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

Meeting Minutes
July 2, 2026

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – 6:33 pm
2. **ROLL CALL**

District	Commissioner	Status	Commissioner	Status
I	Chris Berry	P	Kevin Butler	R
II	Brian Woodward	E	David Somerton	P
III	Liz Alter	P	Jon Jankovitz	P
IV	Brooke Sampson	R	Daniela Suarez	A
V	Jenni Gomez	P	Joanne Brown	P

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

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**
   - **Motion to Approve Minutes:** Berry, **Second**: Somerton,
     - **Abstain:** Alter, Jankovitz
     - **All Other Ayes:** Minutes approved

4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**
   - None

5. **PRESENTATION BY SIERRA RYAN ON CULVERT REPLACEMENT PROJECT PROPOSAL TO CDFW:** Sierra Ryan, Director of Water Resources, presented on a recent application to the California Dept of Fish and Wildlife Fisheries Restoration Grant Program. The proposed project would be to design replacements for two culverts along Casserly Creek, which currently are the end of accessible stream for salmon. The culverts would be redesigned as open bottom "box" or "arch" culverts, allowing a continuation of natural stream bed under the road. Commissioners asked questions regarding the funding sources and recommended several areas for collaboration. In particular, the commission noted that there is opportunity to work with the Public Works division to identify more culverts the require maintenance and replacing them with ones that require less maintenance during and after large storm events.

6. **REQUEST SUGGESTIONS FOR COUNTY PORTION OF MEASURE Q FUNDING:** County Staff have been putting together a list of priorities for the County portion of Measure Q funding. Sierra Ryan has already identified wildlife crossings and Pinto Lake improvements as possible priorities. The question to the Commissioners was, what are some other high priority projects that could be impactful, visible, and relatively inexpensive ($300,000). The Commissioners suggested the following:
    - Collaborating with City of Santa Cruz forest health projects
    - Replacing high priority failed culverts with open bottom channels. Specifically, three (3) culverts along Lompico Creek were identified.
    - Removal of the Boulder Creek Rec dam, which is identified as a fish passage barrier along the San Lorenzo River.
    - Commissioners supported improvements to Pinto Lake as it is a highly utilized park and a good project,
    - Working with the Stream Wood Program to install large permanent wood installations, with ongoing support for nearby residents.

7. **UPDATE FROM WILDLIFE CROSSING SUB-COMMITTEE, COMMITTEE CLOSURE:** The Bio-blitz project continues to proceed with Chrissie Klinkowski working to recruit volunteer biologists from local naturalist organizations. The biologists would provide data to the iNaturalist Project over a period of roughly 1 year, with results expected by July 2027. In addition, a second project is nearing release for the public to report wildlife killed by vehicle strikes. This project will be called "Safe Passage Santa Cruz" and will be managed by the FWAC iNaturalist account. Staff will work with the commissioners to create a press release that has a QR code linking to the project.

    The Wildlife Crossing sub-committee was created as an ad-hoc sub-committee and therefore cannot exceed 6 months in duration. The sub-committee will need to be closed, with the responsibilities for the project divided between Commissioners Brown and Gomez.

    - **Motion to Close Wildlife Crossing Sub-committee:** Jankovitz, **Second**: Somerton,
        - **All Ayes:** Sub-committee is closed.

8. **STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**
    - **Staff Reports:**
        - At the May meeting, Commissioner Jankovitz was elected as Vice-chair on the belief he would be continuing the role. That was incorrect and Commissioner Berry was Vice-Chair last year. Staff corrected the record and confirmed that the vote was still acceptable to the commission. No new vote was agendized for a future meeting.

- Commissioner Berry reported observing an unusually high number of large bullfrog tadpoles in the San Lorenzo River near Highlands Park, prompting concern about the status and spread of bullfrogs in the watershed. Local Biologist Don Alley provided background on historical detections of bullfrogs and tadpoles across the watershed and emphasized that Boulder Creek appears to be a major point of spread. Alley also explained that Bullfrog populations fluctuate with winter severity, with more intense winters often reducing populations.

- **Commissioner Reports:**
  - **Com Berry:** Multiple stream improvement projects are being completed by the City of Santa Cruz, including a San Vincente Creek stream-wood installation, riparian restoration in Scott Creek, and improving passage around the Branciforte dam. The city also contributed to advancing County barrier removal projects.
  - **Com Berry:** Noted many riparian violations and requested that staff reach out to CDFW enforcement to be at future meetings. Staff will be including Cpt Schindler in agenda creation process.
  - **Com Alter**: An interesting study was released that mapped data from STRAVA, a fitness tracker app, and compared it with Mountain Lion tracking data. The report found that Mountain Lions are actively avoiding trails during times of high use.
  - **Com Alter:** One of Com Alters graduate students will be completing her dissertation on vertebrate diversity in Pajaro Lagoon.
  - **Com Sampson**: Board of Supervisors approved the Measure Q competitive grant awards in June. The list of awardees is available on the Measure Q website.
  - **Com Brown:** Appreciated the California Native Plant Society webinar listed in the agenda "Items of Interest". According to the webinar, the passage of Prop 45 will result in overall changes to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) that will weaken protections for clean air, clean water, public health and wildlife.

9. **ADJOURN.** **Motion to Adjourn:** Jankovitz, **Second:** Alter
   All Aye: meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.