



## FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

### Minutes of the April 16, 2009 Meeting

<u>Members</u>	<u>Absent Members</u>	<u>Others</u>
Crystal Norris Andrew Pozzi Martin Bauman Gene Gaffney Dave Cook Jim Lynch Jeff Holden Dave Lloyd Brock Dolman	Al Ferris Jo Bentz Ned Hill	Cathy Neville, Agricultural Commissioner Nick Geist, Sonoma State University Hunt Conrad, Windsor Times Demitri Esquivel, Department of Fish & Game Frank Crabtree, DFG Hunter Education Alex McVicker, Ag Commissioner's Office Dagny Thomas, Ag Commissioner's Office

Chairperson Crystal Norris calls the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m.

#### Adoption of Minutes

Crystal asks if there are any additions or corrections to the March 2009 minutes. There are none. Jim Lynch makes a motion to approve the March minutes, with a second by Gene Gaffney. Motion carried.

#### Correspondence

- A. Correspondence from California State Fish & Game Commission regarding various regulatory actions

#### Financial Reports

In March 2009, the Abalone Fund received \$150.00 from Central Collections, with a fiscal year fund balance of \$12,000.00. Crystal states that this balance does not include \$6,450.00 awarded for Grant #134 at the March meeting. The April fund balance will reflect the new amount.

The General Fund received \$1956.46 from Superior Court, \$437.06 from probation, and \$5000.00 from the District Attorney's office, with a fiscal year fund balance of \$33,623.18.

Andy Pozzi makes a motion to approve the March 2009 financials as presented, with a second by Brock Dolman. Motion carried.

#### Old Business

**Nick Geist, Associate Professor of Biology, Sonoma State University, gives a project report on *Reproductive Biology & Conservation of Sonoma County West Pond Turtles, Grant #110.***

Nick Geist explains that the project was looking to answer basic questions about West Pond turtles. Primarily they wanted to study their reproductive habits due to their gradual decline over the past few years. A key question was regarding “temperature dependent sex determination” – whether or not the temperature of the nest affects the gender of the embryos and pre-determines gender, and what the specific temperature window was, if so. Prior to starting the project there was very little research published or compiled about the turtles. They were able to combine conservation and basic research into the project. The grant award from the Fish & Wildlife Commission helped to fund five incubators used in this study.

Nick says that the project was highly successful. They collected 50 viable eggs and had a 90% success rate with hatching them. They found discovered at a nest temperature of 84 degrees Fahrenheit, the male/female ratio was 50%/50%; if the temperature was lower than 84 degrees Fahrenheit, there were a higher percentage of males born; if the temperature was higher than 84 degrees Fahrenheit, there were a higher percentage of females born.

Crystal asks if the turtles will be released. Nick explains that some will be released back into the wild and that he’s contacted the Oakland and San Francisco Zoo’s to assist with relocating some of the turtles after the research and data collection are over to assist with the zoos’ conservation education. DFG was favorably impressed with the project and gave the go ahead to work with the zoos. The study has allowed graduate and undergraduate students at Sonoma State to become actively involved with hands-on research. They are looking to expand the program in the future to study urban ecology related to the turtles.

Dave Cook asks what the predation rate to nesting failure ratio is. Nick says that the study was able to locate 8 nests, and that they observed the predators finding 22 nests. He believes it is 90% or greater for nesting failure due to predation. Brock Dolman asks about the types of predators. Nick says there are predominantly skunks and foxes.

Crystal asks if they will be expanding the locations of the study in the future. Nick states that they are looking at possibly expanding it to Sonoma County and north of Lake County, where the current eggs were collected and the nesting patterns studied.

## **New Business**

### **Hunt Conrad discusses and requests letter of support for *Reduction of Steelhead take at Lake Sonoma* (discussion only).**

Hunt Conrad introduces himself as an avid fisherman and explains that he is the Fishing Report writer for the Healdsburg Tribune, Windsor Times and Sebastopol Sun. He has fished Lake Sonoma for the last 20 years. He references 1981, when the dam was built, and barred the Steelhead from returning to the ocean. In the past there has been a really good Trout take at Lake Sonoma. As a fisherman, he used to catch up to two per hour. Due to drought conditions over the past two years, the Dry Creek tributaries have run dry in the summertime affecting the Steelhead population. He feels that the lake has lost two years of spawn for the trout and that the population has reduced drastically.

Hunt has written letters to the Department of Fish & Game (DFG) in 2004, and in 2007, requesting that DFG protect the Steelhead population in Lake Sonoma. He feels that the mortality rate is very high and has noticed a drastic decline when he is out on the lake fishing. He is working with Bob Couey from DFG and is anticipating a letter of support from him – he has not yet received final

approval to submit the letter. He knows of anglers that have caught 400-500 fish in a year in seasons past, and knows that those totals have severely declined over the past couple of years.

Andy Pozzi says that he can concur with Hunt's observation of heavy takes and over-fishing; he knows of people that catch lots of fish each year and don't even eat them. He knows that many people target the young fish in the tributaries of the lake during spawning season. He supports dropping the take limit from 5 to 2 fish.

Crystal asks Hunt if he has put this item on a California Fish and Wildlife Commission agenda for an upcoming meeting.

Gene Gaffney then asks what other types of fish are in Lake Sonoma. Hunt says there are catfish, sunfish, large mouth & small mouth bass, and smelt - to name a few. He explains that the lake is well diversified with the different species of fish that inhabit it.

Brock Dolman asks if the Army Corps of Engineers are supportive of Hunt's request. Hunt says they are not involved with his request for support.

Crystal asks the commissioners to take a vote to write a letter of support to the California Fish & Wildlife Commission in support of dropping the take limit of Lake Sonoma from 5 to 3 fish. There are "ayes" from all commissioners present. The timeframe to draft and submit the letter will be determined the following week through the Ag Commissioner's Office.

### **Fish & Wildlife Scholarships 2009 –**

The 2009 Scholarships are voted on by the commission. The names of the applicants are kept confidential to ensure non-biased voting and each application is assigned an alphabetical letter.

Crystal asks the commissioners to pick their top three favorites, which are then tallied. The top two applicants are the winners. Applicant C and applicant K receive the most votes. The scholarship winners for 2009 are Matt Lau (C) and Stewart Wilson (K).

The winners will be contacted and invited to receive their \$2,500.00 award checks at the May and June meetings (Matt Lau and Stewart Wilson, respectively).

### **Grant application process review –**

Gene Gaffney asks the commission if it is possible to review the grant applications prior to adding them to the agenda. He notes that some of the applicants in the past year had excellent projects that unfortunately did not entirely meet the criteria for grant awards. He feels it may save both the commission and the applicant's time and energy by noting this fact prior to having applicants come in for a first read, including presentations. He explains it as a type of pre-screening.

Dagny Thomas states that currently, all grant applications that come in to the Ag Commissioner's Office are added to the agenda. She says that she will point out any grant requests that appear not to meet the criteria to Crystal for review, prior to adding them to the agenda.

Jim Lynch says that the commission may ask a grant applicant not to return for a second read and that they have exercised this right in the past.

Crystal tells Gene he may comment at any time if he feels that a grant request does not meet the criteria. One of the reasons they have implemented the "second read" aspect of grant request presentations is to allow an extra level of review and screening.

The commission decides to review the verbiage on the grant request application to confirm applicants are clear that they may not be asked to return for a second reading.

## **Reports and Comments**

### **Commission –**

Crystal states that there are 303 subscribers to the Fish & Wildlife website updates. She asks the commissioners if they would like to hold the annual BBQ this year. Jim Lynch thinks it would be best to pre-plan this kind of event earlier in the year, and due to the current economic situation, it might be a good idea to hold it in the fall or even let it pass this year. Andy agrees with Jim and would like more time to plan. Andy suggests putting the item on the November agenda to begin planning for 2010.

Dave Cook visited the Bodega Marine Lab and says the Aquaria Display that the commission helped fund looks great and is really impressive.

Brock Dolman may not be attending the May and June meetings as he is planning a trip to the highlands of Tibet to map and study sacred springs and climate change. He has seen near tropical migrant birds on his property.

Jim Lynch went turkey hunting over the weekend and caught a few.

Martin Bauman has been geo-caching with his grandson. It uses GPS devices to locate small buried caches all over the world – similar to a global treasure hunt. He finds it very interesting. He appreciates the fact that this hobby/sport gets people outside into nature. There are over 7,000 caches worldwide.

### **Public –**

Dagny Thomas says that Cathy Neville, the new Agricultural Commissioner, would like to meet with all the Commissioners over the next few months for an introduction meeting.

Dimitri Escovil, DFG, is now the acting main inland warden. He is responsible for all pollution and streambed calls. There are a lot of good abalone cases coming in. There has been a lot of dry sacking.

Frank Crabtree, DFG Hunter Education, introduces himself. He has wanted to meet the commission and sit in on a meeting and is glad he got a chance to do so.

With no further business, the meeting is adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dagny Thomas  
Secretary