

Draft

MARIN COUNTY FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION MINUTES

January 9, 2024

Novato Farm Advisors' Office

1682 Novato Boulevard, Suite 150B, Novato

Phone 415-473-4204 FAX 415-473-4209

Members Present: Ed Schulze, Laurette Rogers, Susan Ristow, Brooke Halsey, Al Nichelini, Brad Stompe, David Lewis, UCCE (exofficio)

Excused/Absent: Craig Anderson

Non-excused/Absent:

Guests present: Representatives from North Bay Bear Collaborative (NBBC)--Peter Barto, Sharon Barnett and Meghan Walla-Murphy. Also present were John Ristow, Marilyn Schulze, Caroline Whitesell (UC Coop Extension), Sam Dolcini, Supervisor Dennis Rodoni.

1. Call to Order Meeting called to order at 5:11 pm.
2. Adopt Agenda. Agenda accepted.
3. Approve Minutes – November 14th minutes approved.
4. Correspondence and Announcements: None
5. Public Expression on non-agenda items but subject to our advisement: None
6. Presentations:

Bears in Marin County – NBBC Representatives

Marin/Sonoma/Napa counties (historically Marin was grizzly bear country). 100 year anniversary of last grizzly bear here. Now black bears are coming down and moving in from the north. In 2016, there were rare sightings of black bears in Sonoma county – residential or moving through. There is a reproducing population in the Mayacamas Mountains.

This precipitated NBBC to begin talking about infrastructure to help bears. Fires came through--set back—but still bear sightings. In 2019, NBBC began to meet regularly – working with parks, Indigenous folks, environmental organizations and vineyards. NBBC has many stakeholders – it's a collaborative and not a non-profit. It has an educational branch to get the word out.

The bear population is increasing , with 45,000 black bears in CA. NBBC has tribal projects as well, working with tribal youth, gathering stories, etc. They are involved with heavy research projects to gather and study DNA. They have eight samples from Marin County, from scat and hair in order to come up with population estimates and dispersal info. They are also studying bear movements. CDFW has funding for GPS collars but the program is held up right now. Pepperwood may be a site

for this program. Also are doing a mapping project. Bears are moving north-south and east-west. How are they crossing 101?

Petaluma Gap – do bears cross that area? Not sure. They are seen in the San Antonio area. Black bears like to live in forests. They like to go up in trees. Eighty-five percent of their diet is vegetation, along with some rodents, other animals' kills. Cubs are vulnerable to predators – but mainly poachers and cars kill them.

Ed relayed that at Kent Dam in 1950, bear tracks were found around a trashed tractor as the bear ate the lunch left there.

The fact that there are cubs in Marin means we probably have a permanent population here now. When DNA program begins, Dr Ben Sacks at UC Davis will analyze seeds and other dietary things in bear scat. \$100-\$150 per sample to analyze.

Females wander less than males. Not sure about home range sizes here. Varies a lot, based on food availability. Males go tens and tens of miles in a year. Sister bears stay closer together. Bears are super seasonal – going to where the food is ready.

Electric fences and guardian dogs are used to keep bears out of hives, grapes, etc. Meghan says we should haze the bears – they need to know boundaries. Shouting, banging pots and pans – help them move off your property (so they don't end up getting killed.)

Bear hunting allowed in Sonoma and Napa from CDFW. Depredation permits are on a needs basis. Have to show 3 nuisance occasions. How do we make it easy for people to live with wildlife?

We are hopeful to see native species come back. Trash is a big problem in co-existing with bears. It's important to not put trash cans out the night before and use bear-proof dumpsters.

Why relocating bears doesn't work: they usually die (hit by cars or starve) or travel hundreds of miles to get back. They are dependent on THEIR place where they were reared. Bears prefer wild food anyway.

Most Marin bears are young dispersing males. Important to haze them out of our towns – they can live well in the open spaces. At some point, number of bears will equalize – but right now we're at the beginning of a bear wave.

Bears are an "umbrella species" – if they can do well in an area then many other species can too.

Office of Emergency Services – some call 911 if they see a bear. It would be great to have an info sheet telling folks where to call if they see a bear. How to work with Law Enforcement – still to come. Give dispatchers where to call if a bear is sighted in a town.

Bears are seasonal, quieter now. More active end of April through July as young males are displaced.

BearSmart.com and BearWise.org are great sites to know what to do to help bears.

List of current sightings in Marin with date and locations was distributed by Peter.

Large tracts of land in Marin like the Lucas property, MMWD—how to get them involved? We can reach out and all work together.

Reintroduction of species can be problematic to West Marin ranchers. Coyotes in 1980 – decimation of ewes. Now mountain lions predated cattle as well.

Bears are not good hunters, but good scavengers. Could get chickens (plastic netting wouldn't stop them unless electrified.)

For most of human history, people lived with bears in the Northern Hemisphere. We can do it too.

In Tahoe, using “Bear Buffers”—berry hedge, apple hedge, etc. that stall out bears with great food. Stops the bears from coming into the town.

Find the angle – a plus side to having bears around. Bears are good for soil health – aerating and fertilizing.

NBBC to go through One Tam and identify costs that could be proposed for MCFWAC funding for scat analysis, etc.

7. Old Business:

- Grant Application Due Date is March 1, 2024.

8. New Business:

- Future presentations
- Field Trip to review grant projects
- Review receipt compliance from previous grants

9. Meeting adjourned: 6:12 pm

Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 13th 2024, 5pm—In person

NOTE: To assure a quorum, any committee member who cannot attend, please call Ed Schulze at 415- 897-8969 within 24 hours of the meeting.