

**Advisory Body Name:** Contra Costa County Fish and Wildlife Committee

**Advisory Body Meeting Time/Location:** 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6 meetings per year, 3 – 5 pm

All meetings were held via teleconference due to impacts from COVID-19, with the exception of the CCC Fish and Wildlife Committee Annual Fall Forum, which was held as a hybrid meeting outdoors at Hidden Valley Park in Martinez and also via teleconference on September 22, 2022 at 6 pm.

**Chair:** Daniel Pellegrini

**Staff:** Maureen Parkes

**Reporting Period:** January 2022 – December 2022

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**1. Activities and Accomplishments** The Fish and Wildlife Committee met six times to discuss matters related to fish and wildlife issues in Contra Costa County (CCC). The Committee administered a grant program that expends the Fish and Wildlife Propagation Funds (funds that are collected by the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife for code violations). Additional details on these activities are provided below.

**Grant Program:** The Committee reviewed 16 proposals requesting Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund grants. The Committee reviewed the proposals and selected 10 of the proposals for full or partial funding totaling \$50,324.27 to recommend to the Board of Supervisors. Grant awards ranged from \$998.70 – \$9,949.00. The Committee reviewed progress and final reports from previous grant cycles and extended invitations to grantees to give presentations.

**Outreach:** 1) The Committee hosted the annual Fall Forum on September 22<sup>nd</sup> at Hidden Valley Park in Martinez and via teleconference for those who wished to join remotely. The Forum was open to the public and invitations encouraged people involved in fish and wildlife law enforcement issues in CCC to attend. Invited attendees included representatives of the U.S. House of Representatives, California Senate and State Assembly, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Sheriff's Department, District Attorney's Office, Superior Court, Public Defender's Office, the East Bay Regional Park District Police, the Board of Supervisors and members of the public. Past participants have indicated that the Fall Forum has been helpful in raising awareness and fostering cooperation on fish and wildlife issues and law enforcement. Approximately 100 people attended the event in 2022. 2) Distributed Wildlife in Your Backyard brochure.

**Volunteer Activities:** Several members volunteered in the community with other organizations that are interested in fish and wildlife issues. A sample of these volunteer activities include: Rhonda Gehlke – California Water Environment Association (CWEA) - State Division Chair of the Community Engagement and Outreach Committee, committee member of the CWEA San Francisco Bay Section Communications Committee and committee member of the CWEA State Division Education Committee; Susan Heckly - Lindsay Wildlife Experience, CCC Master Gardener, International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council and the FWC representative on the CCC Integrated Pest Management Advisory Committee; Kathleen Jennings – Co-chair of the Peyton Slough Wetlands Advisory Committee; Danny Pellegrini - Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District Board of Trustees - Secretary, Sheriff's Posse of CCC (Barbeque Captain) and the Martinez Sportsmen's Club.

Committee members were regularly updated on activities related to fish and wildlife in CCC, which included four presentations from grant recipients and an update from County staff. The presentations and update are listed below:

- Contra Costa Watershed Forum and Contra Costa County Creek and Watershed Symposium Overview (Lisa Damerel, Contra Costa Resource Conservation District)
- Delta Conveyance Project Draft EIR Update (Ryan Hernandez, Contra Costa County Conservation and Development)
- What We've Learned about Arundo Donax and other Invasive Plants in our Creeks. (Bob Simmons, Walnut Creek Watershed Council President)
- Bats and Bridges (Robert Stanley, California Department of Fish and Wildlife)
- Lindsey Wildlife Rehabilitation Hospital (Peter Flowers, Lindsey Wildlife Experience)

**2. Attendance/Representation** The FWC is composed of ten members. Each County Supervisor appoints a member and the Internal Operations Committee appoints four At-large members and one At-large Alternate. The FWC met six times at which a quorum was always present. The members were: Susan Heckly (D-II), Clark Dawson (D-III), Madhan Gunasekaran (D-III), Brett Morris (D-IV), Daniel Pellegrini (D-V), Rhonda Gehlke (At-large), Kathleen Jennings (At-large), Nicole Balbas (At-large), Cass Rogers (At-large), and Felipe Solis (At-large Alternate). The District I seat is vacant.

**3. Training/Certification** All members have viewed the required Brown Act & Better Government Ordinance and Ethics Training videos. Certifications are on file for all of the members.

#### **4. Proposed Work Plan/Objectives for Next Year**

##### **(a) FWC Operations:**

- Develop and refine Work Plan (working document).
- Maintain FWC membership by advertising vacancies and forwarding applications to the Internal Operations Committee.
- Seek to coordinate with other Fish and Wildlife Committees on regional matters.
- Coordinate with the Contra Costa Watershed Forum.

- (b) Make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors via the Internal Operations Committee for the appropriation of funds from the Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund to support fish and wildlife projects in the community:**
- Conduct grant program to solicit proposals, evaluate their relative merits, and recommend funding for projects which will contribute most to the fish and wildlife resources of the County.
  - Develop and advertise FWC grant program by: 1) reviewing past Request for Proposals (RFP), funding applications; and 2) developing new RFP, funding application deadline, and funding priorities; and 3) posting to the County and Department of Conservation and Development websites and social media sites, distributing these materials to the media, the FWC and Contra Costa Watershed Forum mailing lists, and to anyone who requests them.
  - Work with agencies, organizations, and individuals to help them plan and develop projects suitable for support from the Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund.
  - Monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the grant disbursement process.
  - Review funding applications received. Make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors via the Internal Operations Committee for the awarding of grants.
  - Follow-up on projects that receive funding to assure that projects proceed as proposed. One way the FWC will do this is to extend invitations to prior Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund Grant recipients to future meetings to give status reports, outcomes and presentations regarding their projects.
- (c) FWC priorities for 2022/2023:**
- Make recommendations to the Board to approve Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund grant applications for projects that increase collaboration with law enforcement agencies, the court, and community cultural organizations on enforcement issues and increase education focusing on communities that may be unaware of local fish and game laws.
  - Provide public forum opportunities for open discussion on wildlife issues that affect CCC residents and impact natural resources in our County, increase outreach efforts and provide advisory updates to Board of Supervisors as needed.
  - Disseminate “Wildlife in Your Backyard” booklet and develop other projects for involvement of the FWC and the community in CCC.
  - Develop a resource document regarding invasive species.
  - Update website with information on invasive species and a list of awarded Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund grants.
- (d) FWC projects (develop and prioritize a list of projects for potential FWC involvement; select projects for FWC involvement and provide appropriate support, including: initiation, planning, consultation, and/or funding):**
- Make recommendations to the Board on awarding Certificates of Appreciation for significant contributions to the fish and wildlife resources of the County.
  - Consider hosting a forum about wildlife.
- (e) Improve enforcement of fish and game laws and regulations; increase flow of money into the Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund:**
- Help assure that, when appropriate, a portion of fines from violations of laws designed to protect fish and wildlife resources is deposited in the Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund. Promote awareness of the harm caused by violation of fish and wildlife regulations and the value of enforcement.
  - Host a Fall Forum with law enforcement officials (CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Sheriff’s Dept., District Attorney’s Office, Superior Court, Public Defender’s Office, the East Bay Regional Park District Police) to discuss fish and wildlife issues and enforcement (subject to County Health Officer’s Shelter Order to slow the spread of Covid-19).
- (f) Monitor and advise the Board on projects that may affect fish and wildlife resources in the County:**
- Attend field trips to see major restoration projects and prior Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund Grant recipients’ projects in the County.
  - Consider tours of East CCC Habitat Conservancy properties, Marsh Creek Fish Ladder, Walnut Creek Drop Structure, Dow Wetlands and Chelsea Wetlands at Pinole.
- (g) Develop policy recommendations (“white papers”) on fish and wildlife issues as requested by the Board of Supervisors. Topics could include:**
- Impacts of invasive species
  - Wildlife and human interaction / interface
  - Public education on reducing the impact of free-roaming cats on wildlife.
  - Delta Conveyance Project