



## Humboldt County Fish & Game Advisory Commission MINUTES May 19, 2020

*The Commission meets the THIRD Tuesday each month from 6:30pm through 8:30pm. Agenda items and supporting info should be mailed to HCF&GAC; PO Box 922; Ferndale, CA 95536; Phone 707.786.4902 or 707.407.5747 email: [nkaytis4@gmail.com](mailto:nkaytis4@gmail.com) up to two weeks following previous meeting. Online meeting via ZOOM.*

Attendance: James Clark, John Clark, Loren Furber, Phil Grunert, Hollie Hall, (ab)Yadao B. Inong, Rhiannon Lewis-Stephenson, Denver Nelson, Kenny Priest, Ted Romo, Brad Smith, Jeff Stackhouse, Harry Vaughn, Mike Zamboni, Nancy Kaytis-Slocum. (ab)=absent. Guests: Joan Romo, Allan Renger (DFW), Eddie Koch, Wiyot Tribe, and Leonard Miller.

Meeting called to order by Vice-Chairman Ted Romo (Chairman John Clark having difficulty with his internet connection) at 6:34 pm.

The minutes from the February 18, 2020 were unanimously approved by consensus. Item 8a was moved to the top of the agenda to accommodate guests.

8a. Pike Minnow Spearing. Commissioner Brad Smith presented a letter he'd written to ask the Board of Supervisors to approve of Pat Higgins proposal to the Department of Fish & Wildlife. Guests were introduced. Commissioner Harry Vaughn is concerned about getting involved in this. He feels it is between the applicant, Pat Higgins, and the Department of Fish & Wildlife. Commissioner Brad Smith wondered if a couple of pools might be designated for the eradication. Commissioner Hollie Hall wanted to know what type of projects have already been approved; what is the methodology? Smith: Spear has a 6' reach. Commissioner Phil Grunert said experienced divers can tell the difference between a Pike Minnow and another fish. Commissioner Jim Clark asked if the applicant can do an experiment to collect information. Allan Renger from the Department of Fish & Wildlife reported netting had been approved, and electro fishing has been supported by the department. These methods interrupt the migration pattern. HSU, Redwood Science Lab have received permits, Wiyot Tribe, PG&E. There have been diet studies, electro studies. New operator of PG&E to remove Scott Dam. Commissioner Mike Zamboni asked if the method of take is the issue. Renger said Fish & Wildlife is opposed to spear fishing due to unintentional capture, which would be lethal. Smith: So what you are saying is that Fish & Wildlife has no experience with this method. Renger: I do know about this method. Commissioner Loren Furber: The predator of concern? Renger: Pike Minnow over 15" long – every native fish is vulnerable. The department is in full agreement that Pike Minnow need to be controlled. Smith: If Higgins used one pool for a certain time period, would you support it? Renger: I won't answer that. Commissioner Denver Nelson: It is clear that Fish & Wildlife won't support spear eradication. Scott Dam has to go or the Pike Minnow will come back. I don't think it's up to us. MOTION: (Nelson/Stackhouse) Do not approve sending a draft letter to the Board of Supervisors on this issue. Discussion: Leonard Miller, introduced himself as an indigenous person of the Wyott Tribe. Eight salmon returned to spawning – how many fish are the Pike Minnow eating? Commissioner Jeff Stackhouse agrees that it is not our role to support one person's application to the DF&W. Miller: As it goes on more Pike Minnow destroy our fishery. Stackhouse: Call for the Question.

Yes: (6) Denver Nelson, Kenny Priest, Harry Vaughn, Rhiannon Lewis-Stephenson, Jim Clark, Jeff Stackhouse. Hollie Hall abstained due to a conflict of interest. Nos: (5) Mike Zamboni, Brad Smith, Ted Romo, Phil Grunert, Loren Furbur. This subject is dropped.

# Humboldt County Fish & Game Advisory Commission MINUTES

## May 19, 2020

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Romo: Eddie Koch, you haven't had much to say.

Eddie Koch: I'm from the Wiyot Tribe and we've been studying the Pacific Lamprey with Still Water scientists since 2010. The secretary will contact Koch to set up a time he can be the speaker at one of our meetings.

At this time Commissioner Brad Smith, F&G Allan Renger and Eddie Koch left the meeting.

### OLD BUSINESS – Reports

Grant Funding: Secretary Nancy Kaytis-Slocum reported on her phone meeting with Karen Clower in the CAOs office. Clower advised that the secretary would have to lower her salary, or the Commission would have to skip a grant period. Kaytis-Slocum asked the commissioners via email what they would like to do. From the replies received, it was reported back to Clower that the Commission would like to pay the secretary \$4500, and skip this grant funding period.

Commissioner Phil Grunert: What about Salmon in the Classroom? Will it go belly up this year?

Commissioner Mike Zamboni: There was no Salmon in the Classroom this year. Kaytis-Slocum: Beth Chatam of the Office of Education is retiring this year, but will be leaving instructions for her replacement. Zamboni: I know the person who will likely be taking over and will send you her contact information.

Area River Updates: Commissioner Denver Nelson reported. Eel River, Two basin committee has been meeting. One of their solutions is to get rid of the dam. This will cost money. We should get the Wiyot Tribe involved. Word is they are going to pump water from Lake Mendocino back up the Potter Valley, which will be very expensive, but should satisfy all involved. Klamath River – it looks like the plans for the dams are moving slowly. That will be a great help to the fish in the Klamath.

Oak and Meadow Management: Commissioner Harry Vaughn reported that the Tree Foundation Newsletter wrote an article about their work in upper Salmon Creek doing the Oak meadow restoration and also another three acres they got done on the South Fork Salmon Creek before the bird nesting season usual close, and so they are going to have a closure until August 1; but we are moving forward and documenting, putting up sign boards at the Salmon Creek School that describes what we are up to, trying to increase meadow habitat. You can go to tree foundation and get the articles. Commissioner Ted Romo asked about the tropical bird closure. It's just a nesting season restriction. Nesting seasons are different for different birds, so we had to shut down on March 1 to allow for nesting and the birds to fledge out. We start back up on August 1.

Salmon Habitat Restoration: Commissioner Vaughn reported still working on SHARP. Agencies and tribes and individuals got together to try to come up with a plan for the South Fork of the Eel River. Hopefully the draft plan will be released to the public. We'll have the whole restoration priority plan ready.

Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC): Commissioner Mike Zamboni reported looked like Pacific Halibut allocation is 39,000 lbs. Commissioner Kenny Priest said this is the same as last year, and will be the same next year. Season runs May 1 – Oct 31 until we catch our quota.

Marine Life Protection Act: Commissioner Zamboni reported. Salmon season was set from June 6 through August 9.

# Humboldt County Fish & Game Advisory Commission MINUTES

## May 19, 2020

---

Crab Fishing: Commissioner Zamboni reported crab season – the Department agreed to continue the NC crab fishing season – the risk of entangling an endangered whale is low. They did close from Bodega Bay south, but now I see they are trying to get that reopened, so it is up in the air.

Elk Herd: Zamboni said nothing new to add to this. Need answers to this, maybe secretary can invite Carrington Hilson in for one of our future meetings. We changed the allocation for the draw hunt from like 15 bulls and 3 cows to 15 cows and 3 bulls. Trying to figure why on earth they did that. That's a huge difference. Commissioner Jeff Stackhouse: Mike I know what happened to those bull tags – they all got allocated to the SHARE hunt. Zamboni: that doesn't make any sense; I mean I don't doubt it. These are huge money tags; the landowner is making \$5000 for a trespass fee, and the SHARE tags, they are going to get bulls for the same price, no matter what, and they should be included in the draw. The SHARE tags should be all cows, and the draw hunt all the bull tags. Stackhouse: the EIR only allows a certain amount of harvest within our state. Zamboni: What happened to the Green Diamond tags? Stackhouse: I don't know, but I assume they still have their allocation. That is within the PLM program, which is separate. They have taken every single tag and dumped them into the SHARE hunt. I don't think Carrington Hilson is the person to ask, I think it would be the Region 1 person who makes the decision. Probably Shawn Fresz is NC lead biologist in the Eureka office.

Hunting and Fishing Access: Zamboni reported that the State Park is blocking access to Freshwater and Stone Lagoon. This is a big issue. That is the only freshwater access with a boat. And the Sheriff said he was going to open up all access and that he wouldn't support non fishing. I'd like to see a letter to the Board of Supervisors to have the Sheriff open access. **This will be an action item for the next meeting. Commissioner Hollie Hall will draft a letter.**

Cannabis: Commissioner Hollie Hall reported that the farmland has rested during the winter and they are beginning to wake up. With that we will see an increase in road use and people out in the woods and we'll see how that affects wildlife habitat. The county has been eradicating some sizeable cannabis grows that are said to be unpermitted. There is an opportunity then to remove and reduce waste. However, there is a history in our county of law enforcement and fish and wildlife destroying infrastructure and just kind of leaving it in place rather than cleaning it up. I'm curious if there is a process in place for cleanup on private lands. I don't see any changes in our ecosystem with acute impact. What we are seeing in general are farmers complying to a rigorous set of environmental standards, which reduces harm to the environment, and we're seeing illegal grows eradicated and hopefully cleaned up, which should also support habitat.

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act: Commissioner Hall reported that Humboldt County was granted funds to implement a study that would help us sustainably manage the Eel River Valley groundwater supply, and the Board of Supervisors approved a request for proposals from consultants to work with the county and implement those studies. In the future we'll have a lot more data about the interface between surface water and ground water in the Eel River Valley (ERV), the quality of the groundwater and additional information about fluctuations in groundwater supply and how that may be influenced by surface water. Commissioner Denver Nelson: The state mandated that the ERV is an impaired water table. The groundwater has not been impacted anywhere near where it has been in the Central Valley. Hall: However, downstream

# Humboldt County Fish & Game Advisory Commission MINUTES

## May 19, 2020

---

from the groundwater supply in the ERV, the Eel River does indeed run low at times and there may be a situation where removal of the ERV groundwater supply used for irrigation is also depleting the amount of surface water that is flowing down the river because there is a hydrological connection between groundwater in the ERV and surface water in the Eel River. I'm not sure we understand that interface well, and the state reviewers agree. Nelson: Well, I disagree. If you measure the level of the groundwater in the Eel Basin, it hasn't changed for the last 100 years. The thing that changed is a bunch of gravel in the Eel River.

Discussion of Commissioner interest in learning more about owl Survey protocols, neo-tropical bird nesting seasonal restrictions, logging regulations and restoration regulations pertaining to local cannabis farms – Commissioner Hollie Hall, I don't know much about this. This is very broad, so I'd like to get some more information from the Commission, so that I can research some or all of it. Commissioner Vaughn: It's my fault. We have owls in Salmon Creek and Miranda area, and spotted owls, and barn owls that we are tracking; I just wondered since owls are regulated by forestry regulations, how does that affect people who are growing – they may have spotted owls in their back yard. Hall: Yes, I understand the regulations relating to noise and light on cannabis farms, but the actual owl survey protocol, I don't know about that. Maybe there is someone we can bring in from Fish & Wildlife. What happens when you want to have a grow permitted, we do a survey of known and estimated spotted owl habitat, and if there are any in the area, you are not allowed to use any lights in your greenhouses, and for any grow, the generators have to be operated at a very low decibel, that is required and regulated by the California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW). No noise measurable from 30' from the greenhouse and from the property line. Vaughn: There was a big bust in Salmon Creek; many people were not happy with the lights and motors going all night, and now that's gone away. Hall: So neo-tropical bird nesting, basically, CDFW has worked very closely with Humboldt County and have established regulations to protect wildlife from all cannabis activity. So neo-tropical bird nesting seasonal restrictions, certainly where we have nesting season, there can be no cutting of vegetation or cleared away, which does impact cannabis farmers because there is an overlap with road management; so they are trying to get in to culvert areas, to clean the culverts and prepare for water passage in the spring or in the rainy season, you want to be sure to do that off season. And that is outlined in the cannabis agreement. Commissioner Stackhouse: there is a very narrow window at the end of the wet season where they can actually do the work required.

Elk Hoof Disease: Commissioner Rhiannan Lewis-Stephenson: CDFW has announced that two elk in the Del Norte herd have this bacterial disease which causes lameness. It is also in Washington and Idaho. This disease has affected up to 90% of the herds in Washington and potentially responsible for the culling of the herds by approximately 35%. It is a pretty big deal if it is starting to come in to California. My hope is to get a letter out to the Board of Supervisors. I have a draft written up which I can send around. Kaytis-Slocum: please send it to me and I will distribute the letter. Commissioner Zamboni: could you please brief us on the letter; I would like an idea of what regulations you are proposing. Lewis-Stephenson: I don't have any potential regulations, I just want to bring it to the attention of the supervisors that this is currently happening in Del Norte, just letting them know that this can cause significant disruption to the Elk, and that there isn't a cure; the only solution is to mitigate contact and limit contact when the disease is present. Oregon and Washington have put forth some regulations, but mainly just

# Humboldt County Fish & Game Advisory Commission MINUTES

## May 19, 2020

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suggestions to hunters and different people. Commissioner Hall: Do you know if this disease is in any way related to the population or density of the Elk, because we are hearing that in some places the elk herds are too large. Zamboni: that is generally the case in most fish and wildlife species, when crowded, the more likely a transfer. Oregon, Washington and Idaho manage it through hunting. That doesn't happen in California. There are 350 tags, last I checked for the entire state. The county in Oregon north of Del Norte offers twice the tags as California, in one county. Lewis-Stephenson: I've been looking at different articles on this disease and it can really decrease the population of elk. Commissioner Phil Grunert: Just last month the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation magazine had an article on this. Commissioner Kenny Priest: Does it ruin the meat? Lewis-Stephenson: No, it does not ruin the meat. Zamboni: Does the disease kill the animal outright, or does it just make the animal more prone to predation? Lewis-Stephenson: it does not kill them outright, does make them more prone to predation, but also opens them up to other diseases, lowers their ability to get around; it basically causes severe lameness and the elk can't follow the herd. Zamboni: In other states they have wolves as predators, but we don't so it may not be as big an issue here.

Announcements: Commissioner James Clark: The Audubon Society had a short "Raptors are the answer" meeting (RATS). I will send you all a link when it gets up on our website.

A discussion followed on how to invite other people to the Zoom meeting. The link will be posted on the agenda along with phone numbers to call in.

Next meeting June 16, 2020.

The meeting was closed at 8:36pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Nancy Kaytis-Slocum, Secretary