



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

March 5, 2026

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – 6:32 pm
2. **ROLL CALL**

District	Commissioner	Status	Commissioner	Status
I	Chris Berry	E	Kevin Butler	P
II	Brian Woodward	P	David Somerton	P
III	Liz Alter	P	Jon Jankovitz	P
IV	Brooke Sampson	P	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:** Alter,
 - o **All Ayes:** Minutes approved
4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**
 - o None
5. **PRESENTATION ON WILDLIFE CORRIDORS BY ENVIRONMENT CALIFORNIA:** Sam Trezona spoke on the Wildlife Crossings Save Lives campaign, which advocates for the importance of wildlife crossings. The presentation provided details on what options exist for installing wildlife crossings and how to begin the process. He recommended starting with data gathering, such as through an iNaturalist project, to identify areas of concern. This data could then be used for wildlife corridor planning, which the county will be required to consider by 2028 to comply with AB 1889. Commissioner questions are as follows:
 - o **Com Somerton:** Once placed, do wildlife crossings become more effective as wildlife learn to use them?
 - Yes, wildlife does learn to use the crossing. Mothers teach their offspring to use the route.
 - o **Com Gomez:** The county completed an extensive survey of culverts and their state of repair. What options exist for improving passage when culverts are replaced?

- Culvert replacements are an excellent opportunity to provide passage. Either by removing and replacing it with an open bottom bridge, or inclusion of features that make the culvert passable to target species.
- **Com Brown:** If we wanted to collect public data, would [CROS](#) be the best tool for that?
 - CROS could be good to use, but it might be better to utilize the iNaturalist account for gathering local data. There could be value in reporting to both though.

The wildlife corridor sub-committee will continue gathering data, with the feedback provided, and return with possible actions at the May meeting.

- 6. PRESENTATION ON PAULSEN ROAD PROJECT PROPOSAL:** Angela Chilcott in County Public Works presented on a proposed project to raise Paulsen Road out of the flood plain for a roughly 1,000ft stretch of the road. Due to shifts in the river path after major storm events, this area is subject to frequent flooding and is often closed during the wet season due to standing water overtopping the low sections of the road. This is impactful not only to the surrounding community but also creates barriers for fish and wildlife passage. This project would be part of multiple projects that would remove all fish passage barriers along Green Valley Creek. Public Works request that the FWAC vote to send a letter to the Board of Supervisors supporting the project and recommending agencies expedite review to take advantage of emergency funding sources. Commissioner questions are as follows.
- **Com Gomez:** Are there any review waivers associated with this project?
 - Yes, several waivers are granted as part of it being part of an emergency declaration
 - **Com Jankovitz:** Will the waivers include CEQA? What level of is required CEQA? CEQA could make completing this project in the required time a challenge.
 - We will have to CEQA and expect a mitigated negative impact finding.
 - **Com Alter:** Is this work being coordinated with the work being done on the Pajaro River Levee?
 - The Army Corp of Engineers is aware and supportive of this project, but there is not much coordination of these two projects.
 - **Com Brown:** Are there any other projects that are like this one nearby?
 - There are no projects like this one being done by the county, but there are several smaller emergency bridge installations that have been done, such as on Bates and Soquel Creek.

Commissioners reviewed the letter content and offered only a minor edit to change Central California Coast steelhead to South Central California Coast steelhead. With that change, the Commissioners voted on whether to send the letter to the Board.

- **Motion to Send Letter, with edit, to Board:** Sampson, **Second:** Woodward,
- **All Ayes:** Letter passed approved

7. **UPDATE FROM WILDLIFE CROSSING SUB-COMMITTEE:** Commissioners Brown, Alter, and Gomez provided an update on data collection work they have already completed. Com Gomez created a map of [Animal Strikes](#) and overlaid that with the county culvert inventory. This map also shows anecdotal information gathered from Animal Control and the Public Works department, which note that animal strikes seem to be very common on roadways near water bodies, such as lagoons. Commissioners discussed what other data gaps could be identified and how to fill the gaps. Com Sampson noted that the Land Trust has done work on salamander habitat protection, which might have data that could be valuable. One option could be creating an iNaturalist project and request community reporting on animal strikes.

The wildlife corridor sub-committee will continue gathering data, with the feedback provided, and return with possible actions at the May meeting.

8. **PRESENTATION ON 2026 PUBLIC GRANTS PROGRAM (PGP) BUDGET:** The current PGP budget reflects a lack of income for the fund in the previous year. After issuing last year's grants, only \$17,000 remains in the fund. For this coming PGP cycle, the commissioners discussed whether to issue a smaller grant fund of \$10,000 or pause the PGP for 2026 and hope to issue a larger sum in 2027. Commissioners felt that it would be best to pause in 2026 but notify the grant applicant list that the \$10,000 would still be available in the event of an emergency.
- **Motion to Pause the PGP in 2026, but hold \$10,000 in Reserve for Emergency Applications:** Butler, **Second:** Somerton,
 - **All Ayes:** PGP will be paused in 2026, but up to \$10,000 available for emergency applications.

9. **STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- **Staff Reports:**
 - There is potential for future remote attendance rules to be more flexible. This will require that the Board of Supervisors vote to approve that for the FWAC.
 - At our next meeting, staff intends to include a presentation on the [Streamwood Program](#) and work that has been done to identify challenge areas, which are sections of stream that have required Streamwood modification with a relatively high frequency.
 - The [Pleasure Point Marine Protected Area](#) has scaled back proposed restrictions to allow fishing from non-motorized craft. A regional meeting on the petition will be held on April 21st in Half Moon Bay.
 - The [State of the San Lorenzo River Symposium](#) will be taking place on April 11th and will include a presentation by Com Woodward on the Shothole borer detection in the San Lorenzo Watershed.
- **Commissioner Reports:**
 - **Com Somerton:** The Santa Cruz Natural History Museum be hosting an event on [protecting the California Red-Legged Frog](#) on March 24th
 - **Com Sampson:** World Wetlands Day was a big success and removed a large volume of invasive plants and replaced with native plantings.

- **Com Sampson:** Measure Q [Grants](#) application window has been extended.
- **Com Gomez:** RCD started the [Spring No-Cost Chipping Program](#). Com Woodward mentioned that chipping is a good option to control Shot-hole Borer infestation.

10. ADJOURN. Motion to Adjourn: Alter, **Second:** Somerton
All Aye: meeting adjourned at 8:29 pm.