



## Humboldt County Fish & Game Advisory Commission MINUTES September 15, 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, (ab)Loren Furber, Phil Grunert, Hollie Hall, (ab)Yadao B. Inong, Rhiannon Lewis-Stephenson, Denver Nelson, Kenny Priest, Ted Romo, Brad Smith, (ab)Jeff Stackhouse, Harry Vaughn, Mike Zamboni, Nancy Kaytis-Slocum. (ab)=absent. Guest: Cashell Villa, Scott Frazer.

Meeting called to order by Vice-Chairman Ted Romo (Chairman John Clark having difficulty with his internet connection) at 6:36 pm.

Cashell Villa, Director Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge and Scott Frazer were our guest speakers. Director Villa gave a brief synopsis of her experience with wildlife. Volunteers are needed to brush up the 14 blinds. If you can help, call Brandon, the hunt manager. They will be ready on October 15<sup>th</sup>. White Slough: over last five years salt marsh restoration. It was pastureland and we are now turning about 40 acres back into salt marsh. The primary hunting is waterfowl – no deer hunting on 300 acres. She has only seen 30 family groups of honkers out there this year. Predators are coyotes, bobcat and hawks. There are five people at the refuge: 2 maintenance, ecologist Andrea Pickard, biologist Brandon Lief and Cashell. The Refuge gets visitors from out of the area: 20 to 25,000 at the Salmon Creek area, 5 to 7,000 at other units. In 2025 the Refuge will create another 15 year plan. Once they purchase property, they are required to post it. Commissioner Zamboni asked if hunting is allowed in the other areas. Director Villa will check into this. Scott Frazer said that they have posted all areas in the past, but the Jacoby Creek Unit was closed to hunting, but if you boated in on those days that you are allowed boat access, people have hunted from the shoreline below the high tide mark.

The meeting was turned over to Chair John Clark.

The minutes from the August 18, 2020 meeting were accepted.

Area River Updates: Commissioner Denver Nelson reported that all the commissioners had just received an email about the Eel River Groundwater from Hank Seeman. Basically, the county is paying for a study and modeling, which is supposed to be done in a couple of years. The county applied for an extension, which they will probably get. The Potter Valley Project (PVP), just in brief: In January 2019, PGE decided they weren't going to renew their license. The withdrawal was effective in February 2019. In June, 2019, a group of entities including Mendocino County Inland Water Agency, Sonoma County Water, Cal Trout, Humboldt County and the Round Valley Tribe filed a notice that they wanted to take over the PVP. It cost each one of those agencies \$100,000 to get involved, and they need to file a license application by April 14, 2022. The main thing that they proposed is to remove Scott Dam. In order to license a power project, you have to do a lot of studies, so Federal Energy Regulation Commission (FERC), said that this new group had to do a whole new study. If you are interested, I'll give you the reference for the 29 pages of study that need to be done, and the question, of course, is who's going to pay for it. Nobody has that kind of money amongst the entities, so they want PG&E to pay for it. PG&E doesn't want to pay for so it's kind of an impasse. John Driscoll, who works for our

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congressman, says there may be some kind of movement to make PG&E pay for it. Klamath Dam Removal also has FERC involvement. There are seven dams on the Klamath, and four of them generate electricity. They also block fish migration. Who is going to claim responsibility for the dams from Pacific Power. Berkshire Hathaway, actually Warren Buffet. The first entity tried to get the money out of congress but hasn't been able to. We're talking big bucks to take out these dams. Then a new entity which involved many of the old players, FERC said you are going to have to do this, but you have to involve Pacific Power. This is interesting because these dams generate 169 megawatts of power, basically for free, because the water runs through the generator. To give you a point of reference, Humboldt Bay Power Plant is now supplying 163 megawatts, this whole area. So if you are generating power for free comparable to the Humboldt Bay Power Plant, politics come in and somebody says you have to give that up, quit generating power, and go buy fuel to make that much power, probably would say no. I'm not sure there is a lot of money, which amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars, forthcoming to do this project. Commissioner Hall said that there is a huge environmental cost in fish, and social wellbeing of tribes that depend on those fish downstream. We are in a situation now is that FERC has said removal of the dams could move forward, but Pacific Corps has to maintain partnership. And the alternative will be for Pacific Corps to pursue relicensing for power production. Even if they say they don't want to be a partner in decommissioning the dams because we've already made our money and we want to get out of here, well, if they pursue relicensing themselves, they will accrue vast costs associated with making the dam passable by fish. Is that correct? Commissioner Nelson: FERC doesn't really care about fish passage, algae or water quality – they are there to generate power. If I were running this whole thing, I would hire a bunch of lawyers to say the ratepayers won't go for that. It would be cheaper than building fish ladders, and doing all the other things government agencies say have to be done. Commissioner Hall: does Pacific Corps have a third option which is just to walk away completely? Commissioner Nelson: The government is running out of money, so in the priority of things, I don't think taking out four dams on the Klamath, there would still be no fish passage with four of the seven dams taken out. It would probably take a billion dollars to take out the dams. Commissioner Hall: My understanding is that the money has been approved for dam removal by FERC – the money is on the table. Pacific Corps has to maintain partnership until the dams are removed. Commissioner Nelson: The money is not in anyone's pocket, and congress backed out of the first dam removal project. Part of the money came from bond issues, part comes from Pacific Corps, which they will get from their ratepayers. I don't think the money is readily available.

Crab Fishery: Commissioner Mike Zamboni - Nothing new to report on this. Commissioner Hollie Hall: At the Mad River Beach, crab were crawling all over the surf. Is it legal to harvest them there? Zamboni: the season is closed, sport and commercial. Zamboni: the carcasses are there from the crab molting, and the old shell washes up on the beach. New shells are very soft.

Wolves: Commissioner Zamboni-I was working at the ranch, and the elk herd had disappeared the night before, and I heard a howl that didn't sound like a coyote. That howl got the coyotes yipping in the background. My folks heard the howl a couple of times, too. Commissioner Smith: most of the wolves I've heard about are east of the I5 corridor, and over to 395.

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Cannabis: Cleanup of Grow Sites and transparency: Commissioner Jim Clark: I'm not highly confident in the data I got from the county, but as you look at the non-permitted buildings, I think it's safe to say most of them are grow houses, with PVC, and polyethylene. That polyethylene breaks down into very small particles and it goes right to the bottom of the food chain, and eventually gets into the ocean in very small particles, which are eaten by krill, but they can't live on it. Other fish eat the krill, but they aren't getting the nutrients they need. So these non-permitted grows are affecting fish and wildlife. Commissioner Hall: plastic netting is no longer allowed on permitted grows. Commissioner Clark: keep in mind that these grow sites are not permitted, so that information doesn't apply. My opinion is that the County, Fish and Wildlife, and Water Quality are all overwhelmed by abatement. Commissioner Hall: I believe that abatement isn't only on cannabis farms, but also on illegal homes; and the county would target illegal cannabis farms because the owners have the money to pay the fines, while property with illegal houses have owners that would not be able to afford the fines. Commissioner Denver Nelson: Garberville looks empty, what about their economy? People he knows out in the country down there say cannabis is no longer a profitable business, people are leaving. Commissioner Hall: 85% of the people who live in the triangle area grow cannabis. Some have been evacuated because of the fires, some growers are fire fighters, they are staying and watering their neighbor's plants, taking care of their livestock. They are fighting fires, collecting money to support evacuees, and they are sheltering in place, hanging out at friends' houses, taking care of their gardens, and really they are beautiful community people. Even though their farms have burned, they are taking care of each other, collecting money for evacuees, fighting for equality. In Alder Point, only the permitted grow folks were being allowed back to their farms, but other people are growing food and have livestock, and the permitted grow folks are advocating for the wider community to be allowed back in. The permitted growers have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on culverts, negotiating with Fish and Wildlife, Water Quality, paying for expenses, management plans. The snapshot is that a lot of people are leaving, land is abandoned, and that is devastating because that abandoned land is going to have trash on it, unmanaged road infrastructure, unmanaged forest infrastructure and I think that is a bad situation to be in. There are people out of work, but we have a very vibrant cannabis community. Commissioner Jim Clark: I think you should know that there are eight applications for cannabis grows, usually financed out of state, people who have time and money to put in large high-tech operations. This is not a good situation for family farmers. Corporate cannabis is coming. Commissioner Smith: the industry is still growing, but the outlaws are still there. Who cares if the large commercial growers put in 100,000 acres of plants? It will bring in prosperity to the whole community. Marijuana is a consumer-driven economy. The words Humboldt County can only be used on cannabis grown in Humboldt County; however, this is not enforced.

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA): Commissioner Hollie Hall reported that Denver Nelson gave us a very up-to-date report from Hank Seeman on what's happening with Eel River groundwater protection. The report was sent out this afternoon, so not sure everyone got it.

Announcements: Commissioner Mike Zamboni said that U.S. Forest Service land has been closed to hunting. Are there any other agencies that have closed their property? Haven't heard of any.

Next meeting October 20, 2020.

The meeting was closed at 7:45 pm. Respectfully Submitted: Nancy Kaytis-Slocum, Secretary