

DRAFT

Washington State Audubon Conservation Committee (WSACC)
Meeting Minutes
December 9, 2006
Olympia, WA

Welcome, Introductions

Heath Packard welcomed the group and congratulated everyone on their hard work during the elections (see item #3 in the 11/22 briefing packet). Introductions were started.

18 people were in attendance and 9 local Audubon Societies were represented.

Attending:

Joe Scott—Conservation Northwest
Chris Morgan—Grizzly Bear Outreach Project
Gene Bullock—Kitsap AS
Sandy Bullock—Kitsap AS
Sally Van Niel—Pilchuck AS
Jan Van Niel—Pilchuck AS
Dean Swickerath—Grays Harbor AS
Jan McMillan—Grays Harbor AS
Jon Soest—North Central Washington AS
Sue Danver—Black Hills AS
Krystal Kyer—Tahoma AS
Gretchen Starke—Vancouver AS
Dan Kinney—Yakima AS
Steve Puddicombe—Willapa Hills AS
Christy Wood—Audubon Washington
Dana Kiehl—Audubon Washington
Heath Packard—Audubon Washington
Nina Carter—Audubon Washington

Minutes approval:

Sally Van Niel moved to approve the minutes.

Sue Danver seconded the motion.

Discussion was held.

Minutes approved with clarifications: Pilchuck is replacing creosote pilings with non-toxic concrete pilings; largest colony of nesting *marine* osprey; KAKO should be KRKO.

Action Item: Clarification is needed on the Board's relationship to WSACC, to ensure that the Board and the chapters are clear in their respective roles and responsibilities in influencing Audubon Washington's policy positions and priorities. Heath and Nina are working with Board and WSACC members to clarify. They will follow up accordingly.

Chapter Briefings:

Pilchuck Audubon

Five concrete pilings are replacing creosote pilings on Tulalip tribal tide lands. The chapter is opposing the proposed Sauk River Road repair in Darrington. They have been exchanging letters with the Forest Service over their failure to do a complete EIS, especially due to endangered salmon and steelhead. The chapter is happy with the success in the election!

Grays Harbor Audubon

This chapter is also happy with the success in the election: Watch for good things from Kevin VanDeWege, who defeated Jim Buck as the new state representative in the 24th district. A biodiesel plant is being built in Aberdeen. It's nice to see an environmentally-minded business in Aberdeen, but the next step is establishing a local market for biodiesel. A big issue is the opposition of DNR's land swap proposal. They want to make contiguous habitat lands, but expectations about the current lands are being switched. There is also concern about the economics, as less productive land is being exchanged for more productive land.

Heath jumped in to discuss **DNR Land Swaps**:

The proposed DNR land swaps consist of a complex series of land exchanges. While there are five exchanges, some have parcels all over the state. The proposal is difficult to really understand without local knowledge, so Audubon chapters can contribute their input. The chapters can look at maps online to identify parcels that may be problematic, and this information will be articulated to DNR with alternatives, initiating a dialogue that will be constructive in reaching an agreeable solution. The chapters should relay their input to Heath so he can coordinate the efforts, and Audubon Washington is also coordinating efforts with Conservation Northwest and The Nature Conservancy.

Dan is concerned about the lack of land valuation, to determine whether the actual values of the lands being swapped are equal rather than looking at acreage.

Action Item: Heath will develop a process for coordinating chapters on land swap, including sending out an e-mail as per Gretchen's request. Providing time to motivate chapters.

North Central Washington Audubon

Conservation chair Jon Soest talked about a number of different things that NCWAS has been working on including: the Conservation Task Force work on National Forest Management Plans, USFS Travel Management Plans, Wild and Scenic River designation, Wenatchee and Entiat River Watershed Plans, DNR Land Swap and Columbia River Water Management Plan. Jon did not bring a resolution to this meeting, but will wait for endorsement probably at the next meeting, when the Task Force has finished its work and is ready to submit it to the FS. Another management plan being developed by the FS in parallel with the general management plan - the Travel Management Plan. This plan, effective around 2009, will limit off-highway vehicles to roads in the NF that are signed as open, only. As part of the general management plan, the FS planning team must consider changes, primarily additions, to their list of recommended Wild and Scenic Rivers. The planning team for the Colville, Okanogan and Wenatchee NFs has decided that there have been no significant changes since the 1985 plan. Jon pointed out this was

certainly not true. Wenatchee and Entiat River Watershed Plans are moving into implementation, and a number of habitat improvement projects have already been funded and are starting up.

Follow-up: Jon will send a previously-circulated alert asking for chapters to send in comment letters to the WSACC listserv. Black Hills and Pilchuck AS have agreed to do so.

Black Hills Audubon

Sue represented the chapter at the court of appeals for Quality Rock on Thursday regarding the opposition to the expansion of the gravel mine and asphalt plant adjacent to the wildlife refuge. She estimates a 50/50 chance of winning. The chapter is also concerned about the port of Olympia, which is not taking care to protect the prairie dog and lark populations at the Olympia Airport. Sue represents the chapter as stakeholder in conversations to make Olympia a major shipping port and is fighting the idea. The chapter opposes cluster housing and would like to see cluster housing built adjacent to wetlands put on sewer systems. They are also trying to protect the Maytown prairie from development due to its low real estate values.

Tahoma Audubon

The chapter has been opposing the crossbase highway for years. They have filed a 60-day intent to sue notice in attempt to get the crossbase highway off the ballot in November. They are trying to get media coverage and are lobbying to Sound Transit and legislative transportation committees. The chapter is also working to get cumulative affects studies on Geoduck aquaculture, which is expanding to Pierce County. They are working with Rep. Pat Lantz in asking for a hold on expansion until further research can be addressed. Lastly, the chapter is working on the Green Tacoma partnership to identify and protect green spaces and create habitat and corridors in Tacoma. They also announced the hiring of a new executive director to start on January 1st: Bryan Flint.

Vancouver Audubon

The chapter worked on defeating I-933, but Clark County was slightly in favor of 933. The chapter is working on updates of the Comprehensive Plan. The preliminary EIS came out last fall containing three alternatives, and it was clear that preferred alternative was neither. Hearings were held recently, still without the final EIS, and Gretchen Starke emphasized the lousy process. The critical areas ordinance was passed. The chapter is working on a strategy to preserve farmland, keeping farmers in business and preventing development.

Yakima Audubon

The chapter was involved in I-933, but 63% in the county voted “yes”. They’re the only county in state that also voted in favor of a Republican senator. Lots of work to go! The chapter is working on update of critical areas ordinance and shorelines ordinance. Many species are found on the private lands in farmland and lake areas, and private lands need more protection. Public hearings are in progress. The chapter is involved in the DNR land swap and encourages everyone to look at maps on the website. Fish and Wildlife is reviewing wildlife area plan, and the chapter is involved in citizen advisory group. Lastly, Yakima Audubon is the keeper of Toppenish Wildlife Refuge, and the Indian nation wants to reclaim this land, likely resulting in a closure to the public.

Kitsap Audubon

Kitsap Audubon is in a partnership with nine other organizations to form West Sound Conservation Council—their environmental activist arm (since Kitsap is a small chapter). This works to mobilize many more people, and they were very active on I-933. WSCC also serves as a tool for networking various citizens' groups, keeping them up to date on the issues. A major upcoming issue for the chapter is their opposition to the proposed NASCAR track. They would like to attract environmentally-friendly business that would provide family wage jobs—not the racetrack, which will bring traffic and pollution to the region. The chapter also opposes Fred Hill Materials' proposed gravel barging port operation in Hood Canal, which would likely exacerbate its current environmental problems.

Willapa Hills

The chapter is involved in opposing a liquid natural gas (LNG) plant on the Oregon side of the Columbia, which would have great effects on Washington including the salmon. They also oppose the proposed copper mine at Mt. St. Helens and a mine in Kalamoth. The chapter put in for a shorebird grant to help snowy plover and horned lark.

Audubon Washington

Audubon Washington recently hired Christy Wood as the new Development Coordinator. This year is Audubon Washington's 25th anniversary, and a celebration was held in Seattle this month. Gene Bullock, who was not at the celebration, was presented an award in recognition of his volunteer efforts. The official groundbreaking has occurred for the Seward Park, which will serve the very diverse southeast Seattle area. A five-year strategic plan is in the works to determine Washington's role in protecting the Pacific Flyway. Tim Cullinan's job was eliminated as a result of a budget shortage, but he is still on to work on the Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Plan, which is critical for owl survival. Once money is raised, the science advisor position will be reinstated. Four chapters applied for money from the Packard Foundation Grant to National Audubon in order to do conservation projects along flyway, and a decision is expected in January or February.

Guest Presentations on Grizzly Bear Recovery and Resolution:

Christ Morgan, from the Grizzly Bear Outreach Project, presented information on grizzly bears, their vital role in the ecosystem, and their decline in Washington.

Joe Scott, from Conservation Northwest, requested support of Audubon in requesting a NEPA process leading to the implementation of a recovery plan. This would result in Audubon's signature on a letter to WA Fish & Wildlife (see p. 17 in the 11/22 briefing packet).

For similar presentations to Audubon Chapters or other events:

<http://www.bearinfo.org>

Chris Morgan, GBOP Co-Director

The opposition includes the ranching community in Okanogan; some orchardists; perhaps some outdoor guides/recreational groups, but the speakers haven't experienced this. This may affect the public via local, temporary trail closures when bears are in the area. Very few groups are actually opposed: most are supportive or neutral.

Action Taken:

John motions to sign on to the letter.

Steve seconds the motion.

Passed: WSACC will sign on.

Follow-Up: Heath and Nina will introduce this issue to Audubon Washington's Board of Stewards in January to get Audubon Washington to sign on to the letter also.

GIS Powerpoint

Dana Kiehl, Audubon Washington's policy intern, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the use of GIS to help inform policy priorities for Audubon.

Policy Issues and Updates:Marbled Murrelet

See update #5 and 6 in the 11/22 WSACC briefing packet.

Spotted Owl Recovery Plan

In spite of some reservations from Tim, a plan was agreed upon and taken to Washington DC, but they were sent back to create a more flexible plan with more options. A recovery plan is required under the ESA, but the current administration is trying to unravel protections and is misrepresenting science. In addition, Seattle Audubon filed a lawsuit (see item #7 in packet) against Washington State DNR and Weyerhaeuser because logging in sensitive areas is still harming spotted owls.

Crossbase Highway

WSACC signed on a couple years ago in opposing the proposed crossbase highway between McChord and Ft. Lewis, which would bisect oak woodland and prairie savannah, habitat for the Western Gray Squirrel. See Item #9 in packet. A 60-day intent to sue notice was filed over the final EIS from 2003 due to a lack of options and the omission of significant considerations. This issue is currently on the Regional Transportation Investment District list, which is tied to the passage of the Sound Transit package going to voters in November. The crossbase highway should not be included in this package. Audubon is focusing on it as a transportation finance issue rather than an environmental issue.

Bird's Eye View was passed out and the legislative priorities therein were discussed.

Action Item: Change the year from 2006 to 2007. "Loose" on page 3, second paragraph, should be changed to "lose."

Heath closed with reminders of upcoming events.

Meeting adjourned.