

Minutes of the March 20, 2008 Meeting

Attending Members

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

Absent Members

Dave Cook
Ned Hill

Others

Melania Mahoney, Wildlife Fawn Rescue
Marjorie Davis, Wildlife Fawn Rescue
Dave Yearsley, Friends of the Petaluma River
Laurel Anderson, Salmon Creek School
Ted Swiecki, Phytosphere Research
Jean Maier, Observer
Kyle Hiatt, Department of Fish & Game
Josh Nicholas, Department of Fish & Game
Deputy John Blenker, Sonoma County Sheriff's Dept.
Sgt. Robert Pacheco, Sonoma County Sheriff's Dept
Alex McVicker, Ag. Commissioner's Office
Dagny Thomas, Ag. Commissioner's Office

Chairperson Crystal Norris called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

She announces that United Anglers will not be attending the meeting tonight, so their first reading of a grant request for *Purchase of Van to Transport Students* will be postponed until a later meeting.

Adoption of Minutes

Crystal Norris asks if there are any additions or corrections to the January 2008 minutes. There are none. A motion to accept the February minutes was made by Al Ferris, with a second by Pierre Gadd. Motion carried.

Correspondence

- A. Newsletter from The Bird Rescue Center
- B. Email correspondence from James Swan, Snow Goose Productions, with an update on the progress of "Endangered Species: California Fish & Game Wardens" video
- C. Correspondence from California State Fish & Game Commission regarding various regulatory actions

Financial Reports

February 2008 Financials: The Abalone Fund received \$55.00 from Central Collections, and \$150.00 from Probation, with a fund balance of \$9,622.24. The General Fund received \$274.40 from Probation, with a fund balance of \$174,827.17.

A motion to approve the February 2008 Financial Reports is made by Jim Lynch, with a second by Al Ferris. Motion carried.

Old Business

Second reading of *Headquarters/Satellite Projects, Wildlife Fawn Rescue* – Melania Mahoney, Executive Director, is requesting a grant for \$5,700.00 for Headquarters/Satellite Projects.

Melania Mahoney tells the commission that Wildlife Fawn Rescue held an open house honoring the Eagle Scouts that assisted in building prior enclosures for their organization.

She says that the Coast Guard will be assisting in the building of the Forestville enclosure that would be funded by the current grant request.

Jim Lynch makes a motion to approve the grant in the amount of \$5,700.00, with a second by Pierre Gadd. There were 7 “yes” votes (voting occurred prior to Brock Dolman’s arrival). Jo Bentz abstained. Motion carried for Grant #125 to Wildlife Fawn Rescue.

New Business

First reading of *Assessing Impacts of Sudden Oak Death in Sonoma County 2001-2008, Phytosphere Research* - Tedmund J. Swiecki, Ph.D., is requesting a grant for \$15,000.00 for Assessing Impacts of Sudden Oak Death in Sonoma County 2001-2008.

Ted Swiecki begins by explaining that the study of Sudden Oak Death (SOD) in Sonoma County started in 2001, and was funded by the Sonoma County Fish & Wildlife Advisory Board in the amount of \$26,200. In 2004 the project received funding from the USDA Forest Service to re-survey the plots. Between 2001-2004, the study noted an increase in the occurrence of SOD, especially at Austin Creek & Jack London State Park. Disease also moved into areas of Annadel State Park and Lake Sonoma. During 2005-2006 the above-average rain, and late spring rain conditions were favorable to disease spread. The reason for setting up long-term monitoring plots is to assess baseline conditions and track the spread of development or recession of SOD. Phytosphere Research would like to go back and resurvey these plots. They have requested \$43,800 in primary funding from the Forest Service, but are required to obtain a 20% funding match from other sources to obtain these funds; they are asking \$15,000 from the Fish & Wildlife Commission for this funding match.

Gene Gaffney asks about the state budget for SOD last year and if there is funding for studying SOD at the state level. Ted states that there is no money from the State of California going to SOD research; only the USDA Forest Service has funds available for this. The USDA funds are nationally available and not just for research in the state of California.

Pierre Gadd asks if there is still an SOD in Sonoma County. Ted replies that there is a federal and state quarantine in place, and that Sonoma County is a quarantine unit in its entirety; there are no quarantine subdivisions within the county.

Jo Bentz asks Ted if the project met the objectives of the 2001-2004 study and if there were recommendations for management. Ted states that this project is part of many being conducted in the area that are interrelated and the data is cumulatively used in reports to different management agencies. He says that overall, they have reached the objectives. Jo asks if the data is available for the general public to view regarding the reaching of the first study's objectives and Ted states that the information is available on their website.

Jeff Holden wants to know if the 2001-2004 portion of the Phytosphere Research study was funded by prior grants from the Fish & Wildlife Commission. Ted and Andy Pozzi state that prior F&W grants were for other SOD research projects. Jeff then asks if Phytosphere Research is communicating with these other SOD research groups – if the data is being used comprehensively by everyone researching SOD. Jeff also asks if there are any results coming from these research studies other than statistics; have the researchers found a way to stop SOD. Ted states that they collaborate with UC Cooperative, the study is related to the rate of spread of the disease over time and that they haven't yet determined a way to stop the spread of SOD.

Pierre Gadd asks Crystal Norris how much has been granted by the Fish & Wildlife Commission cumulatively over time to study SOD. Crystal replies that it is over \$100,000 total.

Ted states that Phytosphere Research must wait until the Forest Service approves their RCD request in a few months, and if it is not approved by Forest Service, they will rescind the grant request to the Fish & Wildlife Commission.

Crystal states that this was the first reading of the grant and the second reading will be at the April 2007 meeting.

First reading of *School & Community Environmental Stewardship Programs, Salmon Creek Falls Environmental Education Center* - Laurel Anderson, Program Director, is requesting a grant for \$6,635.00 for School & Community Environmental Stewardship Programs.

She shows a Powerpoint slide show and reviews the progress of the campus restoration projects that have occurred since 2002. Salmon Creek School has currently received funding for this project from: The Redwood Fund, Coastal Commission Whale Tail Grant, The Bay Institute, and the California State Coastal Conservancy.

The basis of the grant request is to offer their on-site school and resources to outsource Salmon Creek Falls Environmental Education to urban, underprivileged children in the County. They don't have funding to develop a visiting school program. In the past, they have had volunteers donate their time as educators, including classroom materials as the program was developing. They currently have around 120 children from other schools visiting per year and now need funding to support this as an ongoing annual program.

The school attempts to coordinate the school children's learning experience at the Environmental Education Center with the level of science they are currently learning in the classroom. The environmental science program is tailored primarily for late elementary and middle school students to integrate into their current year science classes. Jeff Holden asks if the visiting schools are contributing funds to the program. Laurel states that they are focusing on lower income schools, and they are not financially able to contribute.

Gene Gaffney wants to know if Laurel thinks that this program is assisting the visiting school children in becoming better environmental stewards via their experience in the program. Laurel believes that the program is very beneficial to the students in this regard. It offers an opportunity and exposure to environmental awareness that they would not have otherwise. Students from urban environments are really enthusiastic about their experiences in the program.

Crystal Norris asks Laurel for clarification regarding the breakdown of the grant request budget and would like more detail about how the grant funding would be spent if it was awarded. Pierre Gadd asks if Laurel will submit a detailed budget breakdown to the commission before April's meeting.

Crystal states that this was the first reading of the grant and the second reading will be at the April 2007 meeting.

First reading of *Purchase and Installation of Marine Electronics, Sonoma County Sheriff's Department Marine Enforcement Unit* - Sgt. Robert Pacheco and Deputy John Blenker are requesting a grant in the amount of \$5,000.00 for the purchase and installation of Marine Electronics.

Bob Pacheco introduces himself and states that they are requesting a grant for GPS and radar equipment to furnish a Coast Guard boat that was donated at no cost to the Sheriff's Department Marine Unit through the military via their surplus program. The Sheriff's Dept. is investing money in the craft to get it running, but needs additional funding for the onboard equipment. Budget restraints are limiting the amount of equipment they can purchase for vessels. The specific equipment they are requesting will not only assist in targeting violators more precisely, but also to help the officers to navigate better in inclement weather – adding increased safety measures for the officers in the line of duty.

The Sheriff's Dept. Marine Unit works all the waterways in the county and is funded by Sonoma County and a grant from the Department of Boating and Waterways. They are responsible for enforcing boating laws and Department of Fish & Game enforcement on the coast, Petaluma River, Lake Sonoma, Russian River and Bodega Bay. The Marine Unit assists the Department of Fish & Game by enforcing warrants for abalone poachers. They also work with the Coast Guard and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on the coast. They are involved with many community service events and education programs in the county.

Pierre Gadd asks how much of their time is spent enforcing DFG warrants. Sgt. Pacheco replies that it's 30-40% of their time. Deputy John Blenker states that they are spending a good portion of their time stopping violators that end up having Dept. of Fish & Game violations. They work in conjunction with DFG Wardens and Coast Guard officers often.

Crystal Norris asks Sgt. Pacheco how much time the Marine Unit is out on the water during abalone season. He replies that they're required by their grant from the Department of Boating and Waterways to be on the water at least two days per week – on every waterway in Sonoma County. There are 4 deputies assigned specifically to this duty, along with Sgt. Pacheco.

Gene Gaffney asks the commission if any of the grant award can be taken from the Abalone Fund. Many of the commissioners reply that they feel at least 50% of the money could come from the fund, due to the fact that the Marine Unit is spending so much of its time enforcing abalone poaching and directly related violations.

Crystal states that this was the first reading of the grant and the second reading will be at the April 2007 meeting.

Reports and Comments

Commission

Brock Dolman says that neo-tropical migrant birds are coming in.

Al Ferris went to a talk on Salmon.

Gene Gaffney asks about the budget balance and how that will affect the grants that are currently pending. The commissioners tell him that once the budget is spent for this current fiscal year, any grants that are presented will have to be put on hold for award consideration until the next fiscal year.

Crystal Norris reported seeing a young buck last week walking down Santa Rosa Creek behind her office in downtown Santa Rosa. She has also seen a pair of Mergansers there as well. There have also been six Steelhead moving upstream across the gravel in the creek for about 4-5 days.

Public

Josh Nicholas, of Department of Fish & Game, asks the commission, per Lieutenant Riske of DFG, about funding in the amount of \$5,000.00 for electronics for a new DFG boat. He states that the District Attorney's office has garnered income from the Andreas Anton case that is earmarked specifically for DFG equipment. Crystal says she will check with the Ag Commissioner's Office about how these funds will be distributed and tells Josh that the Department of Fish & Game must present the request for funds as a grant request with bids on equipment, a budget breakdown and then present it to the commission for approval.

Josh also talks about Abalone season opening April 1st, and emphasizes the importance of having the proper licensing card – as well as following the instructions on the card precisely to avoid any violations. He also mentions that there will be no Salmon season in April, and turkey season is opening soon.

Dave Yeardsley with Friends of the Petaluma River, says that his organization, along with the Petaluma Watershed Salmon & Steelhead Forum and Department of Fish & Game is hosting an upcoming event on April 9, 2008, at the Petaluma Community Center called, "A Petaluma Salmonid Forum". He invites the commission to attend.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dagny Thomas

Secretary