



## FRIENDS OF BRAZORIA WILDLIFE REFUGES

### Minutes of the Board Meeting

Friday, March 10, 2023    Venue: Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

**Members in Attendance:** Ed Barrios, Marty Cornell, Mickey Dufilho, Phil Huxford, Kim Richardson, Dick Schaffhausen, Mary Schwartz, Regina Tippet

**Members Absent:** Oron Atkins, Ruby Lewis,

**Refuge Staff in Attendance:** Bryan Winton

**General Members/Guests in Attendance:** Mike Lange

President Mary Schwartz called the meeting to order at 1:04 pm.

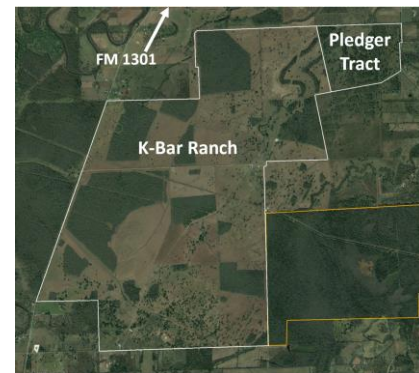
**Agenda:** the agenda was unanimously accepted after a move to so do by Marty and a second by Ed.

**Minutes:** Dick moved and Mickey seconded the motion to accept the minutes of the January 13, 2023 meeting of the board; this motion was unanimously approved. Ed moved and Mickey seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2023 meeting of the FOBWR general membership.

**Land Acquisition:** Mike Lange review activities leading to acquiring land for the Complex;

Two weeks ago, \$4 million was received from the Migratory Bird Commission to enable the \$17.5 million purchase of the K-Bar Ranch property. Closing is expected within the next couple of weeks. This forested land was cleared for cattle ranching; it will be restored to woodland.

The adjoining Pledger Tract, owned by the Harrison Foundation, is another potential addition to the San Bernard NWR.



Lands adjoining the recently acquired Peach Creek Forest Unit of the SBNWR are being considered. One parcel is the McNeill II tract boarding on the northeast of Peach Creek. The next step for this land is to obtain a scope of work.

To the northwest, the Burr Tract is waiting for a quote of market value to as the next step toward converting it to a conservation easement.

The FWS has money to buy the 232-acre Coddou Tract that adjoins the Brothers Tract on its north end on Hwy 35 south of West Columbia. It is a heavily-wooded forest on the Brazos River.

The service also has funds to purchase 57 acres of riparian forest from Oyster Creek, Ltd. It touches the northwest corner of the Dow Woods Unit. This area has been remapped as being in the 100-year flood plain, reducing its market value, thus making other lands abutting Dow Woods to be more attractive potential additions to the SBNWR

The Big Boggy acquisition area contains about 55,000 acres of coastal prairie that are also being considered to expand the BBNWR

**Refuge Update:** Bryan covered recent activity of the Complex.

- Curtis is working with the Region 2 ecological services to assure that wildlife crossings are constructed below the current TDOT project that is widening Hwy 36 through the Brothers Unit. FWS was not an owner of this land when the road project was first defined.
- Hanna's contract as a visitor service coordinator will end in September. A permanent replacement for this position has not been authorized.
- Two vacated maintenance positions will take priority in hiring.
- Bryan expressed a need to increase visibility of the Complex to our surrounding communities. The Complex partnership with the Brazoria County Park System serves to help fill this need. The joining of refuge lands with the adjoining Hanson County Park provides trails extending into less-developed forest, with public use facilities being concentrated in the county park. About 45 overnight pads for RVs and camper trailers are planned to be built on refuge property; these will be constructed by county workers. Protocol needs to be developed to assure that these pads are used only for short-term stays.
- The current mini-drought has refuge staff manipulating water control structures.
- Controlled burns were restarted a month ago, managed per the constraints of protecting black rails. Managing prairies without grazing cows results in the need for aerial spraying to keep Chinese Tallow and other invasive species in check.
- The Volunteer Appreciation Lunch is scheduled for Wednesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>. It will most likely be held at the Clute Recreation Center.

**Action Items** are listed at the end of these minutes. New action items are **highlighted in yellow**. Items completed or removed are:

- Refuge promotion to the area Chambers of Commerce occurred on October.
- Existing trail trifolds serve the same purpose as the proposed rack card.
- The board decided to not pursue a "Community Liaison Director" as a paid position to pursue donations from major corporations and potential benefactors.
- The board will not conduct meetings with ZOOM participants.
- The 2023 spring break open house at the Discovery Center is in progress.

**Treasurer's Report:** The February, 2023 Financial Report is attached to the end of these minutes. Regina noted that:

- Regina moved some funds from TDECU to our ML account; the current balance is \$450,000.
- Our second CD with Merrill Lynch had matured, so we are now down to one CD with a value of \$47,667. With interest rates on the rise, Dick suggested that we consider a two-year treasury

bond (currently running at 5% interest), or another CD. Dick will check with Steve Polemenakos of Merrill Lynch and then suggest an option to the board.

- Higher interest rates are reflected in \$1,703 in investment income for the first two months of 2023.
- Regina opened up an account at McCoys-Brazoria to pay for materials used in our construction projects; the current balance is \$5,286.12. Regina, Oron, Roland, and Curtis have privileges to use this account.
- The 5.375% administration fees for our new grants from the Hershey and Knoblock Foundations have been transferred to our operating funds. The total is \$9,374
- Our first draw (\$664) on the Equistar grant for maintenance of Motus towers has been made.

**Web and Social Media:** Dick is adding content to our web, Migration Celebration, and Facebook sites as details are determined.

**Maintenance:** Dick has finished painting the interior of the Brazoria information pavilion. The four gallons of paint needed cost about \$100 each, with some paint left over. It was decided to use this remaining paint to refresh the information building at the San Bernard refuge. Dick made a motion that **“The FOBWR board authorizes an expenditure of up to \$800 for paint and supplies to paint the interiors of the information buildings at the Brazoria and San Bernard National Wildlife Refuges. Expenses will be drawn from our maintenance fund.”** Marty seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Marty will arrange to power wash the SB information building as preparation for painting.

#### **Capital Projects:**

- Bryan will check with Region 2 to see how we might avoid their lengthy approval process for sign replacement and additions.
- Boardwalk building is now enhanced with the purchase of a hand-held auger (\$629.80), we now have an eight-inch and a ten-inch bit.
- Oron reported that the new boardwalks on the SB Oak Trail are now finished.
- The Bobcat Woods boardwalk extension is about 85% complete; it will be finished before MC23.
- Next on the construction agenda will be to replace the decking and handrails of the Moccasin Pond observation platform and the SB boat dock.
- Another project will be to rebuild the Hudson Woods camera blind.

**Monthly Walk:** The walk for March will be on the newly refurbished San Bernard Oak Trail. April will feature a walk on the Brazos River Unit.

**Birds of Prey.** Phil has given programs at seven schools so far this season, and he has passed out about 2,500 MC23 flyers. A program will be given at Brazos Bend on March 24<sup>th</sup>.

Phil and Mickey have set the stage to receive a \$5k donation from the Brazosport Rotary and for the traditional \$12k donation from Phillips66. Mickey also wrote a request to the BP Rotary for \$500 for bird books to be placed in school libraries.

**Membership:** Mickey has added Donna Jablecki as a life member. We now have 40 life members. 19 others have paid dues for this year, seven members from last year are in arrears. Mikey will send a personal email reminder to these seven.

**Legal / Agreements:** Kim will provide an update at the May board meeting.

**Outreach:** Our week-long Spring Break open house at the Discovery Center begins tomorrow, March 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Migration Celebration:** The ribbon cutting with the Brazosport Chamber of Commerce will take place on Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup>; details TBD.

**Other Motions:**

Ed moved, and Mickey seconded the motion that **“The FOBWR board authorizes an advance of \$1,000 to pay for Mary Schwartz’s travel expenses to attend the end-of-April Friends Academy at the NCTC. The advance will be drawn from general funds and will be replaced upon reimbursement of these expenses.”** The motion passed with unanimous consent.

Ed moved, and Phil seconded the motion that **“The FOBWR board authorizes an expenditure of up to \$2,000 for the purchase of a gas-powered refrigerator to be placed in the Discovery Center. Funds will be drawn from the Brazoria McGovern reserves.”** The motion passed with unanimous consent.

Ed moved, and Phil seconded the motion that **“The FOBWR board will submit a formal comment to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management lease proposal for windfarms offshore of the Texas and Louisiana coasts.”** This motion passed unanimously. **Marty will draft the comment for review by the board.** The 60-day comment period ends on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

Dick moved, and Mickey seconded the motion that **“The FOBWR board authorized the expenditure of up to \$500 for the purchase of three pole banners to call attention to outreach events and open houses, with money to be drawn from Brazoria McGovern funds.”** This motion passed unanimously.

Submitted by Marty Cornell, Secretary

Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges.

<b>Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuge Board Action Register March 11, 2023</b>				
<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Who? Date Started</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>

Develop a New Outdoor Environmental Education Display for our canopy	Marty	Target 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. Need high quality images; pull
Develop text on FOBWR history for website	Ed Barrios	After April, 2023	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. When tax season ends this year. Ed has material
Develop a Succession Plan	Mickey	TBD	Researched succession planning; no further action	[Marty note: Kathy Allan, The Board Dr., has a process of first defining needs, followed by identifying potential candidates with the needed qualifications.]
Download Migration Records to our archives	Marty	Almost done Sep22	Action pending	Files are now backed up to our cloud server automatically as added to or amended. Protocol needs to be defined to provide access by any board member.
Download ATFN Records to our archives	Marty	Almost done Sep22	Action pending	As above
Download Governance items into our Archives	Marty	Almost done Sep22	As soon as convenient	As above

Refresh the Discovery Center Display	Phil	not specified	Ongoing	Phil will meet with taxidermist on 11Mar23
Master Contact Spreadsheet	Ed	Before MC23		Construct a searchable file of FOBWR contacts, e.g., corporate sponsors and donors, sponsors and participants for MC, BoP, ATFN, members, volunteers, outreach. Marty and Lisa have given lists to Ed. Ed is in the process of combining all contact lists.
Create a Grant Solutions account to enable applying for federal grants	Regina and Marty	When need emerges.		The ASAP system is used for reimbursements. Regina will pursue a Grant Solutions account. ASAP is up and running. GS current grant is there. We are not in yet. Have not set up an account yet; difficult; woody did last one.
Design concept for B. Burkhart memorial	Oron		\$840 in donations have been received.	Ideas considered and rejected include a memorial entrance arch for the BWT pollinator garden, a granite bench with an etched design, a concrete bench with bench with imbedded tiles, and a stained glass hanging? \$840 in donations have been collected for this project.
Correct the Brazosport Chamber of Commerce information about trails on the refuges.	Ed	This summer of 2023		

Create informational PowerPoint presentation on refuges & FOBWR to present to community organizations/groups

Marty

Summer of 2023

Marty will develop a new 15-min PPT with segments of drone footage.

Follow up on three benches for the Cannan Bend and Big Slough Trails

Marty and Oron

Spring 2023

Three benches have been purchased and delivered to the Brazoria NWR field office. Concrete pads need to be poured as a base to bolt down these benches.

Check with Steve Polemenakos of ML for fixed income investment options

Dick

O/B May Board Mtg.

Increasing interest rates provide opportunity for, e.g., 5% treasury bond or higher rate CD

Power wash SB Info. Booth

Marty

Mar23

Submit Comments to BOEM on proposed offshore windfarms in the Gulf of Mexico

Marty

O/B 24Apr23

Draft to board by end of March.

## FOBWR FINANCIAL STATEMENT February, 2023

TDECU				\$125,317.23	*A
Merrill Lynch Cash				\$450,007.54	
Merrill Lynch Certificates of Deposit				\$47,667.35	*G
Prepaid - McCoy's Deposit Account				\$5,268.12	
<b>ACCOUNT BALANCE</b>				<b>\$628,260.24</b>	
<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	320,279.33	176,320.55	143,958.78	
20131220 McGovern San Bernard NWR	Katherine McGovern	147,000.00	100,675.93	46,324.07	
20130919 Poole Tract Land Acquisition	Trull Foundation	10,000.00	-	10,000.00	
20181231 Houston Endowment Land Acquisition 4	Houston Endowment	325,000.00	297,872.19	27,127.81	*E
20201228 Houston Endowment Land Acquisition 5	Houston Endowment	150,000.00	65,900.00	84,100.00	
20211229 Damuth Foundation Land Acquisition	Damuth Foundation	35,000.00	35,000.00	-	
20220112 Equistar Chemicals - Motus Tower Fees	Equistar Chemicals	7,000.00	664.00	6,336.00	
20221101 Knobloch Foundation Land Acquisition	Knobloch Foundation	118,304.00	-	118,304.00	*C
20221129 Hershey Foundation Land Acquisition	Hershey Foundation	47,322.00	1,200.00	46,122.00	*C
20210722 Black Rail Habitat (\$78,000 Reimbursable grant)	USFWS	76,438.92	76,438.92	-	*H
<b>TOTAL ALLOCATED FUNDS</b>		<b>\$1,236,344.25</b>	<b>\$754,071.59</b>	<b>\$482,272.66</b>	
<b>FOBWR PROJECTS</b>		<b>Amt Allocated</b>	<b>Amount Spent</b>	<b>Amt Available</b>	
46400 Birds of Prey	FOBWR	8,159.20	494.00	7,665.20	
Migration Celebration	FOBWR	23,689.40	1,552.59	22,136.81	
20170101 BNWR Donation Box	Donations	2,314.35	-	2,314.35	
20201231 General Donations, Membership, Etc.	Donations	6,681.50	-	6,681.50	
20210101 Barbara Burkhardt	Memorial	840.00	-	840.00	
20140403 Law Enforcement Restitution	Federal Court Fines	1,835.35	-	1,835.35	
20211112 Maintenance of Public Use Facilities	FOBWR	18,399.86	629.80	17,770.06	
20190601 ATFN 2019 Cannan Bend	FOBWR	211,436.29	174,088.64	37,347.65	*B
<b>TOTAL FOBWR PROJECTS</b>		<b>\$273,355.95</b>	<b>\$176,765.03</b>	<b>\$96,590.92</b>	
<b>OPERATIONS</b>		<b>\$35,553.59</b>	<b>\$814.64</b>	<b>\$34,738.95</b>	*E, *F
<b>FUNDS IN TRANSIT</b>				<b>\$14,657.71</b>	*I
<b>TDECU SAVINGS</b>				<b>\$15.70</b>	



**TOTAL Funds in Bank Accounts**

**\$623,007.8**

**2**

**COMPLETED PROJECTS OR GRANTS**

**NOTES**

\*I Accounts Receivable/Payable & bank activity not yet posted

\*A December 2022, Transferred \$100,000 from TDECU to Merrill Lynch

**MOTIONS**

\*B Mar 2020 Combined Hickner Memorial Fund \$51,570.00 & 2019 ATFN (net \$53,866.29) & added \$50,000.00 Hickner donation

Mar 2021 reclassified \$56,000.00 from McGovern Brazoria

\*C Jan 2023 Per grant agreements, 5.3571% allocated to Admin expenses

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

\*F Sept 2022 Per board approval, \$15,000 reclassified from General Donations to Operations

\*G Merrill Lynch account now includes one Certificate of Deposit for \$50,000. Maturity date is Feb 20, 2024

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

\*H Total Grant = \$78,000: \$76,440 for program costs plus \$1,560 for FOBWR indirect costs (reclassified to Operations Oct 2022)