

Minutes of the August 16, 2007, Meeting

Attending Members

Crystal Norris
Pierre Gadd Jr.
Jo Bentz
Andrew Pozzi
Al Ferris
Jeff Holden
Dave Cook
Martin Bauman
Gene Gaffney
Brock Dolman

Absent Members

Jim Lynch
Ned Hill

Others

Melania Mahoney, Wildlife Fawn Rescue
Marjorie Davis, Wildlife Fawn Rescue
Karl Menard, Bodega Marine Lab/Discovery Center
Dave Hellendall – Sonoma County Resident
Steve Riske, Dept. Fish & Game
Josh Nicholas, Dept. Fish & Game
Jim Goodman, Dept Fish & Game HE
Bruce Kohler, Smith River Fish Control
Andrew Swan, Snow Goose Productions
James Swan, Snow Goose Productions
Mary Jo Delos, SC Regional Parks Found.
Mary Clemens, SC Regional Parks Found.
Alex McVicker, Ag. Commissioner's Office
Naomi Lozinto, Ag. Commissioner's Office
Susan Taylor-Fellbaum, Ag. Comm. Office
Dagny Thomas, Ag. Commissioner's Office

Chairperson Crystal Norris called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Adoption of Minutes

A correction to the July minutes - Jo Bentz was absent at the last meeting. A motion to accept the amended July minutes as presented was made by Al Ferris with a second by Gene Gaffney. Motion carried.

Correspondence:

No Correspondence.

Financial Report

Crystal announced the Final Budget reports for Fiscal End of Year '06-'07. The Abalone Fund Budget Balance was \$695.02, with the overall Abalone Fund Balance totaling

\$7,323.59. The General Fund Budget Balance was \$16,440.15, with an overall General Fund Balance totaling \$177,024.33

Crystal requested that the Fiscal End of Year Report '06-'07 for the Abalone Fund be updated to reflect "DFG" in parenthesis for each of the three Abalone Grants (#111, #112, #113).

The end of July Abalone Fund, 7/31/2007, received \$55.00 from Central Collections with a fund balance of \$7,378.59. The end of July General Fund, 7/31/2007, received \$1,252.15 from Superior Court revenue, and \$147.28 from probation, with a fund balance of \$178,423.76.

A motion to accept the July 2007 and End of Fiscal Year '06-'07 financial reports was made by Pierre Gadd, with a second by Al Ferris. Motion carried.

Old Business

Second Reading of Indoor Tide Pool Support/Maintenance at the Environmental Discovery Center at Spring Lake - Mary Jo Delos of Sonoma County Regional Parks is requesting a grant for \$3,500 for professional maintenance and support of the indoor tide pool exhibit at the Environmental Discovery Center at Spring Lake Regional Park.

The grant would be used to hire Karl Menard of the Bodega Marine Lab to assist with maintenance & development of the exhibit.

Motion to accept the grant request in full for \$3,500.00 for Tide Pool Support/Maintenance at the Environmental Discovery Center at Spring Lake was made by Pierre Gadd. A second was made by Gene Gaffney. Motion carried for Grant #118 to Sonoma County Regional Parks.

New Business

First Reading of The Fish and Game Warden video documentary, Snow Goose Down Productions - James Swan, Ph.D., of Snow Goose Down Productions, LLC, is requesting a grant for \$30,000 for "Endangered Species: The Fish and Game Warden" video documentary (56 min video).

James Swan introduced himself. He's been making documentaries since 1970. Two years ago, after writing an article for "National Review" on Game Wardens in general, he received a phone call from Bob Orange, a California Game Warden, asking him if he was aware of the dire situation currently affecting Fish & Wildlife Game Wardens in California.

James met with many Wardens and went on ride-alongs. He discovered that California has the lowest per capita ratio of game wardens of any state in the US. After writing a

series of articles on game wardens as a columnist for ESPN, he was then asked in December 2006 (by Jake Bushie & Jerry Ricardo - California Fish & Game Wardens) to do a documentary about the situation regarding the plight of wardens in California.

He referenced the video documentary proposal handout (in meeting packet) and passed out a short project synopsis/budget handout for all of the Commissioners. He also passed out copies of "2007 California Fish & Game Warden – Expose Update." He then introduced and showed a 3 minute video documentary trailer; a sample of what is being developed.

Topics that were highlighted in the trailer: abalone, fish & game poaching; the shortage of Game Wardens state-wide (fewer than 200) compared to the massive population growth of California in the last 100 years (current population 38 million), and how this affects the wardens' ability to enforce laws; also covered was lack of interest in positions (new hires) due to low starting wages, salary increases & salary caps.

At the end of the presentation James states that KQED is seriously interested in showing the documentary on "KQED Presents" and feels there is a chance to get it shown State-wide and nationally.

Warden Josh Nicholas commented on the effects that the loss of wardens is having on the Department of Fish & Game, along with the low salaries and high cost of living in California. He also stated that the lack of state budgeting and funding for firearms and basic equipment, combined with the extremely high risk level involved in this line of work, adds additional stress within the personal and professional lives of wardens.

Al Ferris asks if the film has already been produced and James Swan responds that it is being worked on currently. It is being filmed segment by segment, producing short pieces similar to the one shown this evening, so that Wardens can use the segments immediately for their own outreach to raise awareness and support. He then asks if abalone and poaching would be featured with emphasis on the North Coast. James guarantees that the abalone issue will be included in the documentary.

Al wanted to know if the \$30,000 grant asked for from the Sonoma County Fish & Wildlife Commission is the total cost of the production.

James stated that the entire production budget is \$186,000. He states that he is contacting every Fish & Game Commission in the State, every sporting organization and a number of foundations. The total budget of \$186,000 is half the average cost of a "KQED Presents" production.

Al Ferris wanted to know what would happen if he was not able to raise the funds. James states that he is certain they are going to reach their goal - \$8,500 has been raised so far. He reassures the Commission that the money would be returned if the goal wasn't reached.

He then introduced his son, Andrew, who is the production assistant and video technician for the documentary. He explains that the initial income has been used to purchase video editing software to digitize & catalogue over 300 audio visual tapes from DFG archives due to the lack of DFG funds.

James covers the contributions that have come in to date: \$2,500 from the California Water Fowl Association; \$2,500 from the Fish & Game Warden's Association; and \$3,500 from the LEF Foundation (a visual arts foundation in SF). James has also contacted entities such as the National Wild Turkey Federation, Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, and Safari Club International.

Martin Bauman inquires if this type of grant is within the Fish & Wildlife Commission Mandate and that it seems like political lobbying; that it may not be within the Commission's ability to approve.

Crystal emphasizes that the grant request is appropriate in the sense that the ultimate end result would be the increase of Wardens in the field, which would benefit the wildlife, the County, and increase fines being levied – which would increase Fish & Wildlife Commission income. In the broad perspective, it is an educational element.

Martin is concerned that the documentary would be created for the State and that \$30,000 is a huge commitment - mentioning that even the Game Warden's Association has only contributed \$2,500. He then suggests that the Commission consider cutting down the potential grant contribution to \$5,000-\$10,000.

Crystal says that the Commission can contribute whatever it chooses – it isn't obligated to any dollar amount when approving grants.

James Swan clarifies the documentary's possible political implications, stating that to air the documentary on PBS, it cannot be presented as a one-sided political statement, and it has to be educational. The intention of the documentary is to show the breadth of the responsibilities that wardens have. Most people think they spend their time just checking fish, but the reality is that the wardens are now dealing with high levels of organized crime. It is serious work that they perform. He wants the public to be aware of this, including the pressures of home life, etc.

Andy Pozzi expressed concern about the size and cost of the grant request, and asked how many Commissions have been contacted asking for financial support? James stated that Santa Cruz County is considering contributing \$1,500.

Jo Bentz wants to know how the "Fish & Game Warden – Expose Update" brochure relates to the production – and/or does it? Is it being distributed to the public? James says that it's a Fish & Game publication – the F&G Warden Association put it together.

Gene Gaffney wants to know if the Commission could send an invitation to our state, local & county elected officials (i.e. supervisors, congressmen, assemblymen) – to help spread the word. Several people commented that it wouldn't be something the Commission would get involved in. He wanted to know why we couldn't contact our elected officials to raise awareness. It was stated that if he wishes to do so, he needs to do so on "his time" and as a personal request, not on behalf of the Commission as a whole.

Brock Dolman mentions that regarding funding and the quick turnaround deadline for the production in April, that the way the Commission works, they could approve a smaller amount initially and when the production is much further along in progress in the spring, they could return for a "second ask" – which would afford the Commission time to better see how the documentary is developing and perhaps it would then be more comfortable offering a larger matching amount. He also suggests creating an associated website in conjunction with the movie with links or fill-in signature form letters ready to sign & send directly to legislators.

Crystal thanked the presenters and stated that this is the first reading of this grant, and that the second reading will be during the September 2007 meeting.

Reports and Comments

Commission

Martin Bauman passed around a copy of the "Marin County Wildlife & Fisheries Advisory Committee Yearly Report" and suggests that the Commission consider publishing something similar – a short report stating all Commissioners, game wardens, supervisors, grants awarded for the previous year, community involvement, etc. Crystal thinks it's a great idea and easy to accomplish, emphasizing that the Committee would need someone to actually do the work to produce it. Everyone thinks it's a great idea.

Andy introduces his friend Bruce Kohler from Smith River Fish Control. Bruce has many friends who sit on boards similar to the Commission. Spoke about the Klamath River and the Native Americans net fishing vs. Fish & Game conservation efforts. He emphasized the importance of public outreach and awareness regarding F&W issues in any area.

Pierre stated that he wouldn't be attending the meeting next month in September.

Public

Crystal asked the visiting Agricultural Commissioner's office staff to introduce themselves. Dagny Thomas introduced herself as the new Senior Office Assistant, who will be the Secretary during upcoming meetings, alternating with Naomi Lozinto.

Sue Taylor-Fellbaum introduced herself as the Front Desk Office Assistant II who was on a field trip, cross-training as a backup meeting Secretary.

Jim Goodman of Dept. Fish & Game's Hunter Education supports the grant proposal and queries the Commission about how many have taken the Hunter Education classes recently, suggesting that everyone take the class. He sees a wide variety of backgrounds and age ranges in classes he's teaching.

Dave Hellendall mentions Karl Menard of the Bodega Marine Lab and highly commends Karl for his service to educational and preservation programs. He is impressed with the depth of teaching that is being afforded children at the Discovery Center.

Marjorie Davis, Director of the Wildlife Fawn Rescue Center, discusses her program and the outreach she does free of charge to schools throughout the County. She then stated she was pleased to introduce her replacement, Melania Mahoney, as Director of the Fawn Rescue Center.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dagny Thomas

Secretary