



**Sonoma County Fish and Wildlife Commission
Meeting Minutes
March 17, 2011 – 7:00pm**

Attending
Members

Crystal Norris
Dave Lloyd
Jim Lynch
Al Ferris
Jeff Holden
Jo Bentz
Dave Cook

Absent
Members

Gene Gaffney
Caroline Christian
Darius Anderson
Brock Dolman
Andrew Pozzi

Others

Hattie Brown, Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation
Kellie Noe, Sonoma County Water Agency
Karen Fies, Workforce Investment Board
Ed Hoener, Sonoma County Sheriff's Office
Ann Gallagher White, District Attorney's Office
Doug Gore, Dragonfly Stream Enhancement
Dagny Thomas, Ag Commissioner's Office

Chairperson Crystal Norris calls the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Adoption of Minutes

Crystal asks if there are any additions or corrections to the February 2011 minutes.

Al Ferris makes a motion to approve the February 2011 minutes as presented, with a second by Dave Lloyd. Motion carried with seven 'Ayes', five 'Absent'.

Correspondence

- A. Correspondence from California State Fish & Game Commission regarding various regulatory actions
- B. Thank you letter – Audubon Canyon Ranch
- C. Laguna de Santa Rosa *Meanderings* – Spring 2011 newsletter

Financial Reports

In February 2011, the Abalone Fund received \$25.00 from Central Collections, with a fiscal year fund balance of \$273.05. The General Fund received \$1,851.49 from Superior Court, \$340.84 from Probation, and paid out \$84.16 in office expenses, with a fiscal year fund balance of \$48,553.72.

Crystal mentions the fund balance does not reflect grant #151 in the amount of \$5,000.00 awarded in February to Audubon Canyon Ranch.

Crystal asks for a motion to approve the February 2011 financial reports as presented. Al Ferris makes a motion to approve, with a second by Jo Bentz. Motion carried with seven 'Ayes', five 'Absent'.

Old Business

Hattie Brown, Conservation Science Program Manager, Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation (Laguna Foundation), is requesting a grant in the amount of \$6,990.00, for *Adopt a Vernal Pool Program*, second reading

Crystal asks if there are any further questions or comments.

Al Ferris discusses man-made and natural vernal pools.

Hattie states the Laguna de Santa Rosa has been given a Ramsar designation. The Ramsar Convention protects wetland habitat and recognizes wetlands of "International Significance". The Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetland Complex is now one of 5 sites throughout California, 27 sites nationwide and 1,904 sites worldwide to receive this designation. Although there are no significant legislative impacts on land use from this recognition, it puts Laguna Foundation on the map as far as being an important wetland ecosystem globally.

Crystal asks about matching funds. Hattie says they currently have not received any, but the California Native Plant Society is expected to match the amount requested of the Fish and Wildlife Commission, if awarded.

Crystal asks for a motion to approve the grant in the amount of \$6,990.00. There is none. Crystal invites additional comments.

Jeff Holden says it is traditionally not typical to fund grants consisting entirely of administrative expenses and that the Commission historically has not done so. He feels it is a lot of money to pay for someone's salary.

Crystal states the Commission needs to look at how it approaches awarding grant funds for staffing hours as it applies to current grant applications and not base decisions off past practices - as economic times and labor needs for projects have changed.

Jim Lynch agrees with Crystal. He says many solid projects are coming before the Commission that aren't necessarily "bricks and mortar" types of studies. Sometimes the bulk of a project requires an administrator to perform volunteer coordination, management, training and data collection, none of which requires the purchase of equipment. He really liked the project from last month, which he felt was an excellent representation of the goals of the Commission. He feels sometimes the most critical element of a good research project is a professional with specialized skills, such as a field biologist, managing it.

Al would like to see administrative costs separated out. He doesn't like the idea of someone receiving grant funds in the form of hourly compensation for a staff position.

Jo Bentz says times have changed and agrees with Jim and Crystal. Non profits are struggling right now and she supports these types of grants if the money is available in the fiscal year. This grant does deal with endangered species and it is a necessary and beneficial study. There are currently no maps of local wetlands and this project would assist with their development.

Dave Cook would like to weigh the merits of each grant on an individual basis.

Jeff Holden agrees that there has been a shift in the past few years as to the nature of the funding requests, likely due to the economy. He's not against funding staff hours, just looking closely at grants that are requesting 100% funds for administrative costs.

Hattie then explains landowners are more at ease allowing non-profit field biologists and volunteers access to private property than they are with government agencies. The Foundation only sends its volunteers and staff where they can secure safe access. One aspect of the grant proposal is the development of better website reporting which is accessible to the community. Through their volunteer data collection efforts they have discovered a natural predator to the vernal pools, Pennyroyal Mint, and have been able to acquire funding for eradication. Treatments for the Pennyroyal Mint have been a combination of hand pulling and application of aquatic herbicide under very stringent conditions.

Jim Lynch makes a motion to approve the grant in the amount of \$6,990.00, with a second by Al Ferris. Motion carries with seven "Ayes", five "Absent" for grant #152.

Doug Gore, Dragonfly Stream Enhancement, gives an update on grant #138, *Green Valley Creek Channel Stabilization and Coho Habitat*

Doug reports the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) came up with \$30,000.00 in funds for this project. They were able to place nine wooden debris structures in Green Valley Creek. University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) has flagged two fish this year they believe to be broodstock Coho. UCCE has been able to conduct continuing research there due to the work Dragonfly Stream Enhancement has done through the grant award. Doug thanks the Commission again for the funds and for their support of this project.

Captain Steve Riske, DFG, is requesting a grant in the amount of \$4,397.46, for *Russian River Enforcement*, pending

Ed Hoener, Sonoma County Sheriff's Office, Marine Unit, reports that the inspection by the state Auto Inspector is still pending.

Crystal says that the grant request will remain pending on monthly agendas until there is resolution to the situation.

New Business

Kellie Noe, Program Specialist/Youth Ecology Corps Coordinator – Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA), is requesting a grant in the amount of \$7,320.00, for *Summer Youth Ecology Corps*, first reading

Kellie Noe introduces herself and then introduces Karen Fies, with Sonoma County Human Services, Workforce Investment Board.

Kellie explains the Summer Youth Ecology Corps plays a vital role in watershed maintenance and habitat restoration. The program runs during the summer, when there is a short window of time between rainy seasons to access watershed areas and perform this work. SCWA works in conjunction with other project hosts countywide.

Involvement in the program promotes the development and enrichment of environmental stewardship and learning skills that youth are able to take with them throughout their lifetimes. They acquire work training and readiness skills, enhance their environmental education base, and are making a direct contribution to the community.

The partnership for the program includes: SCWA, Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board, Sonoma County Human Services Department (HSD), and Sonoma County Office of Education, and New Ways to Work. Along with many community partners, the five employers of record include: Social Advocates for Youth (SAY), Sonoma County Adult and Youth Development (SCAYD), Petaluma People Services Center, West County Community Services, and The Center for Social and Environmental Stewardship.

The program hires educators from the community that teach youth about watersheds, water cycles, water delivery systems, and native plants and animals. It's a hands-on learning process that allows a deeper understanding of the ecosystem.

They are requesting \$7,320.00, which will support one crew of six youth for an eight week work experience. Participants work four days a week, for four hours a day providing immediate improvements to Steelhead environments: the Santa Rosa Creek System, Adobe Creek in Petaluma and Copeland Creek in Rohnert Park to name a few.

Kellie explains the entire budget for the project is \$17,734.00; the amount they are requesting covers one additional crew for the summer, with the balance funded by the HSD Workforce Investment Board and SCWA. It would allow six additional students to participate in the program.

The Summer Youth Ecology Corps has received an Environmental Excellence Award from the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA).

Jo Bentz asks if the high school students hired are Sonoma County residents and how old they are. Karen Fies says they are local students, ranging in age from 14-21 years old, depending on qualification requirements of funding sources. Jo then asks if there is a high drop-out rate. Karen explains the participants typically don't drop out. They've had a less than 10% attrition rate in the last two years because the participants enjoy the work and realize they have good, meaningful employment. There is always a waiting list and another youth ready to fill a spot, which is a strong motivator to keep participants from jeopardizing their enrollment in the program. They target low income, at-risk youth. Jo asks about who performs the heavy machinery for clearing work. Kellie says heavy machinery is operated by adult professionals. The Youth Corps performs hands-on work such as planting, clearing small shrubbery, trash removal, etc.

Crystal asks how the interview process works. Karen says they recruit at each of the five non-profit agencies acting as the employers of record. They have different funding sources with different funding eligibility requirements such as economic need, letters of recommendation, or participation in Community Service Days. Once those requirements are determined, the employers of record conduct assessment interviews with eligible candidates. Crystal then asks which creeks will be targeted this summer. Karen says the worksites have not been finalized, but they will use SCWA, City of Santa Rosa, and Ag Preservation and Open Space District sites in need of cleanup and restoration work.

Al Ferris asks if the program is associated with the United Anglers in conjunction with the Adobe Creek worksite. Kellie says a teacher with United Anglers, Dan Bacher, was a crew leader for the Youth Ecology Corps last summer. They are also working with the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) to develop a Water and Energy Resource Academy. Al thinks this is a great project and exactly the type of thing the Commission should be funding. He worked with the United Anglers in the past and has seen many youth transform through this type of work experience.

Jim Lynch thinks this is a great project and is impressed with the number of agencies involved. He feels this absolutely meets the Commission's grant criteria.

Dave Cook works for SCWA, so he won't be voting on this grant. He feels this is a wonderful project. They have been developing new methods of stream restoration through the stream maintenance program. The Youth Ecology Corps takes at risk youth and offers them many opportunities. He fully supports the project.

Crystal mentions the Fish and Wildlife Commission scholarship program as a potential goal for participants in the Corps. She states this is the first reading, and the second will be heard at the April 2011 meeting.

Reports and Comments

Commission –

- Jim Lynch observed Commission grant monies 'at work'. He participated in a DFG Hunter Education class with Jim and Janice Goodman at Hannah Boys Center. The replica firearms purchased with Commission funds are working well and have been an asset to their training curriculum.
- Al Ferris says the hatchery in Oroville is inundated with Steelhead. Salmon season is anticipated to open on April 2, 2011.
- Dave Cook missed the last meeting because he was snowed-in at Lake Tahoe, without use of his fireplace.

Public –

- Ann Gallagher White, Sonoma County District Attorney's Office, introduces herself as the new Deputy District Attorney assigned to Environmental Crimes. Crystal explains to Ann the Commission's goal of eliminating the Abalone Fund. Ann will follow up with Matt Cheever on the status of the restitution cases involved in the fund.

With no further business, the meeting is adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dagny Thomas
Commission Secretary