



County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency – Environmental Health

Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission

(831) 454-2022 TDD/TTY - Call 711 <http://www.scceh.org>



Meeting Minutes November 6, 2025

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – 6:31 pm
2. **ROLL CALL**

District	Commissioner	Status	Commissioner	Status
I	Chris Berry	P	Kevin Butler	P
II	Brian Woodward	P	David Somerton	P
III	Liz Alter	P	Jon Jankovitz	P
IV	Brooke Sampson	R	Daniela Suarez	P
V	Jenni Gomez	P	Joanne Brown	P

P = Present R = Remote E = Excused A = Absent

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

- o **Motion to Approve Minutes:** Somerton, **Second:** Butler,
- o **Ayes:** Butler, Woodward, Somerton, Alter, Sampson, Suarez, Gomez, Brown
- o **Abstain:** Berry, Jankovitz
 - **Minutes Approved**

4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** NONE

5. **PRESENTATION BY PUBLIC GRANT PROGRAM APPLICANTS:** Commissioners heard presentations from the grant applicants and had an opportunity to ask questions. Grant proposals will be ranked and recommended for funding at the December meeting.

6. **PRESENTATION ON THE COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN:** Sven Stafford at the CEO office sought input from the Commissioners regarding the County [Strategic Plan 2032](#) (SP). The SP has 6 Focus Areas, with one being most applicable to the FWAC being “Environment, Climate, and Sustainability”. That Focus Area is intended to align with key documents like Climate Action & Adaptation Plan (CAAP) and Hazard Mitigation Plan, and the Measure Q Vision Plan.

The Commissioners were asked for feedback on wording for the mission statement and on possible standards for determining success. Commissioners comments were as follows:

- There was inadequate time to discuss this topic and asked for future opportunities for discussion
- The proposed mission statement did not include any mention of habitat protection or environmental benefits beyond those for humans.
- The proposed standard of Air Quality was not ideal because of minimal local control. Commissioners felt that Water Quality was a better standard due to local sources of impact and historical data for comparison.
- **Public Comment:**
 - Jean Brocklebank hopes that the commissioner's comments will be incorporated.

7. APPROVAL OF ZONE 0 LETTER TO BOARD: Commissioners discussed the Zone 0 letter and whether the subject could be addressed by the Supervisors. Some felt that the primary issue was insurance companies dropping coverage, which may still happen even if there are local allowances for Zone 0 plants. The counter was that local allowances would prevent Cal-Fire from citing county residents. Another concern was whether the Supervisors would be receptive to a letter, given the limited success of recent efforts. The counter was that this item could be viewed as warning the Supervisors of changes that might negatively impact their constituents. Com Woodward recommended that reference to "cost burden shifting" be removed as they are outside the scope of the knowledge for this Commission.

- **Public Comment:**
 - Jean Brocklebank supports the letter and is concerned about the possibility of additional habitat being removed.

Motion to Approve Zone 0 Letter, with Woodward edit: Berry, **Second:** Alter,

- **Ayes:** Berry, Butler, Woodward, Somerton, Alter, Sampson, Suarez, Gomez, Brown
- **Nays:** Jankovitz
 - **Zone 0 Letter Approved and will be sent to Supervisors**

8. DISCUSSION OF WESTERN POND TURTLE ENDANGERED SPECIES LISTING:

Commissioner Berry provided an update about the listing of Western Pond Turtles as an Endangered Species which had been [proposed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service](#). However, the current administration has largely stopped this process so the

California Dept of Fish and Wildlife is considering a state listing. The Western Pond Turtle is the states only freshwater turtle and is found locally. The commissioners discussed possible actions that could be taken to support this effort. One option included soliciting a presentation from staff at CDFW and offering support.

9. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

○ Staff Reports:

- Significant Tree Ordinance (STO) Update: Planning Dept Staff responded to Supervisor De Serpa forwarding the letter on the STO with the following concerns:
 - (1) Adding new permit requirements would;
 - (a) Be counter to current housing and economic policy and the Board's directive to Streamline Santa Cruz County. The proposal would likely slow many future development projects.
 - (b) Make tree management more difficult and costly, which could adversely impact residents ability to implement wildfire protections, including defensible space
 - (2) Enforcement would be very challenging due to
 - (a) Daily chainsaw activity in the Santa Cruz Mountains
 - (b) Code enforcement staff is already fully loaded and is focusing on issues facing health and safety
 - (3) Current regulations already protect sensitive habitat and timber resources.
- Remote Attendance Update: A recent law was passed that should allow remote attendance of meetings for any reason, likely starting in 2026.
- **Commissioner Reports:**
 - Brown: During a Lompico Pond restoration event, Bethany Schultze shared her research on bats at Loch Lomond Reservoir. There are many species of bats occurring locally, which can benefit from actions like leaving tree snags in place as roosts and reducing the use of pesticides.
 - Brown: SLVWD will be hosting a volunteer event to remove invasive French Broom at Olympia Watershed on Saturday, November 15 from 9 am to 12 pm. Registration for the event can happen [here](#).
 - Somerton: Observed Double Crested Cormorants near Schwann Lagoon, which are preferentially roosting in the eucalyptus trees nearby.

10. ADJOURN. Motion to Adjourn: Berry, Second: Woodward All Aye: meeting adjourned at 8:38 pm.