



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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Commission Meeting
October 9, 2013
Tallahassee, FL
Minutes

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) held a special meeting October 9, 2013, at the Tallahassee Automobile Museum, located at 6800 Mahan Drive, Tallahassee. Chairman Richard A. Corbett called the meeting to order with the following members in attendance.

Bo Rivard, Panama City
Brian Yablonski, Tallahassee
Chuck Roberts, Tallahassee

Ronald A. Bergeron, Ft. Lauderdale (by phone)
Aliese Priddy, Immokalee, FL

Staff:

Nick Wiley	Executive Director
Eric Sutton	Assistant Executive Director
Bud Vielhauer	General Counsel
Colonel Calvin Adams	Director, Division of Law Enforcement
Chuck Collins	Director, South Region
Louie Roberson	Director, Northwest Region
Shannon Wright	Director, Northeast Region
Chris Wynn	Director, Southwest Region
Thomas Eason	Director, Habitat and Species Conservation
Diane Eggeman	Director, Division of Hunting and Game Management
Tom Champeau	Director, Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management
Jessica McCawley	Director, Division of Marine Fisheries
Doc Kokol	Director, Community Relations
Rae Waddell	Director, Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network
Gil McRae	Director, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
Jackie Fauls	Director, Legislative Affairs
Andy Grayson	Director, Policy and Accountability
Bill Hunter	Director, Licensing and Permitting
Charlotte Jerrett	Chief Financial Officer
Jerrie Lindsey	Director, Public Access and Wildlife Viewing Services
Ignacio Sanchez	Director, Information Technology

There were 4 individuals registered to speak to the Commission during the one-day meeting.

Meeting Opening

Chairman Corbett called the October 9, 2013, meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and welcomed the Commissioners, staff, and public to the Tallahassee Automobile Museum, Tallahassee, Florida.

Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Corbett announced that this meeting was to discuss the 15 to 20 year strategic horizon of the Agency and the resource. He stated the meeting will be styled after our mission with two general themes: 1) for the benefit of the people and 2) for the benefit of wildlife. He then introduced Carlos Alfonso, founding principal of Alfonso Architects, Inc., who assisted with the discussion of Agency strategic direction.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda

Chairman Corbett asked for a motion to approve the meeting Agenda. A motion to approve the Agenda was made and seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Overview

Mr. Alfonso explained that the purpose of the meeting is to build a bridge to the future together by the following:

- Re-familiarize ourselves with the resource.
- Restate the FWC Mission.
- Define the role of the Commission.
- Set a time horizon (15-20 years).
- Develop the strategic focus.
- Set Operations to achieve the strategy. This will be conducted at a different meeting. Policy drives budget, not vice versa. You should first set the course for FWC's ship, and then set FWC's operations to move the ship on course.

Scope and Scale

Mr. Alfonso introduced a brief video that was prepared for the South East Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Demographics

Part A – What does Florida's current population look like, and how will that change into the future?

Amy Baker, Coordinator, Office of Economic & Demographic Research, gave a presentation on what Florida's current population looks like and how it will change into the future. She noted the two biggest challenges facing Florida are that we are an aging, and a growing state. Florida is one of the fastest growing states in the nation, with the projected population growth it is poised to become the third largest, and will go past the 20 million mark. The majority of growth will be from migration or Floridians having children.

Commissioner Yablonski asked what the demographic profile is of the growth going forward.

Ms. Baker responded that Florida adds about 613 to 713 people moving in per day, and the median age in 2012 was 41 years old; South Florida tends to have a lower median ages. The aging of baby boomers (boomers) into retirement will be the single biggest impact to Florida. The boomers moving to Florida typically have retirement resources and spend money, which is good for the economy; and at the young end, have a low demand for government services. However, as we move towards 2020 to 2030 the demographics will start to mix as the first wave of boomers start to age and will need more services and buy less.

Commissioner Yablonski asked what the prevailing age group is of hunters and anglers, which will affect the Agency.

Ms. Baker replied that the ageing will shift the amenities; folks will not be as active as in the early stage of retirement.

Commissioner Yablonski asked if this will affect access.

Ms. Baker responded they anticipate adding about 4.8 million people who will still be growing and aging. Between now and 2030, 60 plus will represent 70 percent of the growth. This will bring work force challenges and the diversity trend will continue forward.

Chairman Corbett asked when the state would become a minority state.

Ms. Baker responded before the next Decennial Census in 2020; the Hispanic sector will represent almost 27 percent of the total population. She also noted the northwest populations have the fastest growth.

Commissioner Priddy asked if consideration was given to counties that do not want to continue to grow and that institute tighter growth restrictions.

Ms. Baker said this was not taken into account, the future will reflect the past with emphasis on the current growth.

For additional information see: <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/about/index.cfm>

Part B – What does that population change mean relative to our existing customer base? What does it mean for our future customer base? What does that mean for our mission?

Mark Duda, Executive Director, Responsive Management, gave a presentation that focused on the relationship of demographic change and hunting/fishing/wildlife from a national context as well as attitudes/values of emerging demographic segments towards fish and wildlife. He cautioned that trend is not destiny, forecasting is hard, particularly of the future. Mr. Duda noted that a recent national survey showed the following:

- There is a nine percent increase in hunting.
- Wildlife viewing is up.
- Outdoor recreation, wildlife and habitat are important to the public.
- Water resources are the most important issue.
- They feel wildlife populations are healthy and want to interact directly, but have low knowledge levels about fish and wildlife.
- There is decreasing concern over climate change.
- Eight out of ten Americans support hunting and Florida runs at 75 percent.
- Most hunt for the meat.
- Increase in hunting and fishing license sales.
- More women are hunting for food.
- Aging equals a decline in hunting.
- There is dissatisfaction among inactive hunters.
- There was an 18 percent increase in sport shooting from 2009 to 2012. The surveys show 20 percent are new, younger, female, have not hunted before, and are urban or suburban.
- Archery participation grew eight percent nationwide and is increasing.
- Florida shows a slight up tic from the national fishing trends.

Commissioner Priddy commented that as folk's age, and their time frees up from obligations, she felt that should bring them back into hunting.

Mr. Alfonso stated that the take away from this is that “trend is not destiny.” He further talked about management, protection, fluidity, versatility; the ability to react to critters and lead customer base will be important going forward.

Chairman Corbett asked if trend is not destiny, how we use data looking into the future; what do we put in the youth centers to attract the next generation. He stated the Agency has 200 partnerships, which is dramatic growth.

Mr. Duda responded that the broad scale demographics will probably continue with what demographers deem them to be. He also felt the Agency is doing the exact right thing with the youth camps. A new study looked at trends in recruitment and retention across the nation, at three months, one year, and two years, to see what the effects in attitudes were. From the results of this study, he recommended that the Agency can’t go wrong by going broad scale. Programs that are holistic, comprehensive, and including hunting and females, were more effective.

Commissioner Priddy asked how much influence social media, movies, and celebrities had over youth, and can the Agency piggy back on that influence. She also questioned how long before results are seen with the efforts toward programs like Becoming an Outdoor Women (BOW).

Mr. Duda responded there is a three to five year lag time. He explained that the biggest impediment to programs like BOW is they are not implemented long enough or given enough time to become successful. Hunters are not made overnight. Further, big broad attitudes are not changed in a short period of time; keep the focus on making folks outdoors persons.

Commissioner Rivard asked if they are looking into families with children who are already engaged in sports and outdoor activities.

Mr. Duda responded that with urbanization and structured sports, there is less unstructured time to go into the woods for hunting or fishing activities. He noted it would be good to work with the whole family as participants, i.e., family licenses, and felt this would be a good way to strengthen family bonds. Mr. Duda further noted that all the research says social bonds and hunting show there are many things to do to encourage hunting. He asked why hunter education programs don’t use social media tools to help keep kids together. He felt we lose them because they don’t know anyone, or have anywhere to hunt.

Commissioner Rivard asked if there is data on Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts; he suggested that may be a natural place to reach out because they are already looking for activities to do.

Mr. Duda responded this is a natural resource; if kids are together they have fun. Agencies should consider recruiting groups of kids.

Chairman Corbett asked if a lack of knowledge created fears and misperceptions.

Mr. Alfonso explained that we have to join in the competition. He felt that law enforcement has many different opportunities to connect with the people; it is a good chance to communicate and educate.

For additional information see: <http://www.responsivemanagement.com>

Scope, Scale and Demographics

Mr. Alfonso asked the Commissioners to think about the following question at lunch:

“Grandchildren/children are receiving the Theodore Roosevelt Award – and they credit their inspiration to what you did as a Commissioner.” And I’d like to thank my grandpa/grandma, who helped Florida _____ as a Commissioner.”

Benefit for the People – Relevancy of the Resource

Mr. Alfonso assisted the Commissioners in a discussion that included the following topics:

- Law enforcement and educational or public outreach opportunities
- Volunteer hours, count, value of volunteer hours, and full time Equivalent (FTE) Fiscal Year 2011-2012
- Conflict wildlife calls – trends of increased alligator and black bear conflict.
- Florida’s demographic trends and FWC’s participants.
- Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network – “Creating the Next Generation that Cares.”
- Boating.
- Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs).
- FWC Social Media Growth 2012-2013.

Public Trust Doctrine

Diane Eggeman, Director, Hunting and Game Management Division, outlined that the Public Trust Doctrine is a body of legal authority and case law that says certain natural resources, such as water, fish, and wildlife are held in trust for the benefit of people. The three principles are fish and wildlife is a public resource, managed for the common good, and held in custodianship by government agencies staffed with trained professionals. She reviewed: state wildlife agencies as Trustees; the Florida Constitution; the roles of Trustees; the roles of the manager of the Trust (employees); the roles of the beneficiary (public – current and future generations); and private lands sharing stewardship.

Commissioner Priddy asked how the Agency reconciles the tenant of the doctrine that says wildlife is owned by the public when the movement of wildlife is restricted. She offered as example, when a high fence is constructed on private land that enclose a non-native, but native wildlife is there as well, and the fencing prohibits their natural movement.

Ms. Eggeman responded that when the Agency establishes game farms and hunting preserves they are encouraged to drive out native wildlife that is there before the fence is put up.

Commissioner Yablonski noted that the greatest challenge the Agency faces is how to reconcile the fact that public owns wildlife and we are the trustees. He stated that only 25 percent of wildlife habitat is on public land where we can unify management of habitat and wildlife; but the other 75 percent of wildlife habitat is on private land with private owner rights. He said that making wildlife an asset rather than a liability, i.e. the Florida panther is the Agency’s greatest challenge. Florida represents a split estate, where public resources and private property rights both have to be respected.

Chairman Corbett referred to the strategic plan and said that as trustees, board members have to indicate to the FWC what the goals are.

Executive Director Wiley responded that the Agency has developed a strategic plan, and it does have a list of high level goals that staff has identified, and they welcomed feedback on these goals.

Mr. Alfonso said it was important that the Strategic Plan is a living document. He clarified that the role of a commission is to set policy, provide advocacy, strategize, and remain transparent to the public. Those big ideas are the rudder that sets the course at a high level.

Chairman Corbett suggested that as Commissioners they individually go through the Strategic Plan to analyze it and make comments on areas they felt were important.

Mr. Alfonso noted the Commission should look to set policy for the state, which will direct staff on how to manage the resource.

Mr. Sutton said the product they are referencing today is the Strategic Plan, which was created by staff from the ground up. It has been a very involved process by the Agency to focus operationally on what is called our “Wildly Important Things.” Further, the product the Commissioners end up with today, can be used by staff to make sure they focus on and then implement the right things.

Chairman Corbett said he would like to reconvene soon, to further what was started today.

Mr. Alfonso noted this meeting is a function to serve the Commissioners over the years, to look high level, and build a bridge to the future.

Chairman Corbett suggested using the media more.

Commissioner Rivard suggested being relevant is important and should be a goal.

Commissioner Yablonski said he felt the Strategic Plan is more of an operational document, detailing everything the Agency does. He felt their job is to look around corners, anticipating trends, challenges, and opportunities. Then set vision and direction going forward; what does it mean, and what are the issues we need to be aware of.

Mr. Alfonso noted the Strategic Plan is something that can be built on.

Chairman Corbett asked how to take the classroom out to the field.

Mr. Alfonso explained that the concepts of being fluid and broad are strategic positions, and outlined the role of the Commissioners that will affect policy. Commissioners should be highly organic in communications, with outreach from all aspects of the organization. These will be very important going forward. Using social media and having 212 youth partners are great outreach tools.

Executive Director Wiley noted there will always be base line responsibilities, but suggested the Board also identify important key areas like youth conservations centers, and Everglades’ restoration for staff to focus on. Also, ongoing dialogue will help identify key issues and keep the needle moving.

Mr. Alfonso explained today is an impetus to create ongoing, policy driven, strategic meetings. He described the qualities he felt are needed to serve on a board of excellence:

- No ego.
- Put personal interests aside for the good of the whole.
- It’s all about the place, critters, habitat and Floridians.
- Spirit of collegiality and collaboration.
- Passion.

Commissioner Yablonski added:

- Recognize they are not the experts – listen to and have faith in science, stakeholders and citizens.
- Accountability – transparency.
- Empathy.

Commissioner Priddy added:

- Science with wisdom and common sense.

Executive Director Wiley emphasized they are investing more in the social sciences.

Commissioner Bergeron emphasized the future of hunting, fishing, and public viewing is dependent on not losing habitat. He felt as the population grows it is important to keep our quality of life, that the Agency try to develop a master plan that looks at all the pristine natural resources and work with other groups to get multiple uses of our natural resources that are not protected today. He said a good example of this is water treatment areas that have become the best duck hunting in the United States.

Habitat and Wildlife

Terrestrial and Marine Wildlife & Habitat

Assistant Executive Director Sutton gave a presentation on the long-term well-being of fish & wildlife. He stated that from a geographical perspective Florida is really like no other place on earth. The priority of the Agency is fish and wildlife habitat, but balanced with urban growth patterns. He discussed the following:

- Urban Growth Patterns.
- Present Terrestrial Benefit for Wildlife which includes:
 - Excellent base of public conservation lands.
 - Well established partnerships in land management.
 - Leveraged research and technology to guide future habitat and species efforts.
 - Individual, high profile species have been well managed.
- Future Terrestrial Benefit for Wildlife which includes:
 - Expanding options, tools, and partnerships for habitat protection.
 - Focus on landscape level restoration.
 - Defining our role with the urban interface and conflict wildlife.
 - Integrated approach for imperiled species.
 - Champion sustainable access to the resource.

Ms. McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management Division, discussed the long-term well-being of fish & wildlife from the fisheries perspective, both freshwater and saltwater. She discussed the following:

- Present Strengths of Fisheries in State Waters:
 - Florida is the Fishing Capital of the World.
 - Many long-term goals are being achieved.
- Future Strengths of Fisheries in State Waters:
 - Maintain Fishing Capital of the World status.
 - Continue to work with changing stakeholder desires.
 - Work with partners on habitat and water quality issues.
 - Strengthen invertebrate fisheries management.
- Current Challenges of Marine Fisheries – Federal Species:
 - Many stocks are under rebuilding plans.
 - Constraints from Magnuson Act.
 - Quota monitoring and closures.
- Future Challenges of Marine Fisheries – Federal Species:
 - Rebuilding completed.
 - Relaxing regulations.
 - Improved data collection.
 - More real time recreational monitoring.

Chairman Corbett asked where we stand with the relaxation of the rules.

Ms. McCawley responded that on the state side we have been able to reach our goals, and can say we can now give back. However, the fisheries take time to rebuild on the federal side.

Commissioner Rivard noted Panama City Anglers appreciated the October red snapper season opening.

Chairman Corbett asked when we would get the recreational data that tells us how many recreational fishermen are out there.

Ms. McCawley responded they are part of the way there; NOAA is constantly looking to make improvements such as getting recreational data sooner.

Commissioner Yablonski noted the slides of the future are the most important slides, and what we ought to be focusing on. Private land stewardship is important and at 75 percent of the habitat, we need incentives for the

private landowners to be partners and stewards without the regulatory hammer. He asked if folks are even aware of the constitutional amendment passed on property tax exemptions on private land conservation.

Assistant Executive Director Sutton emphasized staff can build on what they hear today is important to the Commissioners.

Executive Director Wiley commented that the Agency needs to work to change the paradigm on public versus private lands.

Discussion continued about strategies that included the following:

- Incentive to help private landowners.
- Conservation easements.
- Sequence and prioritize valuable land contiguous to large contiguous public lands.

Chairman Corbett asked if it would be helpful to have staff identify these large contiguous lands and talk to the landowners.

Assistant Executive Director Sutton clarified the agency does not buy title to lands often, but we do use the following criteria to help prioritize:

- Private lands assistance program.
- Prioritize who we approach for incentives.

Commissioner Yablonski said we have to be sensitive to targeting and identifying as the perception is regulatory, not helpful. Some folks want to keep doing what they already do, raise cattle, grow trees, etc., and there is huge conservation value to this, by keeping rural character alive.

Commissioner Priddy asked if we have input into the Florida Forever selections.

Assistant Executive Director Sutton responded yes, and explained FWC's role on the Acquisition and Restoration Council and the Florida Forever process.

Commissioner Yablonski discussed the concept that when a healthy species thrives in state or national parks such as the elk herd in Yellowstone, it spills over into other lands, creating hunting opportunities. He would like to find ways to make healthy wildlife an asset rather than a liability on private lands.

Commissioner Roberts noted that when private landowners give up their property for improved habitat, the public feels like they should have access. He felt the Agency needs to develop wildlife corridors, whether private or public, where wildlife can move to...escape to, keeping in mind the development that will be needed for the future growth of the state. Lastly, he would like to see as much public access as possible provided to public lands, as well as to identify adjacent private lands.

Commissioner Yablonski recognized how much land is already held privately in conservation, in the form of easements, or being used for ranching and agriculture.

Executive Director Wiley said it is important that the Agency continues its efforts with partner agencies to open up as much public lands and keep the access.

Chairman Corbett asked the Commissioners to prioritize strategies.

Mr. Alfonso suggested each Commissioner talk about their top priorities.

Commissioner Bergeron clarified that a willing property owner is first needed, when there is available funding, for conservation easement, particularly if it has a huge benefit to our endangered species.

Commissioner Roberts felt that education is most important moving forward. The youth conservation centers teaching about outdoor activities will become more important as the demographics in Florida change; he suggested taking advantage of the social media to help. He also felt it is important to teach youth how important conservation and preservation of our natural resources is; unless they have the opportunity to experience the outdoors, they won't grow to appreciate it. Lastly, he felt that wildlife corridors would open up lands with incentives, providing encouragement or latitude to do what folk have been doing; large lands are an asset to the public because the wildlife moves in and out of them.

Commissioner Rivard agreed with Commissioner Roberts. He noted he liked the forum of the workshop as it provides a good opportunity to look at the bigger picture, where can the Agency invest. He would like to see outreach to schools and Scouting groups and tie in with the youth centers by providing something they want to do, and in groups. Lastly, he noted that law enforcement is the face of FWC; look for opportunities to leverage initiatives and maximize efforts to provide good customer service.

Commissioner Priddy stated she would like to continue to strive to reduce regulations, which would ease up on law enforcement. She also felt it was important to continue to place emphasis on non-native species, keep upgrading WMAs, and take marketing efforts to the next level with social media. She would also like to see more inclusiveness with ethnic diversity, family groups, and youth. She stated a different marketing approach may be needed for older and less active folks, with more time, and also women with shooting sports. Lastly, she would like to see the Agency invest in infrastructure to promote shooting opportunities.

Commissioner Yablonski agreed with Commissioner Priddy about women and shooting sports, as well as shooting clubs. He said he felt there was a growing disconnect between children and nature...elders too. He would like to focus on the following:

- Habitat loss and degradation.
- Urban wildlife interface.
- Private land stewardship.
- Expanding and innovating on management tools...current tools are old.
- Go above and beyond communicating with policy makers.
- Accountability.
- Ethics issue and the Sportsman's Code.
- Role of citizen science and the instantaneous sharing of information as a resource.
- Giving back to the people, less regulation and more opportunities.

Executive Director Wiley would like to provide each Commissioner with a phone call opportunity with staff to walk through the DRAFT Strategic Plan Document, so it can be finalized.

Commissioner Rivard noted there is nothing wrong with the DRAFT Strategic Plan...and nothing should be taken out.

Chairman Corbett suggested prioritizing what was said today.

Commissioner Bergeron stated the following

- Create a plan to protect most important natural resources that are not already protected.
- Find more access to public and private lands.
- Look at wildlife corridor opportunities.

Public Comment

Ted Forsgren (Coastal Conservation Association (CCA)-Florida) felt angler access is very important for the Commissioners to be involved with.

Bonnie Basham (Florida Airboat Association/BOAT US) suggested the Commissioners keep boating in mind because Florida is a destination for so many boaters. She also suggested using the Youth centers for senior citizens and that the youth hunting program is fantastic and should be replicated in other areas of the Agency.

Chad Hanson (The PEW Charitable Trust) advocated for sustainable fisheries. When managing species, think broadly and develop tools and applications for protection of prey and forage based species.

Manley Fuller (Florida Wildlife Federation (FWF)) said the Everglades and Gulf restorations are great opportunities to provide more public access, and the FWF wants to be very involved and good partners with the FWC. He also felt it is important to get a better understanding of the role of forage fish and how they provide the base of harvested recreational and commercial species. In addition, they feel the FWC attempting to find additional tools to aid in private land conservation and land management is a good idea because they provide habitat for both the terrestrial and the aquatic environment. Lastly, he noted he knew someone who had established a shooting program in public schools in Leon County.

Mr. McRae, Director, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, discussed the science based decision making process:

- Plan a year or two in advance to make a management call.
- Strategic plan – take into consideration a small staff and army of volunteers.
- Keep in mind decisions made at a high level, need a lot of science, time and effort.
- Build up economic capability.

Lastly, he emphasized that every decision made feeds back into both the enforcement and science side.

Assistant Executive Director Sutton said the culture of the Agency is collaborative, which helped to get better projects.

Tom Champeau, Director of Freshwater Fisheries Management Division, would like the Commission to identify five things the Commissioners feel is very important, where the Agency could improve. He said they will take their knowledge, experience and wisdom to help resolve the DRAFT Strategic Plan.

Commissioner Exchange

Commissioner Yablonski stated he liked this forum and suggested setting different priorities and the pick a priority to address at the different meetings.

Chairman Corbett emphasized he would like to keep this alive and carve out time at the beginning of the November Commission Meeting to spend on this.

Commission Administrative Matters

The next regularly scheduled Commission meeting is set for November 20-21, 2013, at the Bonaventure Resort and Spa, in Weston, commencing at 8:30 a.m. on both days.

Adjournment

Chairman Corbett adjourned the meeting at 4:25 p.m.

Richard A. Corbett
Chairman

Nick Wiley
Executive Director

Respectfully submitted:

Robin Stetler
Commission Administrative Assistant