



County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency – Environmental Health

Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission

(831) 454-2022 TDD/TTY - Call 711 <http://www.scceh.org>



AGENDA

July 3, 2025, 6:30 PM

Agenda Item #	Start Time	End Time	Description
1	6:30	6:35	Call to Order
2			Roll Call
3			Approval of Consent Items:
4			1. May 1 st Meeting Minutes
			Public Comment for Items Not on The Agenda
5	6:35	7:15	Presentation on Highway 17 Wildlife Corridor Findings
6	7:15	7:30	Introduction to the FWAC
7	7:30	8:00	STO Expansion Discussion
6	8:00	8:15	Approve the 2025 FWAC Workplan
8	8:15	8:30	Staff Reports
			Commissioner Reports and Announcements
9		8:30	Adjourn

Public Comment

None

Items of Interest:

[Report: Roadkill a 'Preventable Natural Disaster' | UC Davis](#)

[Redefining "take" in the Endangered Species Act – The Conversation](#)

The County of Santa Cruz does not discriminate on the basis of disability, and no person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied the benefits of its services, programs, or activities. This online meeting is available to anyone with a telephone. If you are a person with a disability and require special assistance in order to participate in the meeting, please contact Sean Abbey at (831) 454-2386 or TDD number (454-2123) at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting in order to make arrangements. Persons with disabilities may request a copy of the agenda in an alternative format. As a courtesy to those affected, please attend the meeting smoke and scent free.

Commissioner and Public Participation Information

Commissioners meet in person at the **Solarium Conference Room, 1060 Emeline Avenue**. Members of the public can join in person at either location but are encouraged to join virtually using the link below.

PLEASE NOTE: The meeting room is on the second floor, above the Water Quality Lab entrance. The door must remain locked after hours, but staff will be able to provide access to all attendees as they arrive.

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 271 279 967 137 7

Passcode: qc9Re3sp

Click the “Click here to join the meeting” link above. If you are asked to join Teams with an application, click on “No thanks” and open in the browser. You should not need to download the application to join the meeting.

Please join the meeting a few minutes BEFORE 7:00 pm so that we can start at 7:00 pm. Staff will open the video conference at 6:55 pm. Cameras are optional for members of the public.

Please contact Sean Abbey (sean.abbey@santacruzcountyca.gov) with questions.

Meeting Roles and Rules:

Jenni Gomez, Chair, will lead the meeting. Chair Gomez will announce each agenda item, identify who will be leading an item and introduce discussion and public comment periods.

Sean Abbey, staff liaison, will assist with roll call, note taking, and tracking who wants to speak. Please allow time for staff to make notes about any decisions. Sean will monitor email during the meeting.

There will be a public comment period for each item and the Chair will invite the public to participate at the appropriate time.



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Meeting Minutes

May 1, 2025

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – 6:30 pm
2. **ROLL CALL**

District	Commissioner	Status	Commissioner	Status
I	Chris Berry	P	Samuel Adelson	E
II	VACANT		David Somerton	E
III	Liz Alter	E	Jon Jankovitz	P
IV	Brooke Sampson	P	Daniela Suarez	P
V	Jenni Gomez	P	VACANT	

P = Present R = Remote E = Excused A = Absent

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Commissioner Berry noted a typo in the commissioners reports where “presentation” should have been “presented”.
 - **Motion to Approve Minutes with Correction:** Berry. **Second:** Gomez.
 - **All Ayes:** Minutes approved
4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**
 - Steve Kennedy: Asks that an item be placed on a future agenda to release him from his promise to make no further funding requests for his Canonbal Express film.
5. **REVIEW AND APPROVE LETTER TO THE BOARD REGARDING SIGNIFICANT TREE ORDINANCE:** The Commissioners reviewed the proposed letter and had no revisions. Commissioners also reviewed the suggested code changes and made the following edits: Add Black Locust and Tree of Heaven to list of invasive species that are exempt. Change the Green Wattle Acacia to be simply Acacia. Maintain references to the benefits of large trees to property values and visual aesthetics. Combine the two sections of code referring to timber harvest exemptions, with a comment saying this change is suggested for code simplification only.

- **Motion to Approve Letter with Changes to Suggested Code Revisions:** Gomez, **Second:** Berry,
- **All Ayes:** Letter and Code Change Suggestions approved. Letter will be presented to the BOS at the next possible meeting.

With the letter completed, the Commission also voted to end the Significant Tree Ordinance Sub-committee.

- **Motion to End the STO Sub-Committee:** Berry, **Second:** Gomez
- **All Ayes:** Sub-committee has ended.

- 6. APPROVE THE 2025 FWAC WORKPLAN:** Commissioners reviewed the workplan and suggested adding Regulatory monitoring, coordination with stakeholders, and maintain the iNaturalist account to General Workplan items. Commissioners suggested waiting to approve the final agenda until more commissioners were present and potential new commissioners could be added. Vote on final Workplan will be held at the July Meeting.
- 7. VOTE FOR COMMISSION OFFICERS:** Each commission and committee shall elect its chairperson and vice-chairperson. Each commission and committee may also elect a co-chairperson in lieu of a vice-chairperson, if established in the body's authorizing ordinance or bylaws. Annually, commission officers shall be elected during the first meeting in April, or if the commission does not meet in April, at the next subsequent meeting. Commission officers may serve for up to two consecutive years and shall be eligible to serve again after a one- year "sit-out" period.
 - **Motion to Approve Gomez as Chair:** Suarez, **Second:** Sampson,
 - **All Ayes:** Gomez appointed as Chair
 - **Motion to Approve Berry as Vice-Chair:** Suarez, **Second:** Sampson,
 - **All Ayes:** Berry appointed as Vice-Chair
- 8. APPROVE MEETING SCHEDULE, DISCUSS POSSIBLE CHANGES:** Commissioners voted to retain time and location of the meetings. The proposed meeting dates needed to be correct in 2026 to fall on the first Thursday.
 - **Motion to Approve Meeting Schedule, with correction:** Berry, **Second:** Jankovitz,
 - **All Ayes:** Minutes approved
- 9. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**
 - **Staff Reports:**

- The OR3 office is implementing the Emergency Watershed Protection Program, which recently received an additional \$4 million (now at \$9.7 million) to provide streambank stabilization for up to 15 homes. Property owners will be responsible for 25% of the cost. A status update will be provided to the BOS at the November 18th meeting. [Staff Report](#)
- In communication with Staff at the Land Trust to present on the effects of the Highway 17 wildlife tunnel after 1 year in operation.
- A new Diversity Survey is expected to be going out in the coming months. This is to see how the situation has changed, or not changed, since the 2022 meeting.
- **Commissioner Reports:**
 - **Com Sampson:**
 - 1) Provided a summary and update on Measure Q update to all commissioners.
 - 2) Flagged concerns regarding the weakening of the Endangered Species Act, noting the US house voted to remove long finned smelt
 - **Com Berry:** Provided an update on the status of the ongoing Salmonid Restoration Federation events.
 - **Com Jankovitz:**
 - 1) Has been attending and enjoying the SRF,
 - 2) Commercial season for salmon is closed but the recreational season is open July-August,
 - 3) Descending device is now required when fishing for groundfish, which was a FWAC topic of discussion last year.
 - 4) A relic dam was removed in Pajaro Watershed, near Gilroy, in September. The removal opened over 3 miles of habitat and has resulted in fantastic improvements to habitat quality both up and downstream of the dam.

10. ADJOURN. **Motion to Adjourn:** Berry, **Second:** Jankovitz
All Aye: meeting adjourned at 8:21 pm.



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DRAFT 2025 Work Plan

Public Grants Program

Monitor - Fish and Game Propagation Fund balance

Action – Decide on fund amount and suggested request level for PGP in 2025

Monitor ongoing changes to regulations related to Fish and Wildlife

Learn - about what changes are occurring at the state and federal level.

Action – Engage with relevant stakeholders to discuss regulatory changes

Provide a forum for public input regarding fish and wildlife issues

Learn - about what community considers important fish and wildlife topics.

Action – Be responsive to issues as they arise, report back to Board of Supervisors

Utilize iNaturalist account for public outreach

Learn – about the distribution of various species of interest.

Action – Create projects to inform work to support Fish and Wildlife

Coho salmon and steelhead recovery planning *(Approved Statement)*

Lead Commissioner: Berry

Learn - current status and research

Monitor - low-flow fishing closure status and fishing regulation changes.

Monitor - progress for new coho salmon conservation hatchery.

Action – communicate with CDFW about fishing regulations.

Riparian Corridor Protection and Enhancement *(Approved Statement)*

Lead Commissioner: Jankovitz

Monitor - progress on County efforts to develop a Riparian Enhancement Program

Monitor - how local agencies are dealing with homeless living in riparian areas.

Action – support riparian corridor enhancement when appropriate

Action – communicate importance of protecting riparian from homeless encampments for wildlife and water quality benefits.



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Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS) ([Approved Statement](#))

Includes conservation for wildlife, fish, riparian, oak woodlands, idea of strategic plan for fish and wildlife

Lead Commissioner:

Learn – about RCIS process

Action – Discuss and comment to RCD/RTC on draft RCIS.

Action – Participate in public meetings.

Action – Consider letter to BOS re: RCIS comments

Monitor – development of final plan.

Expand Significant Tree Ordinance outside Coastal Zone ([Approved Statement](#))

Lead Commissioner: Gomez

Monitor – progress of the letters to the Board requesting expansion.

Action – work with the Planning Dept, if requested.

Action – write new letters, as needed.

Wildlife Corridors and Open Space Conservation and Management

([Approved Statement](#))

Lead Commissioner: Alter

Monitor – Cotoni-Coast Dairies and San Vicente Redwoods public access process.

Learn – about Cotoni-Coast Dairies and San Vicente Redwoods forestry management.

Learn – about how conservation easements are being used in County.

Learn – about how much open space is in the County.

Learn – about how to support wildlife corridors.

Marine Protection ([Approved Statement](#))

Lead Commissioners: Somerton

Learn – about new and ongoing marine protection issues

Learn – what community considers important fish and wildlife topics

Learn – about the human impact on inter-tidal communities

Action – take action when appropriate to support Marine Protection

Monitor – new legislation and actions

Measure Q Implementation ([Approved Statement](#))

Lead Commissioner: Sampson

Learn – Understand the goals of Measure Q the funding allocation structure

Monitor – creation of Citizen Oversight Advisory Board



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Monitor - Ability to utilize Measure Q funding for added resources

Action – Prepare FWAC Approved Statement that may be used to support Measure Q project approvals

Invasive Species

Lead Commissioner:

Learn - Identify species, statuses

Action - Prioritize species for future actions

Action - Lend support to Weed Management Agency

Reducing Wildlife/Vehicle Collisions (Approved Statement)

Lead Commissioner: Brown

Monitor – Locations where wildlife/vehicle collisions occur most frequently.

Learn – about the benefits and feasibility of the following methods to reduce collisions:

1. Wildlife crossings to meet the needs of different sizes of animals.
2. RADS (Roadside Animal Detection Systems) to warn drivers of the presence of wildlife
3. Signage to notify drivers of areas with a high frequency of collisions

Monitor – funding opportunities to help pay for/maintain wildlife crossings and signage.

Aquatic Habitat Conservation

Lead Commissioner: Suarez

Monitor: protection and restoration of wetlands, lakes, rivers, water bodies in District 4

Monitor: the pollution that may affect aquatic habitats

Learn: about water quality for fish and wildlife

Vision Santa Cruz Wild (Approved Statement)

Lead Commissioners: Adelson

Action – Create a strategic plan for habitat and wildlife.

Action – develop ways to education county residents about local fish and wildlife issues.

Learn – County General plan update is related to this item



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WORK PLAN APPROVED STATEMENTS:

Coho salmon and steelhead recovery planning

Coho salmon and steelhead trout are perhaps the greatest examples of our County's special biodiversity. In addition to having their own inherent value, healthy local populations of these fish are indicators of properly functioning watersheds and marine ecosystems that have broad value for our County in terms of recreation, water quality and supply, aesthetics and other ecosystem services. Recovery of these species is of paramount importance to our community and the Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission strongly supports any actions that can be taken toward that goal. For more information on priority actions please refer to the respective recovery plans. They can be found at the following links:

Central California Coast Coho:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/recovery-plan-evolutionarily-significant-unit-central-california-coast-coho>

Central California Coast Steelhead:

https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/dam-migration/2016-multispecies-recovery_plan-vol4.pdf

South Central California Steelhead:

<https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/17275>



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Riparian Corridor Protection and Enhancement

As a member of the Santa Cruz Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission, I would like to provide you, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, with information and recommendations pertaining to your upcoming agenda item regarding riparian corridor protection and enhancement. Considering the vulnerability of our County's wildlife, fishes, and natural habitat, it is critical to consider riparian corridors as being paramount for environmental functionality. Riparian corridors support a suite of native fish and wildlife species throughout the County, and increase the functions and value of the ecosystem. Riparian degradation has been observed at an increasingly alarming rate by the Commission in many forms including illegal dumping, unhoused population impacts, property owners disregarding riparian setback ordinances, invasive species colonization, and active removal of native riparian vegetation. All illicit activity in the riparian corridor has a cumulative effect on the health and status of our County's fish, wildlife and natural habitat

As you proceed with discussions on this topic, it is highly recommended that you take action and uphold your duty to protect the County's fish and wildlife by supporting riparian corridor enhancement when appropriate. It is encouraged to support progression on County efforts to developing a Riparian Enhancement Program.

By integrating the aforementioned information and recommendations into your decision making, our community can feel confident that you, the County Board of Supervisors, are taking the correct, informed steps to protect, conserve, and restore the health of our local fish and wildlife.



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Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS)

As a member of the Santa Cruz Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission, I would like to provide you, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, with information and recommendations pertaining to your upcoming agenda item regarding the Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS).

As you proceed with discussions on this topic, it is highly recommended that you take action and uphold your duty to protect the County's fish and wildlife by

By integrating the aforementioned information and recommendations into your decision making, our community can feel confident that you, the County Board of Supervisors, are taking the correct, informed steps to protect, conserve, and restore the health of our local fish and wildlife.



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Expand Significant Tree Ordinance outside Coastal Zone

As a member of the Santa Cruz Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission, I would like to provide you, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, with information and recommendations pertaining to your upcoming agenda item regarding expansion of the significant tree ordinance. Our forests provide valuable services such as preventing erosion of top soil, reducing the risk of landslides, protecting against flood hazards, counteracting water and air borne pollutants, and sequestering carbon. In addition large trees are more fire resistant than the vegetation that typically replaces one after it is removed. The preservation of significant trees and forest communities on private and public property is necessary to protect habitat for fish, birds, insects and mammals, many of which are threatened or endangered.

As you proceed with discussions on this topic, it is highly recommended that you take action and uphold your duty to protect the County's fish and wildlife by expanding the scope of the ordinance to include these important ecosystem services, not just the scenic value of the trees.

By integrating the aforementioned information and recommendations into your decision making, our community can feel confident that you, the County Board of Supervisors, are taking the correct, informed steps to protect, conserve, and restore the health of our local fish and wildlife, and their habitats.



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Wildlife Corridors and Open Space Conservation and Management

As a member of the Santa Cruz County Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission, I would like to provide you, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, with information and recommendations pertaining to your upcoming agenda item regarding wildlife corridors and open space conservation and management. Maintaining habitat and connectivity between habitats is fundamental to conserving wildlife populations, particularly in areas like Santa Cruz County that have extensive urban-wildland interfaces, and an abundance of sensitive species (Figure 1). The mountains of Santa Cruz represent a mosaic of different habitats that host native biodiversity including mountain lions, mule deer, bobcats, foxes, Santa Cruz long-toed salamanders, red-legged frogs, tiger salamanders, coho salmon, steelhead trout, marbled murrelets and many others. The ecological integrity of these systems can be compromised by human infrastructure and activities. Roads and highways, in particular, represent both barriers to wildlife that effectively shrink the amount of habitat available to them, as well as an important source of mortality for many species. Likewise, human activities in open spaces including hiking, mountain biking, and both legal and illegal harvest of plants, animals and fungi, can degrade sensitive habitat over time if not kept in check.

As you proceed with discussions on this topic, we highly recommend that you take action and uphold your duty to protect the County's fish and wildlife by 1) continuing to support the construction and maintenance of wildlife corridors, such as the wildlife crossing tunnel on Hwy 17 at Laurel Grade built in collaboration with CalTrans; 2) promoting the protection of open space wherever possible including balancing habitat protection with public recreation and sustainable timber harvest, such as in the Cotoni-Coast Dairies and San Vicente Redwoods public access process; and 3) working with organizations such as the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County and Sempervirens Fund to identify additional parcels of land for conservation easements and protection to prioritize contiguous tracts of habitat across the County.

While the focus of our Advisory Commission is on promoting the health of fish and wildlife populations, properly managed open spaces contribute to other important County goals including mitigating the effects of climate change and storm runoff. By integrating the aforementioned information and recommendations into your decision making, our community can feel confident that you, the County Board of Supervisors, will be supporting the wildlife populations and open spaces that make Santa Cruz County unique.



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Marine Protection

As a member of the Santa Cruz Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission

I would like to provide you, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, with information and recommendations pertaining to your upcoming agenda item regarding Marine Protection. Considering the vulnerability of the marine habitat within Santa Cruz County, it is critical to consider human impacts on intertidal communities, which are especially vulnerable in rocky habitats near urban centers. Although we recognize the importance of access to these areas at low tides both for educational enjoyment and the sport harvest of mussels, seaweeds and other edible seafood, many of the popular rocky intertidal areas are being “loved to death” by human disturbance. As you proceed with discussions on this topic, it is highly recommended that you take action and uphold your duty to protect the County's fish and wildlife by posting signs at the entrances to the most popular areas outlining the best practices for reducing impact and utilizing volunteer shoreline stewards from various non-profit organizations at extreme low tides to help visitors learn how to enjoy, but not destroy, the intertidal community. By integrating the aforementioned information and recommendations into your decision making, our community can feel confident that you, the County Board of Supervisors, are taking the correct, informed steps to protect, conserve, and restore the health of our local fish and wildlife.



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~~Vision Santa Cruz Wild~~

~~As a member of the Santa Cruz Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission, I would like to provide you, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, with information and recommendations pertaining to your upcoming agenda item regarding Vision Santa Cruz County, which promotes "a healthy, safe and more affordable community that is culturally diverse, economically inclusive and environmentally vibrant." Considering the vulnerability of Santa Cruz County's fish and wildlife, it is critical to consider that every aspect of Vision Santa Cruz County's Operational Plan (Health & Safety, Housing, Transportation, Sustainability, Economy, and Operations), if navigated sensitively, can support a healthier and more resilient natural ecosystem.~~

~~As you proceed with discussions on this topic, it is highly recommended that you take action and uphold your duty to protect the County's fish and wildlife by prioritizing the connections between a healthy human community and a healthy local natural ecosystem. Decisions that favor a healthy environment often also favor a healthy human community. To share some examples: Greenspaces support physical and mental health for humans, and if they are landscaped with native plant species greenspaces can also support healthy ecosystem function. Minimizing air pollution by using electric public transportation vehicles results in cleaner air for humans as well as animals like amphibians which only thrive in especially clean air. Sustainable, environment focused development is becoming more favorable through an economic lens, including cost savings from the conservation of energy and water. As you navigate Vision Santa Cruz, it is strongly advised that you focus on the ways your programs might impact our County's fish and wildlife and how those impacts can be minimized.~~

~~By integrating the aforementioned information and recommendations into your decision making, our community can feel confident that you, the County Board of Supervisors, are taking the correct, informed steps to protect, conserve, and restore the health of our local fish and wildlife.~~



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Measure Q Implementation

As a member of the Santa Cruz Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission, I would like to provide you, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, with information and recommendations pertaining to your upcoming agenda item regarding Measure Q (The Water and Wildfire Protection Act) funding recommendations.

As you proceed with discussions on this topic, it is highly recommended that you take action and uphold your duty to protect the County's fish and wildlife by funding projects that equitably address the health and habitat of local fish and wildlife populations throughout Santa Cruz County when considering eligible conservation, restoration, and stewardship projects including groundwater recharge, restoring vital habitats and controlling invasive species, building wildlife infrastructure, trail restoration, floodplains and wetlands, forest management, culverts, litter removal, and creating defensible space along roadways and trails. Under Measure Q, priority is to be given to multi-benefit projects that address critical environmental needs, like climate resiliency and adaptation, habitat protection, water conservation, extreme weather and natural disasters, and pollution reduction.

By integrating the aforementioned information and recommendations into your decision making, our community can feel confident that you, the County Board of Supervisors, are taking the correct, informed steps to protect, conserve, and restore the health of our local fish and wildlife. Thank you.



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Reducing Wildlife/Vehicle Collisions

As a member of the Santa Cruz Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission, I would like to provide you, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, with information and recommendations pertaining to your upcoming agenda item regarding wildlife crossings on roads in Santa Cruz County. According to the 2424 “roadkill report” from the Road Ecology Center, UC Davis, “More than 48,000 deer, thousands of Pacific newts, close to 100 mountain lions and many thousands of other animals are killed each year by vehicles on California roads”. State Road 17 is listed in the state’s top hot spots where wildlife/vehicle collisions are the highest. As you proceed with discussions on this topic, we highly recommend that you take action and uphold your duty to protect the County’s fish and wildlife by:

1. Monitoring roadway locations within the county where wildlife/vehicle collisions occur most frequently
2. Researching the benefits and feasibility of the following methods to reduce collisions:
 - Wildlife crossings to meet the needs of different sizes of animals
 - RADS (Roadside Animal Detection Systems) to warn drivers of the presence of wildlife
 - Signage to notify drivers of areas with a high frequency of wildlife/vehicle collisions
3. Monitoring funding opportunities to help pay for/maintain wildlife crossings and signage

By integrating the aforementioned information and recommendations into your decision making, our community can feel confident that you, the County Board of Supervisors, are taking the correct, informed steps to protect, conserve, and restore the health of our local fish and wildlife, and their habitats by providing safe wildlife crossings, thus helping to avoid wildlife/vehicle collisions.