



## FRIENDS OF BRAZORIA WILDLIFE REFUGES

### Minutes of the Board of Directors

Friday, May 14, 2021    Venue: Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

**Board Members in Attendance:** Oron Atkins, Ed Barrios, Marty Cornell, Mickey Dufilho, Phil Huxford, Ruby Lewis, Lisa Myers, Kim Richardson, Dick Schaffhausen, Mary Schwartz, Regina Tippet

**Absent Member of the Board:** Herb Myers (excused)

**Refuge Staff in Attendance:** Jennifer Sanchez

**Guest in Attendance:** Mike Lange

The meeting was called to order at 1:02 pm by President Lisa Myers

The **Agenda** was accepted.

**Minutes** for the March 12, 2021 Meeting of the Board of Directors, and the April 30, 2021 Special Meeting of the Board were unanimously approved after a motion by Mickey and a second by Phil.

**Discovery and Land Acquisition:** Mike Lange reported that:

- The current active land-acquisition projects would add ~15,000 acres in the approved Austin Woods acquisition zone, including 3,000 acres of the Hawkins tract and 4,700 acres in Matagorda County.
- The owner of the 5,800-acre Kbar Ranch property, which adjoins the Big Pond Unit, desires to conserve this land. It is about 25% forest with the rest cleared land. The NRCS supports this project as it involves restoration. The Department of Agriculture will fund \$13 million for the conservation easement.
- The search is still on for the 50% match (\$633,500) to the Knobloch Foundation grant toward purchasing the Peach Creek Forest (McNeil Tract). Mike is pursuing four sources for this match including the Meadows Foundation and the Hershey Foundation.
- The Damuth Foundation requested a full proposal for a \$35,000 grant, indicating it is highly likely that the grant will be awarded.
- The Land and Water Conservation Fund will grant \$700,000 to pay for the 250-acre Speers tract, a heavily wooded property with a deep swamp on Oyster Creek.
- NACA will grant \$2 million for bottom lands tracts in the Austin Woods acquisition zone. These projects scored 14<sup>th</sup> out of 29 projects submitted. Three bottom land tracts are targeted.

The Houston Endowment grants restrict spending to projects in Brazoria and Fort Bend Counties. Discovery work on properties in these counties with extension into Wharton and Matagorda Counties could be paid for with Houston Endowment funds, however work on properties with no connection to Brazoria or Fort Bend Counties would fall outside these grants.

Other funding sources will be needed for pre-purchase discovery work once our remaining Houston Endowment grants are depleted. Mike will approach Susan Love of the Hershey Foundation for their willingness to provide this support.

Jennifer has agreed to review invoices for Mike's discovery work prior to payment by Regina.

#### **Grants and Projects:**

- Having completed the TPWD grant for the Bobcat Woods Loop Trail, we are now in the position to apply for a new Recreational Trails Grant. Grant proposals for the next round would be due 1Feb22, with awards being made in the fall of 2022. Jennifer would like us to focus on the upgrading and possible extension of the **San Bernard Oak Trail**, building sections of elevated boardwalk, gravel/granite fines, and concrete where

appropriate. We would apply for the \$200,000 maximum for these grants, which would obligate FOBWR for a \$50,000 match (20%) of cash and/or in-kind funding. **Oron and Curtis are charged to determine what could be done on this trail for \$250k.** Marty would write the grant application and interface with TPWD.

- TDOT has agreed to construct two wildlife crossing bridges along adjoining refuge property between Brazoria and West Columbia as part of the pending widening of Hwy 36. The US Fish and Wildlife Service would lose a 50-foot strip on the east side of the right of way.
- A hunting and fishing plan for BNWR was published in the Federal Register; comments will be closed on July 1<sup>st</sup>. The process is on track for a September 1<sup>st</sup> opening of dove season, and then the opening of Cannan Bend to the public.
- The Cannan Bend restroom is ready for installation next week and a kiosk is constructed. A solar-powered gate will be installed.
- **The \$96,000 cost for bringing electricity to the Cannan Bend Unit is prohibitive. Ed noted that CenterPoint has a community grant program, he will thus pursue the concept for a grant that would pay for establishing this electrical service. Lisa will connect with the CenterPoint representative on the Brazosport Chamber of Commerce.**
- The Union Sportsman's Alliance has agreed to construct the Hudson Woods concrete trail section linking the parking lot to the south observation platform; the work will probably be done in June over weekends. FOBWR funding may be needed to pay for materials, although Jennifer is looking at other sources for funding.
- The Complex budget for non-fire activities is constrained, with only 14% available after salary and benefit expenses. Although a biologist position has been approved to replace Thomas Adams, budget constraints as well as the bureaucratic job posting process mean it will likely take over a year to staff this position.
- The high-water crossings on Ivy Road in the SBNWR are scheduled to be replaced with 24-inch diameter culverts.
- The crew of Oron, George Valdez, and Martin Hagne have constructed the bridge on the south end of the Cedar Lake Plantation Loop Trail. **Jennifer gave drafts of interpretative panels to Lisa for her editorial review.** The project has ~\$24,400 remaining to spend on the completion of the trail.
- The Complex is working on a 1.4-mile addition to the San Bernard breakwater, which will extend 4.5 miles from Tipps Bait Camp to Cedar Lake.
- The pump for the Brian Adams memorial pond will be hardwired to the Discovery Center.
- **Oron will check with Roland and Curtis on the need for a new UTV for sea turtle patrols.**
- Lisa and David Heinicke are developing large-format interpretative signs for the Cannan Bend trail. The current vendor for signs on the Big Slough Trail is not responsive, so Tom Schneider has been asked to explore other sign fabricators.
- **It was noted that several signs on the Cross Trail auto loop are deteriorated and need replacing. Mary will send photos of these signs to Tom.**
- It was also noted that trail signs are in need of frequent cleaning. An "Adopt-a-Trail" program was suggested as a task to bring before the general membership. No action plan resulted.
- **It was further noted that poop stations are needed at the entrance to trails, especially at the Dow Woods Unit. Lisa will research the cost of poop stations.**

### **Monthly Refuge Walk:**

The May 28<sup>th</sup> trail walk will actually be an ~1.5-mile kayak cruise on the San Bernard River to the Bates Allen County Park in Fort Bend County. The Complex will supply nine kayaks, including one tandem kayak.

The June 25<sup>th</sup> walk will feature the Burr property cypress pond next to the McNeil tract (Peach Creek Forest). This land is located between Boling and Wharton.

There will be no Refuge Walk in August.

**Financial update:** Treasurer Regina Tippet reviewed the April 2021 Financial Statement (attached at the end of these minutes), noting that the report reflects the transfer of \$56k from the Brazoria McGovern fund to the San Bernard

McGovern fund. Regina also mentioned that \$790 is in the Barbara Burkhardt memorial fund; requiring a decision on the use of this money.

**Membership:** Mickey noted that there are several members of long standing that have not paid their annual dues. They are being individually contacted.

**Outreach:** Ruby reviewed three outreach events that have recently occurred:

- Nature Day at Sea Center Texas had 949 attendees. Our refuge trail trifold stock was depleted (1,000 more are on order from BayStar)
- The April 24<sup>th</sup> migratory bird day at Surfside attracted perhaps 50 visitors to our booth. Phil Huxford's bird wings banner was a hit not only with kids, but also with adults. FOBWR will pursue buying another of the banner, whose artwork/design came from a FWS source. Jennifer will provide this source and Phil will arrange for a new banner to be made.
- The April 24<sup>th</sup> Earth Day celebration in Clute featured our reptiles, socially distanced. Attendance was modest.

Upcoming outreach events include a July 3<sup>rd</sup> Summerfest program in Pearland and an August "sales tax holiday" day at the Brazos Mall. The date is to be determined.

A Brazoria County migratory bird bash is scheduled for October 9<sup>th</sup>. Phil has arranged for the Birds-of Prey program to be given at Angleton's Northside Elementary School, which has received a grant from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology for the cost of this program. This event will conflict with a Refuge Saturday program and Grand Opening of the Cannon Bend Unit on the same day (see below). Our resources would need to be split.

**Birds of Prey:** Phil reported that, in this Covid-restricted season, 26 programs were given at 14 elementary schools and at two community events with a total of 5,198 attendees. Financial support was not pursued, but Phillips 66 gave their customary \$10k and \$2k came from other sources.

**Photo Contest:** Kim noted that 66 photos were submitted to this year's photo contest, and that the best in class along with the winners from last year will be displayed by the Art League at the Center for the Arts and Sciences starting May 14<sup>th</sup> (this evening) and run through June 6<sup>th</sup>. The photos will also be posted on our Migration Celebration Facebook page. BayStar Printing printed and mounted the photos for a very reasonable \$90.

**Refuge Saturdays:** The USFWS has provided no guidance yet on the relaxation of Covid19 restrictions, but in expectation that this will happen with the decline of infections, we will plan for Refuge Saturday open houses in the fall, to wit:

- September 11<sup>th</sup>, Hudson Woods
- October 9<sup>th</sup>, the grand opening of Cannan Bend
- November 13<sup>th</sup>, Bobcat Woods

December will feature the resumption of the Christmas week Discovery Center open house. The Dow Woods trail Refuge Saturday would occur next year.

**MC22:** The 2022 Migration Celebration will be held on April 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, with the Kickoff Fundraiser to two weeks preceding, on Friday, April 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Takeout Lunch Fundraiser:** Marty presented the results from our April 3<sup>rd</sup> Takeout Fundraiser and compared this event to the MC19 Kickoff dinner. He noted that the sales of tickets by committee members was commendable, but concern over food supply caused a throttling back of selling tickets and turning away of several drive-up potential customers. Of the 305 tickets disbursed, there were 68 unredeemed tickets (~22%). Gross revenue for the Takeout21 fundraiser (at \$20 a ticket) was comparable to that of MC19 (at \$30 per ticket). Net profit for the takeout was higher mainly because the rental of the McLean Park pavilion was much lower than the \$1,500 rental and associated set up fees of RiverPlace. Costs of other activities of the traditional kickoff event (photo contest, raffle, speaker fees, police officers, etc.) are not included to enable an equitable comparison:

	Takeout 21	MC19
Volunteers	32	49
Tickets Sold	281	198
Tickets Mailed to Sponsors	24	10
Ticket Price	\$20	\$30
Ticket Income	\$5,620	\$5,858
Small Donation Income	\$506	\$720
Total Income	\$6,126	\$6,578
Expense	\$1,646	\$3,520
(Venue Rental & Setup Cost)	\$275	\$1,745
<b>Profit</b>	<b>\$4,480</b>	<b>\$3,058</b>
Sponsor Donations	\$7,000	\$11,1000

**Action Register:** Items completed since the March board meeting are:

- The FOBWR logo with a rosette spoonbill has been accepted
- The board agreed on a green embossed with our new logo.
- Refuge Saturday planning is being resumed.
- Background of David Plunkett served to acknowledge him at the volunteer appreciation luncheon at the Discovery Center on April 20<sup>th</sup> where David was presented a painting by Cherie McBride.
- The Takeout Fundraiser was held on April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The updated status of pending items is shown below. New action items are also highlighted in the above text

The next board meeting will be on July 9, 2021 at GCBO.

Lisa adjourned the meeting at 3: 31PM.

Submitted by Marty Cornell, Secretary

Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuge Board Action Register 14May21				
Action Item	Who? Date Started?	Due Date?	Status	Comments
Develop a New Outdoor Environmental Education Display for our canopy	David/Lisa/ Marty	Target <b>July 2021</b> for concept proposal	No action has yet occurred	Committee to define aesthetics and variations in content/message modules. Material options for signs and displays to be defined as basis for cost estimates. Check spring-mounted signs and GCBO-pipe frame type. <b>Multiple events on the 7Mar20 illustrate the need for target-specific displays.</b>
Upgrade the FOBWR website	Phil (took over from Lisa)	Date not specified	Ongoing	David Stark of Overnite Software has offered his services pro bono, using the Weebly format to create a duplicate prototype. He will be using more photos to provide visual candy. Security for online sales will be a feature; the cost of the security feature TBD. Board approval required for any upgrades
Develop text on FOBWR history for website	Ed Barrios	Sometime in 2021	Fixin to	Ed has reviewed documents back to 1994 (the start of FOBWR), and scanned newsletters through 2003. He will put these archives on our web site.

Develop a Succession Plan	Lisa, Mickey	Sometime in 2021	Researched succession planning	Kim is looking into protocol (bylaws, P&P), board consensus is needed to define skill needs.
Define role and responsibility of School Outreach Chair	Phil and Marty	On/Before 31Dec21	Action pending	Marty is to draft a statement for Phil to review.
Explore Outreach Trunks	Ed, Ruby, & Tom	On/Before 31Dec21	Action pending	Outreach trunks should be considered; one being about butterflies. Tom to meet with BISD science administrator to discuss the concept.
Arrange a thankyou meeting with 1st grader Alex Grogard	Lisa	As soon as convenient	Action pending	<b>path to recognition is needed.</b>
Download financial records to our archives	Dick	not specified	Action pending	Dick needs to provide path and permissions
Download Migration Records to our archives	Marty	not specified	Action pending	Awaiting access protocol
Download ATFN Records to our archives	Marty	not specified	Action pending	Awaiting access protocol
Download Governance items into our Archives	Marty	May 2020 board meeting	As soon as convenient	<b>Awaiting access protocol</b>
Board to develop annual goals	Lisa	As soon as convenient	Actively Working	Lisa will set up a meeting. [Marty note: Goals are not time-bound, whereas Objectives are; they should be SMART]
Provide cost estimate for demolishing the Hudson Woods boardwalk and replacing with concrete	Jennifer	May, 2021 board meeting	TBD	Jennifer is looking into funding from several sources, and may not need to tap into FOBWR McGovern reserves
Refresh the Discovery Center Display	Lisa, Phil, Tom, Herb	not specified	Ongoing	"Working on costs from taxidermist and his availability" 12Mar21 same status no change
TDECU and BCoC Relationships	Lisa	not specified	Working	Lisa wants to also work with the Brazosport Chamber of Commerce
Membership of FOBWR, including a plan to attract new members	Lisa and Mickey	not specified		Lisa and Mickey will develop a recruitment plan
More promotion of refuges	Lisa	not specified	not stated	Need to discuss and work out plan.
Signage at BNWR trails	Jennifer	not specified		18 signposts have been installed on the Big Slough trail; concept for signs is done, need attribution of photos before production

Send letter to The Facts on the naming of the Hickner Trail on Cannan Bend	Lisa and Phil, 13Mar20	O/B 30Mar20	in progress	Sanctioned by the Hickner Family; this celebration will occur during the opening of Cannan Bend, target for the fall of 2021
Spec. a wireless communication system for monthly walks	Ed	As soon as convenient		Ed looking at practicality of implementation
Monthly work parties to groom trails	Oron			Phil to lead maintenance work party of the Discovery Center area for Tom's spring clean-up day
Determine scope of work on the San Bernard Oak Trail that can be done for \$250K	Oron and Curtis	Not Specified		TPWD Recreational Trails grant maximum is \$200K, requiring a 20% match = \$50K
Determine if we can get a grant from Center Point Energy to cover cost of delivering electricity to Cannan Bend	Ed	Not Specified		Ed noted that the Center Point website mentions grants.
Contact Center Point Energy on the Brazosport Chamber of Commerce on grant possibilities	Lisa	Not Specified		
Critique draft for signs for the Cedar Lake Plantation Trail	Lisa	Not Specified		Drafts supplied by Jennifer
Determine need for a new UTC for sea turtle patrols	Oron, Roland, Curtis	Not Specified		Typical 3-year life of UTV in beach service suggests a replacement vehicle is needed.
Send photos of deteriorated signs on Cross Trail to Tom	Mary	Not Specified		
Determine the cost of poop stations	Lisa	Not Specified		Stations are especially needed at Dow Woods.
Supply source for birdwing banner	Jennifer	Not Specified		
Arrange for purchase of birdwing banner	Phil	Not Specified		This banner is very popular at outreach events.

<u>April 2021 Final</u>	<b>FOBWR FINANCIAL STATEMENT</b>				
TDECU				\$99,652.72	
Merrill Lynch Cash				\$295,136.22	
Merrill Lynch Certificates of Deposit				\$149,912.71	*G
<b><u>ACCOUNT BALANCE</u></b>				<b>\$544,701.65</b>	
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<b>FUNDED GRANTS and ALLOCATED FUNDS</b>	<b>Grantor</b>	<b>Total Awarded</b>	<b>Amount Spent</b>	<b>Amt Available</b>	
20131230 McGovern Brazoria NWR non committed	Katherine McGovern	214,279.33	110,378.27	103,901.06	
20131220 McGovern San Bernard NWR	Katherine McGovern	127,000.00	69,271.29	57,728.71	
20130919 Poole Track Land Acquisition	Trull Foundation	10,000.00	-	10,000.00	
20181231 Houston Endowment Land Acquisition 4	Houston Endowment	325,000.00	266,672.19	58,327.81	*E
20201228 Houston Endowment Land Acquisition 5	Houston Endowment	150,000.00	-	150,000.00	
20170811 Cedar Lake Plantation Trail	ATFN 17 FOBWR	62,155.96	37,787.10	24,368.86	
20160728 Cedar Lake Cut Lands See NOTES \$30,000.00 Reimbursement	USFWS	30,000.00	30,000.00	-	*A
Account Receivable \$800.00					
20161205 Bobcat Woods Matching \$ Rec 152,000.00	FOBWR	246,694.90	246,146.44	548.46	
plus ATFN 2015 funds \$53,641.0					
plus Grant Receivable of 8,000.00					
Plus McGovern Funds of 17,000.00					
Plus refunds deposit acct 16053.90					
<b>TOTAL ALLOCATED FUNDS</b>		<b>\$1,165,130.19</b>	<b>\$760,255.29</b>	<b>\$404,874.90</b>	
<b>FOBWR PROJECTS</b>		<b>Amt Allocated</b>	<b>Amount Spent</b>	<b>Amt Available</b>	
46400 Birds of Prey	FOBWR	32,917.27	10,521.37	22,395.90	*C
Migration Celebration	FOBWR	38,717.00	10,976.53	27,740.47	*D
20170101 BNWR Donation Box	Donations	1,796.16	716.86	1,079.30	
20201231 General Donations, Membership Fees, Etc.	Donations	1,958.97	-	1,958.97	*H
20210101 Barb Burkhardt	Memorial	790.00	-	790.00	
20140403 Law Enforcement Restitution	Federal Court Fines	7,916.11	6,080.76	1,835.35	
20190601 ATFN 2019 Cannan Bend	FOBWR	211,406.29	138,546.95	72,859.34	*B
<b>TOTAL FOBWR PROJECTS</b>		<b>\$295,501.80</b>	<b>\$166,842.47</b>	<b>\$128,659.33</b>	
<b>OPERATIONS</b>		<b>\$27,242.81</b>	<b>\$12,359.18</b>	<b>\$14,883.63</b>	*E, F

<b>FUNDS IN TRANSIT</b>					<b>-\$3,716.21</b>	<b>*I</b>
<b>TDECU SAVINGS</b>					<b>\$15.70</b>	
<b>TOTAL Funds in Bank Accounts</b>					<b>\$544,717.35</b>	

**COMPLETED PROJECTS OR GRANTS**

**NOTES**

20161205 Bobcat Woods Trail is a receivable. Grant 160,000.00 plus \$53,641.00 ATFN fundraiser

\*A 20160728 Cedar Lake Cut Lands is a receivable. We will receive funds as invoices are turned in.

\*C 46400 Birds of Prey 2021 beginning funds balance  
\$21,396.00

\*D Migration celebration 2021 beginning balance  
\$19,051.00

\*F 12/31/20 A blank check was stolen from a check book and made out for \$4,437.94 and cashed by TDECU  
A fraud report has been filed with TDECU and the Lake Jackson police dept. 1/4/20. Reimbursed January 2021 full amount

\*H Added new line to fully capture misc revenue & expenses; beginning balance consists of Dec 31, 2020 Excess Funds Available for Projects (-1,317.92),

which was temporarily decreased due to stolen check on TDECU account (\$4,437.94)

\*I Accounts Receivable & bank activity not yet posted

**MOTIONS**

\*B Mar 2020 Combined Hickner Memorial Fund \$51,540.00 & ATFN net \$53,866.29; Mar 2021 reclassified \$56,000 from McGovern Brazoria to Cannan Bend

\*E 11/13/20 Per Board guidelines 7% was allocated to Admin expenses from Houston Endowment 4

\*G Merrill Lynch account now includes three Certificates of Deposit for \$50,000 each. Maturity dates are Feb 03, 2022, Feb 03, 2023, Feb 20, 2024

Balance is net of unrealized market gains/losses and includes estimated accrued interest.