Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership

Annual Meeting Minutes (October 27, 2014),

Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, Athens, TX

# Minutes are intended to complement reports in the 2014 Briefing Book

* Meeting called to order by RFHP Coordinator, Jeff Boxrucker at 8:00 am CDT.
* Call for Proxies:
  + Doug Nygren for Gary Martel
  + Mike Armstrong for Mark Oliver
  + Mark Porath for Don Gablehouse

Ten Board members present (including proxies); quorum established

* Welcome and Introductions of attendees:
* Dave Terre, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
* Reed Green, US Geological Survey
* Jeff Lucero, US Bureau of Reclamation
* John Moore, US Bureau of Land Management
* Gene Gilliland, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
* Joe Margraf, US Geological Survey
* Mike McGhee, Iowa Department of Natural Resources
* Jeff Boxrucker, RFHP Coordinator
* Mark Porath, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
* Mike Armstrong, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission & SEAFWA
* Rick Ott, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
* Craig Bonds, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
* Doug Nygren, Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks and Tourism, MWFWA
* Pat Sollberger, Nevada Department of Wildlife
* Ben Page, PA Fish and Boat Commission
* Craig Walker, Utah Division of Wildlife
* Cecilia Lewis, USFWS (via phone)
* Brian McRae, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (via phone)
* Mark Webb, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (via phone)
* Motion to amend agenda to move presentation by representative of Wichita Falls, Texas to first on the agenda. Motion by Porath, Second by Margraf. Motion passed.
* Presentation on Lake Wichita total renovation project by Steve Garner. $40-50M estimate to excavate what is a currently a mostly dry basin, adding additional amenities to improve boating, fishing and other recreational activities as well as stimulate economic development around the lake.

**Old Business:**

* Meeting minutes from 2013 Annual Meeting minutes (Erie, PA) were provided to all members prior to the meeting.
* Motion to accept minutes by Lucero. Second by Green. Motion passed.
* Financial Report given by Boxrucker, details in Briefing Book. Discussion on funds remaining for outreach ($26K from MSCG available through 6/2015), for BMP compilation ($77K for MSU). Discussion on fundraising efforts – Donations, memberships, web button, Bass Pro initiative, etc. Need to get off Federal budget and find corporate and foundation sponsors, refocusing on non-endemics with new message. Need projects-in-hand to take to potential donors that they can “adopt” and sponsor.
  + Motion to accept the current financial report by Walker. Second by Moore. Motion passed.

# FOR Updates:

* Boxrucker provided update on FOR progress. 42 chapters & organizations, with goal of 50 by June of 2015. Nine new chapters, eight new organizations. Texas leading the way thanks to emphasis from administration and dedication from field staff. New B.A.S.S. Nation partners in ID, AZ, IL, NC, WV, VA + San Antonio Fly Fishers, Texas Master Naturalist chapters.
* Partner Workshop program discussed by Dave Terre. Eleven presentations, 7 from FOR funded projects. Kudos to Craig Bonds, TPWD for organizing and coordinating podcasts which will be edited and made available on the FOR website. Tim Cook, Texas B.A.S.S. Nation Conservation Director set up live Internet streaming. Several FOR sponsor attending workshop. 44 attendees including speakers and agency personnel. FOR paid lodging and provided meals for partners. Potential model for future FOR meetings.
* Discussion regarding future funding of FOR Foundation to provide grants. Armstrong asked how other Partnerships are funded – Boxrucker said coastal partnerships rely on NOAA, others use FWS funds, some partner with NRCS and federal Great Lakes grant programs. Discussed possibilities of a fund-raising position such as WNTI model who has a coordinator/fundraiser. Possible collaboration with other NFHP partnerships such as Ohio River Basin. NFHP is setting up a 501(c)(3) foundation for fundraising for all the partnerships. Armstrong asked if it was likely that NFHP foundation would be a “banker” as FOR is with 100% pass-through.

**Committee Reports:**

* Science & Date committee report by Reed Green on impairments and classifications scheme, linking databases and applying metric equations. RFHP will receive $75,000 from a NFHP MSCG (2015) to update the database. Will be published as a USGS Data Series
* Multi-state Conservation Grant from AFWA – Boxrucker discussed working with NFHP to be part of their 2016 proposal or go separately. Submitting proposal for research project to evaluate if addition of structure can increase fish production or merely attracting existing fish. Still working with university researchers to fine-tune the proposal on the best ways to measure. Boxrucker will know more following NFHP Board meeting in November.
* Strategic Plan (in briefing book) needs to be updated every 5 years. RFHP plan is due for renewal with NFHP in 2015. MOU with individual states has no expiration or renewal clause.
  + Subcommittee to help develop new Goals and Objectives was organized: Terre, Green, Boxrucker, Lucero.
* Coordinator Work Plan discussed by Boxrucker. Expectations in 2015 plan more realistic than those in 2014 plan. Infrastructure of the partnership is in place – need now is funding and outreach. Suggesting a Director of Strategic Partnerships position be created to accomplish fundraising goals.
* Outreach Efforts: Lucero questioned effectiveness of website and suggested need for reworking/updating. Need to broaden use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) Walker suggested hiring a professional to oversee marketing and outreach. Nygren suggested social media posting need to be relevant to partners (and potential partners), emphasizing habitat work on ponds and private waters too.
* 2015 Budget: Boxrucker explained 2015 budget proposal (in Briefing Book). Coordinator salary secure through 2015 on existing funds. $75K base funding from FWS expected + additional money based on criteria points. RFHP received $135K in 2014. Allocation packet is due to FWS on January 5. Coordinator will prepare packet.
* Future of RFHP Coordinator Position: Boxrucker expressed desire to retire next year. His recommendation was to retain current position at 1/2 time and hire someone as Director of Strategic Partnerships (to do the fundraising) to be paid from Coordinator salary. Armstrong suggested a cap on hours and said we need to review the agreement with AGFC regarding sub-contracting and benefits issues.
  + Margraf motioned to follow Boxrucker’s recommendation with coordinator position as “Operations Manager” at current 1/2 time salary and transition Gilliland into “Development Director” (fundraising position) during 2015 at 20% time, $25/hr. plus travel expenses…and…form a workgroup to search for a person with marketing and managerial skills that could do both jobs. Second by Porath. Motion passed.
  + Hiring Gilliland will require him to resign from Board but can be appointed proxy by replacement (possibly B.A.S.S. CEO Bruce Akin)

**2015 Annual Meeting**

* Ogden, Utah (per Walker)

**Project Selection** (Proposals in Briefing Book)

* Boxrucker said submissions were down significantly in 2015 (7) compared to 2013 (15) and 2014 (21), probably due to frustration on how slow grantees received funds from FWS and difficulties in getting compliance clearances. This was 5th year for grants with 24 projects funded to date. Discussion on how to get more submissions, get Board to push, fix FWS issues, get states to encourage submissions from partners.
* Iowa project will be withdrawn if compliance documents are not complete by January 1, 2015. McGee will check on progress.
* Boxrucker recommended funding Proposals ranked 1 - 4 for $60K
* McGhee offered to provide partial funding for Iowa project, reducing the amount required from RFHP.
  + Motion by Nygren to fund projects ranked 1 - 6 at $95K, leaving $40K for operations. Second by Moore. Motion passed.
* Small Grant Projects from VA ($1000), TX ($1000) and IL ($500). Funded with moneys collected as memberships and donations.
* Motion by McGhee to fund all three proposals. Second by Margraf. Motion passed.
* Motion to Adjourn by Margraf.

**Friends of Reservoirs Board of Directors Meeting**

* Meeting called to order by President Dave Terre at 3:00 pm CDT.
* Committee formed to develop targets and redefine goals and objectives of FOR (Terre, Boxrucker, Walker, Gilliland, Lucero). Target date of February conference call.
* Marketing & Fundraising Ideas:
  + Develop “green” message that will resonate with non-endemic sponsors rather than sportfishing message used for tackle industry.
  + Target businesses wanting green image such as oil/gas/energy
  + Supply a DVD with folder showing videos, photos, sales pitch
  + Look at small urban reservoirs for close-to-home experience – resonates with local businesses
  + Investigate crowd-funding sources such as gofundme.com
* Outreach & Membership Ideas:
  + Website needs revamping, simplification, updating. Lucero suggested dedicating funds to hire web manager to optimize, set up key words, make mobile friendly.
  + Brochures need updated inserts, target specific audiences
  + Broaden audience beyond anglers – look at all lake users as potential members.
  + Recruit high school and college bass clubs as FOR members and as project participants for plant nurseries, habitat project helpers
  + Emphasize diversity in habitat projects – shoreline accessible fish attractors, etc. Review project criteria and include points for bank fishing benefits and youth.
  + Approach smaller cities with water supply reservoirs to be partners
  + Look at scaling projects to fit reservoir size. Small grants might include fishing access amenities such as docks or piers.
  + Decide on definition of reservoir – how small is too small? Once decided, new criteria must be written (point system modified accordingly) and new opportunities communicated to potential grant applicants.
  + Target water gardeners and master naturalists
  + Contact state boating access coordinators about FOR and tie in habitat enhancements
* Establish a “Coordinator Successor” committee: Nygren, Margraf, Oliver
* Meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm