

MINUTES

SUISUN RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING

HELD ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14th, 2024, AT 2:00 PM
SOLANO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISOR'S CHAMBERS
675 TEXAS STREET, FAIRFIELD, CA 94533

DIRECTORS PRESENT: Tony Vaccarella
Jim Waters
Kent Hansen
Mike Lewis

OTHERS PRESENT: Dennis Becker, Assoc. Director
Steven Chappell, SRCD
Robin Cheng, DWR
Kevin Clark, DWR
Fred Riedel, Fleetside Club
Melissa Riley, DFW
Orlando Rocha, DFW
Jamel Stewart, DWR
John Takekawa, SRCD
Jeff Taylor, SRCD
John Telfer, SRCD Assoc. Director
Andy Vaccarella
Dick Vanderkous, SRCD Assoc. Director

1. Call to Order ~ Mr. Vaccarella called the Suisun Resource Conservation District Board of Directors meeting to order at 2:01 PM.

2. Public Comments ~ There were no public comments. Mr. Vaccarella introduced his son Andy Vaccarella in the audience.

3. Open Session ~ Mr. Vaccarella opened the January 10, 2024, Board of Directors meeting. Mr. Vaccarella asked for consideration of agenda Item 3a.

a) Approval of the January 10, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes ~ Mr. Vaccarella asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 10, 2024 Board meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Lewis and seconded by Mr. Waters; all were in favor and the motion carried.

4. Financial Reports ~

a) Approval of Vendor Claims for January 2024 ~ Mr. Chappell reported the January 2024 SRCD General Fund vendor claims totaled \$125,537.72. All amounts are regular expenses with the exception of claims 81-83 and 90 these are landowner PAI grant or Drought Response Program reimbursements. Mr. Chappell reported the January 2024 Lower Joice Island vendor claims totaled \$10,402.77. All expenses were normal LJI operational and salary expenses. Mr. Chappell reported the January 2024 Water Managers Program vendor claims totaled \$25,036.73. All expenses were normal Water Managers operational and salary expenses. Mr. Waters moved to approve the vendor claim summaries as presented, Mr. Lewis seconded the motion, all were in favor with Mr. Hansen abstaining from the vote, and the motion carried.

b) Budget Summary Review ~ 2nd Quarter FY 23-24 ~ Mr. Chappell reported on the 2nd quarter budget summary review 50% through the fiscal year, which is more of an expenditure report, since revenues are not yet posted. For Lower Joice Island department salaries and benefits are at 43% of projected expenses, and operations are at 64%. Half of the expense for the replacement outboard motor on the shared pontoon boat was received, and billing was submitted for the blue carbon project reimbursement. No expenses were posted for the Delta Stewardship Council Phragmites socioecological study. The Water Managers Department expenses are at 40% of salaries and at 51% for operating costs for the year. Fish Screen Maintenance Department has a -\$7,284 balance which a portion of that will be billed to landowners, but it includes boom truck repair cost that SRCD will have to cover. The NFWF Grant Department for the salt marsh harvest mouse is at 14% of salaries with operations at 90% for completed contracted services. The Pest-weed Control Department has been billed to the landowners for 2023 and the bills are currently being paid. The PAI Fund Department includes cost share amounts to be paid to landowners. The Delta Conservancy Grant Department has been billed through quarter #2 which was approved for payment today. Meins Landing DWR Support Department includes \$7,000 for the hourly caretaker salary and \$58,000 was paid to a contractor for requested levee repairs. The fish screen retrofit grant has been billed for \$23,000 of expenses. The Fish

Restoration Program Agreement Grant Department has been billed for expenses and will be paid in the next quarter. The SRCF General Fund Department expenses for salaries and benefits are 47% of the budgeted amount. For services and supplies are at 30% of the budgeted amount. Discussion ensued.

5. Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) Report ~ Mr. Orlando Rocha provided the DFW report.

Joice Island Pig Hunt: Joice Island special pig hunts will continue this year despite the bridge closure. Pig hunt applications close today, February 14th. After last year's success, DFW will continue to run pig hunts from the first weekend in March through the last weekend in May, affording 52 hunters the opportunity to harvest pigs. Last year only 11 pigs were harvested, so we're hoping hunters will see more success this year.

Joice Island Bridge: Work has temporarily ceased on the Joice Island bridge due to California Ridgeway's rail breeding season. Staff are conducting surveys to ensure there are no endangered rails present, and work is expected to resume after the final survey on March 19th.

Check Station: A contractor job walk was conducted yesterday to solidify plans for the check station remodel. By next waterfowl season work should be completed, and we'll have a new updated hunter check station.

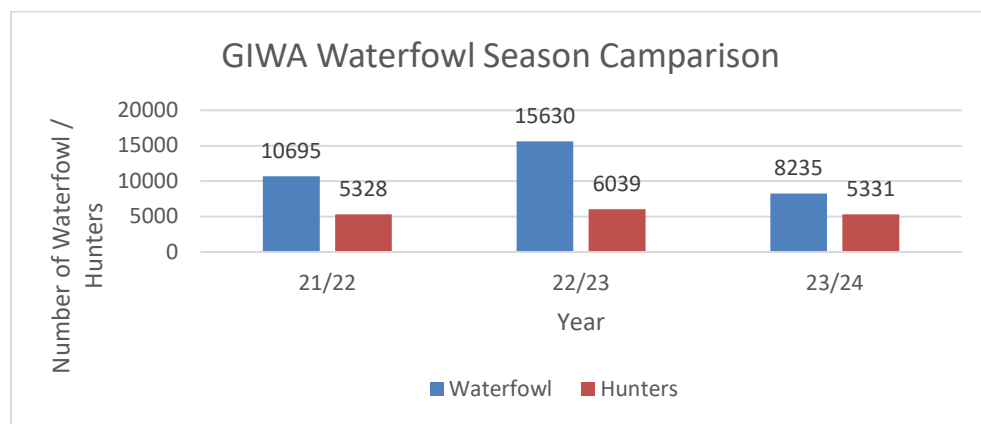
GIWA Projects: The Grizzly Island Wildlife Area fish screens are going to be replaced this year. The intake gates into Grizzly Ditch, which supplies much of the water for the Wildlife Area, will also get replaced this year.

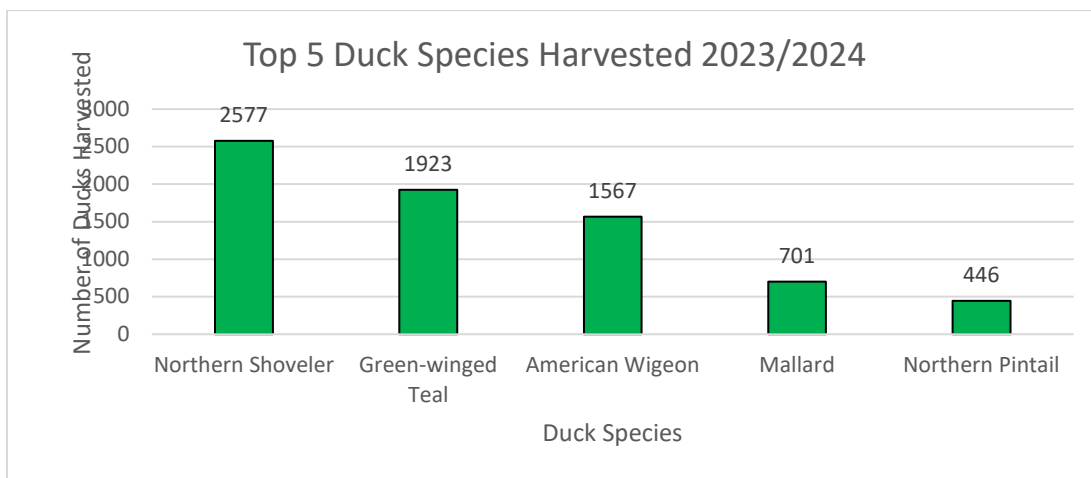
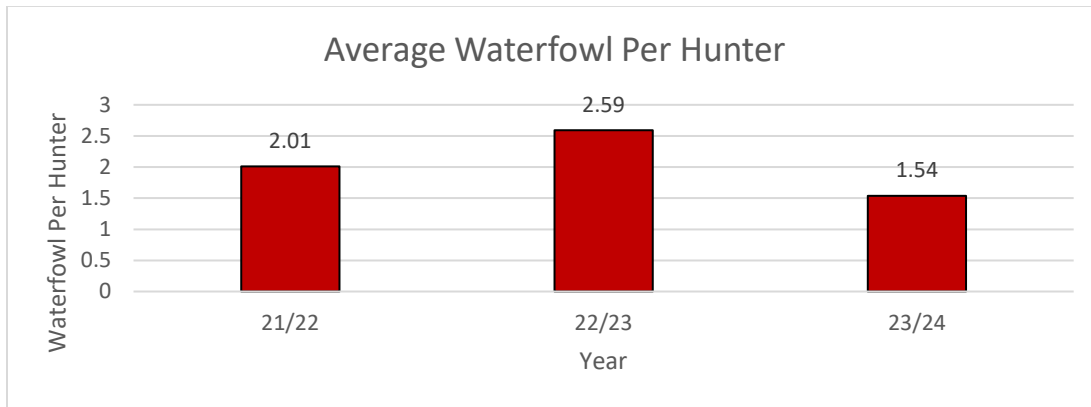
Waterfowl Season: Over the veteran's weekend, DFW had a total of 25 hunters who harvested a total of 64 ducks. The top duck species harvested was American Wigeon, closely followed by Mallard. This was a slight uptick in hunter turnout compared to last year when 22 hunters came out over the course of the weekend. Conversely, last year over the federal youth hunt 47 youth hunters came out over the course of the weekend and this year we only had 33 youth hunters who harvested a total of 21 ducks, with the top duck species harvested being Northern Shoveler. While overall attendance for these hunts has been decent, we'd have liked to see more hunters come out. The idea of combining these hunts into one weekend is currently being considered. The first helicopter survey was completed for tule elk last weekend. The results indicated that the ground counts were doing a good job of monitoring the population. Discussion ensued.

2023/2024 Federal Youth Hunt Weekend					
Date	# of youth hunters	# of ducks	Waterfowl Average	#1 Species	
3-Feb	25	18	0.72	AMWI	NSHO
4-Feb	8	3	0.38	NSHO	NOPI
2022/2023 Federal Youth Hunt Weekend					
Date	# of youth hunters	# of ducks	Waterfowl Average	#1 Species	#2 Species
4-Feb	33	68	2.06	AMWI	AGWT
5-Feb	14	22	1.57	NSHO	AGWT

2023/2024 Veteran Hunt Weekend					
Date	# of veteran hunters	# of ducks	Waterfowl Average	#1 Species	#2 Species
10-Feb	17	49	2.88	AMWI	MALL
11-Feb	8	15	1.88	BUFF	NSHO
2022/2023 Veteran Hunt Weekend					
Date	# of veteran hunters	# of ducks	Waterfowl Average	#1 Species	#2 Species
11-Feb	13	40	3.08	MALL	NOPI
12-Feb	9	38	4.22	MALL	AMWI

*Numbers do not include the Federal Youth and Veteran Hunt Weekends.





6. Department of Water Resources Report ~ Robin Cheng and Kevin Clark presented the DWR Suisun Marsh briefing packet. For the month of December, salinity standards were 12.5 mS/cm in the east and the west. The Progressive Daily Mean (PDM) salinities in the Marsh ranged from 0.8 to 4.1 mS/cm. At the end of January, net Delta outflow was 25,574 cfs. As of February 11th, salinities ranged from 0.2 to 3.0 mS/cm with Delta outflow of 79,786 cfs and a salinity standard of 8.0 mS/cm at the eastern and western stations. S-97 and S-42 remain offline, and Cygnus station is currently being used instead of Ibis. No drought response fund triggers have been exceeded. Hunter Cut and Volanti Water Quality Station repair work was completed on November 28th with final construction approval pending an expected in January. DWR will install the permanent water quality equipment once the stations are approved. Discussion ensued.

The Roaring River Distribution System water levels continue to be monitored following high tides, and staff completed urgent and unforeseen erosion repairs on January 18-19. Environmental staff submitted RGP 3 applications for 2024 maintenance activities on January 29th, and fish screens cleaning was completed. For the Morrow Island

Distribution System, DWR continues working on levee inspections, and environmental staff submitted a 2024 RGP 3 application on January 29th. Environmental staff also submitted a RGP 3 application for Goodyear Slough Outfall (GYSO) on January 29th. California Ridgway's rail surveys were ongoing. At Suisun Marsh Salinity Control Gates, gates were in the open position in response to declining salinity, and Gate 2 is out for refurbishment. A 2024 RGP 3 application was submitted for the Montezuma Day Use Area on January 29th. Staff conducted final inspections of the rebuilt Hunter Cut and Volanti water quality monitoring stations on January 23rd, and the project is near completion. Russian Thistle remains prevalent at several sites including RRDS or MIDS, and a vegetation monitoring work plan is in early stages of development including invasive species. Discussion ensued.

California reservoir capacity in January ranged from 54-69% of average in the northern Sierra and 47-91% in the southern Sierra. For the new water year, precipitation year to date was 84% of average in the northern Sierra and 71% in the southern Sierra. Discussion ensued.

7. Suisun Resource Conservation District Reports ~

- a) 2015 Suisun Marsh Preservation Agreement: Mr. Chappell reported that the SMPA agreement programs continue to be administered. Monthly calls continue with DWR Management including updates on monthly payment of SRCD contract expenses. The SMPA 5-year review has been completed, and BOR was compiling recommendations, and there was no support for immediately amending the agreement. February 8th, a SMPA 5-year review meeting is scheduled to discuss recommendations and possible future actions. Discussion ensued.
- b) 2016 PAI Program Update ~ Mr. Chappell provided an update for the PAI Program cost share program. A summary of past years program expenditures was presented to the Board. The remaining fund balance exceeds \$734,000 and is sufficient for the 2024 PAI 75:25 and 50:50 programs to be conducted without placing restrictions on 2024 proposals. The 2024 PAI Grant Program application package was released to the landowners Feb. 9th, with two deadlines for applications. A workgroup will be set up and lead by SRCD to discuss waterfowl monitoring which is required under the Suisun Marsh Plan. Discussion ensued.
- c) Suisun Marsh Plan Update ~ There have been no changes with the Suisun Marsh Plan Implementation. Regular monthly meetings for the SMP Principals continued. Mr. Chappell and Mr. Waters attended the Principal's meeting on January 11th and February 8th. The quarterly AMAT meeting on February 13th, included the lessons learned on the last restoration project. Discussion ensued.

- d) USACE Permits – RGP 3 & LOP Permit Update ~ SRCD continued to administer the RGP 3 permit. The 2024 RGP 3 annual permit letter and application were distributed to landowners on 15 January. On Feb. 8th, SRCD send out the 2024 LOP Dredging Permit applications to landowners and is currently preparing the 2025 LOP renewal applications. The renewal package should be submitted in the spring of 2024. Ms. Riley from DFW is providing support for the needed special Ridgway's Rail surveys for two properties this spring under the RGP 3 requirements.
- e) Water Manager (WM) Program Update ~ Mr. Takekawa presented the Water Manager Program update. The Water Managers helped landowners complete 2023 water year diversion reports that were due on February 1st, and they provided new RGP 3 applications for 2024 fieldwork. For January 2024, 10 applications were submitted for approval. In addition, the spring burning, spring salmon, and Ridgway's rail letters were sent out with the 2024 PAI letter and application. Mr. Taylor is drafting a new Letter of Permission application for dredging for 2025. He is helping Sunrise Club 405 with bridge repair permitting, and he met with other clubs to discuss habitat work. The last winter gate monitoring survey was completed on January 25th, and Mr. Taylor submitted the final report on January 29th. He hauled a tow pump to Davis Machine in Meridian for repairs, but he had to deal with a bad pump axle during transport. He has been working on diagnosing an overheating problem with our navigation boat with assistance of boat mechanic Andy Twiss, and we are acquiring parts to replace the exhaust system.

Mr. Edmunds helped finalize and send out the winter edition of the West Wind newsletter. On January 25th, Mr. Edmunds organized a meeting with biologist Cathy Blazy from Solano County Agriculture with Mr. Chappell and Mr. Takekawa to discuss the SRCD herbicide program and landowner participation. Mr. Edmunds worked to develop a drone habitat survey to capture the extent of inundation working with Goodyear Club, and he and Ms. Collins completed the first data collection survey on February 13th. Ms. Collins stitched together nearly 1,000 photos to develop a high-resolution image from the survey and collected RTK GPS elevation data. The mapping method may help improve understanding of the extent of flooding and fieldwork for the coming summer. In addition, Mr. Edmunds will be taking a test for aquatic certification with the Department of Pesticide Regulation, and he is obtaining costs from printing companies for our revised vegetation guide. Ms. Guzman returned to work part-time at the end of January, and she will be handling light duty office tasks over the next month during her recovery period including working with Mr. Taylor, Ms. Collins, and Ms. Brandon on our revised vegetation guide.

Ms. Collins completed 2023 infrastructure updates for the BCDC Geomars map and is working on landowner Individual Management Plan updates. She and Mr.

Takekawa met with Brett Harvey from DWR on January 12th and 26th on Suisun Fish biomass and wetland drainage analyses. She completed a data management plan for the Phragmites socioecological study, and she is drafting an annual review and stakeholder engagement plan. On February 2nd, Ms. Collins attended a meeting with Mr. Chappell and Mr. Eddings from CWA to develop a management map to better describe differences in wetland management across Suisun Marsh parcels for hydrological modeling of residence time. She continues updating the website, and she has scheduled a meeting with webmaster Charles Fox for February 15th. Finally, she worked on scheduling a Mein's Landing habitat management meeting for March.

Ms. Brandon continued work on salt marsh harvest mouse occupancy modeling and completed a map of the 76 sampling sites. She coordinated with Dr. Cody Aylward, formerly at UC Davis, to collate an eDNA dataset. She has been working on geographic information to correlate with the population information, and today we met with USGS biologist Dr. Laurie Hall to discuss options for analyses. She worked on our study of the effects of Suisun Marsh breaches and reformatted the manuscript for the journal *Estuaries and Coasts*, and we met with Mr. Jason Hagani who traveled from Michigan to present his paper on salt marsh harvest mouse use of wetland habitat structure at the Western Section of the Wildlife Society meeting in Roehnert Park on February 8th. On January 18th, Ms. Brandon and Mr. Takekawa met with Steve Andrews from RMA to continue work on the levee breach modeling review paper. On January 25th, Ms. Brandon and Mr. Takekawa completed a monthly inspection of the Tule Red Restoration Project levee, and on January 26th, she completed a levee survey at Wings Landing 211 by boat with Mr. Taylor's assistance, and she is working with a new vendor to repair her laptop.

On January 12th, Mr. Takekawa led a monthly meeting of the Phragmites Socioecological study team. On January 16th, Mr. Chappell and Mr. Takekawa attended a monthly update meeting with the DWR Fish Restoration Program Agreement staff. On January 23rd, Mr. Takekawa met with Resource Conservation Districts in the Greater Bay Area Conservation Hub to discuss upcoming opportunities. On February 1st, Mr. Takekawa met with Dr. Karen Thorne USGS to discuss products for blue carbon studies. Mr. Takekawa also met with speakers to develop the keynote presentation for the Western Section of the Wildlife Society on California estuaries and climate change, and he was one of three panelists providing the keynote plenary address for >400 attendees at the conference in Roehnert Park on February 7th.

- f) Lower Joice Island Update ~ Mr. Takekawa provided the Lower Joice Island update. Mr. Mouton continued maintaining the facilities and habitat on the island. He obtained a load of propane on February 5th and serviced the septic system. He continued to adjust pond water levels and circulation for storm events. Winds

damaged his entry doorway, so he repaired the door weatherstripping. He repaired a float in a clubhouse bathroom, changed the oil in the generator, and installed a new battery on his caretaker boat.

Hunting continued from January 10th through the veteran's hunt on February 11th. The total harvest in the last month of the season was 124 birds taken during 39 hunter days or 3.2 birds/hunter which is the same success as in the previous month. The species composition included 54 teal comprising 44% of the bag, 33 spoonbills comprising 27%, 15 wigeon, 11 pintail, and 9 mallards. This result compared with 2.3 birds/hunter day the month before and 3.9 birds/hunter day the year before when more spoonbills (83 or 57.6%) were taken compared with teal (44 or 30.6%). We will enter all of the harvest information for the year to provide a full summary for the Lower Joice Island Gun Club at the next board meeting.

- g) Summary of Past & Future Meetings, Tours, and Presentations ~ Mr. Chappell provided an update. On January 11th, Mr. Chappell attended an annual site visit to the Montezuma Wetlands project. He attended the meeting of the Solano Bayshore Resiliency Roundtable. Tomorrow, he is meeting on the Tule-Lang Ranch near the landfill recently obtained by the Solano County Water Agency. Discussion ensued.

8. Suisun Resource Conservation District Committee Reports ~

- a) Agency Committee ~ No report.
- b) Legal Committee ~ No report.
- c) Personnel Committee ~ No report.
- d) Finance Committee ~ No report (Mr. Vacarella is acting).
- e) Associate Director's Committee ~ Mr. Riedel asked questions about control of Phragmites on the Goodyear Unit. Mr. Rocha indicated that although much of the area is on the tidal side, work will be done this summer to improve drainage on the managed wetland side. Discussion ensued.

9. **Meeting Adjournment** ~ A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Waters and seconded by Mr. Hansen, all were in favor and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 3:13 PM.