



Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges

Minutes of the Board Meeting

Friday, November 11, 2022 Venue: Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

Members in Attendance: Oron Atkins, Ed Barrios, Marty Cornell, Ruby Lewis, Lisa Myers, , Dick Schaffhausen, Mary Schwartz, Regina Tippett

Members Absent: Mickey Dufilho, Phil Huxford, Kim Richardson

Refuge Staff in Attendance: Bryan Winton

General Members/Guests in Attendance: Mike Lange

Lisa Myers called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM.

The proposed **agenda** was accepted.

The **minutes** of the September 9, 2022 meeting of the board were unanimously approved after a motion by Ed and a second by Oron.

Interim Motions: There were no motions made in the interim between the September 9th board meeting and the present.

Land Acquisition Update: Mike Lange noted that the executed Friends \$125,000 grant from the Knobloch Family Foundation will go to pre-purchase discovery activity for 1,350 acres adjoining the Peach Creek Forest (tract 164) of the San Bernard NWR; this is known as the McNeal Tract II, and is on the east side of the San Bernard River. It is being offered for fee title purchase.

To the north east side of Peach Creek Forest is the 1,600-acre Burr Tract, which is being offered to the USFWS as a conservation easement. Cattle have been removed from this land, and the land is being managed for waterfowl. This area is the nexus of a new Christmas bird count.

A 50-acre parcel to the NW corner of the Dow Woods

Unit is being offered to the USFWS. Funding would come from a \$2 million grant of the Wetland Conservation Act.

The 232-acre Cuddou Tract on the Brazos River is being pursued; it is next to the Brothers Unit of the SBNWR.

In Matagorda County, the USFWS is pursuing acquisitions to both the Aransas and Big Boggy refuges. Two tracts on the Matagorda Peninsula are being pursued; 553.5-acre Braman Tract and the 492-acre Executives Decision Tract.



For the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Mike assisted the Galveston Bay Foundation in the purchase of 1,222 acres on Follets Island. Another 637 acres are in the process of being purchased, and there is the potential to add another 441 acres.

Mike will prepare an overview of the 2022 land-acquisition activity for the January general membership meeting of the FOBWR.

Refuge Update: Bryan noted that:

- Hiring a temporary replacement for visitor service activities will not occur before February. Hanna Becket is being considered for this role. The delay is a result of Congress operating via continuing resolutions rather than establishing a budget.
- FWS salaries are slated for a 4.5% increase; but these funds will come from a fixed budget, thus straining other needs of our refuges.
- The TMCNWRC currently has 20 vacancies, including only one position for visitor services; the hiring freeze remains in place.
- Staffing with interns, e.g., college students, is a possibility if funding can be found. Interns would need a minimum of four months of employment to establish experience credit.
- The Complex is working with Brian Frasier of the Brazoria County Parks Department to expand public access to adjoining lands and facilities such as RV and camping sites and expanding and maintaining trails into refuge property. The county does a great job in maintaining its 11 parks and 14 miles of beach.
- Bryar Johnson will take on the task of reactivating the Complex Facebook page.
- The Service is working on a partnership agreement with GCBO.

Lisa asked Bryan to prepare an overview of refuge needs for the general membership meeting in January.

Action Register: The action register is attached at the end of these minutes. Three action items were removed:

- The Open House for area Chambers of Commerce was held on October 28th.
- The Easter Seal fishing for disabled veterans attracted 12 to 14 families
- The November Saturday Open House at Bobcat Woods was canceled because of rain.

Financial Report: The Financial Report for October, 2022 is attached to these minutes. Regina noted that she moved \$10k from the donation category to operation funds.

There has not been any significant spending of McGovern funds this year, one major expenditure from the San Bernard-McGovern fund being \$20,000 for a new Ranger UTV for sea turtle patrols.

The herbicide application funded by our Black Rail Habitat Grant has been completed using all of the \$75,626.68 available in this grant.

No charges have been made from our \$7k Modus grant. Regina will attempt to have this contract modified to allow expenditures for Modus tower maintenance.

There has been no activity in our \$18.4k maintenance reserve; it is expected that this reserve will shortly be tapped for the repair of the San Bernard Oak Trail. A bit over \$37k remains in our Cannan Bend project.

An administration fee of \$5,700 has been extracted from the Knobloch Family Foundation \$125,000 grant for pre-purchase discovery activity in along the Texas Coastal Bend. This grant is not reflected in the attached October financial statement.

Regina is working with Curtis for information needed before we contract for an audit of our books.

Web and Social Media: Dick reported that our web and Facebook media are in good shape. He has posted the upcoming Refuge Saturday at Bobcat Woods.

Maintenance Committee: no activity.

Projects: Oron plans to finish the repairs to the SB Oak Trail in time for next year's Migration Celebration. Money and materials are on hand. The refuge skid steer needs repair; it is needed to position materials along the trail.

Oron also intends to construct a photo blind at Hudson Woods.

We need two benches for the Cannan Bend trail and one bench for the trail at Big Slough; these should be the same as those dispersed along the Bobcat Woods Trail. Toward this end, Marty moved that **"The FOBWR board authorizes the expenditure of up to \$2,500 to purchase three composite benches for the Cannan Bend Unit, funded from the McGovern-Brazoria reserves."** Ed seconded the motion, which passed with unanimous approval. Marty will order these benches, and Oron will construct a concrete pad for each bench.

Birds of Prey: no report.

Membership: Mickey reported via email that FOBWR has 28 members who renew annually and 38 life-time member.

Legal/Agreements: Kim will review or bylaws for any changes that may be needed; this will be done to enable sanction by the General Membership at the January annual meeting.

Outreach: Lisa covered upcoming activities:

- The next Refuge Saturday event will be at the Bobcat Woods Trail on November 19th, led by Oron. Cleanup is scheduled for November 18th.
- The Christmas Discovery Center Open House will run from December 26th through January 1st. It is possible that the Brazoria County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce will schedule a visit to the Discovery Center during this period.
- In October, Friends outreach activities engaged over 3,000 people, including many at KBR Kids Day in Houston.

Migration Celebration: Plans are progressing well. Ravi Singhanian will approach BASF for raffle items, targeting a GoPro camera and a drone. Captain Tommy of The Skimmer tour boat will donate tickets for four passengers as well as overnight accommodation. A plan is needed for the protocol of the raffle. 2,500 MC23 rack cards have been printed; Lisa will post some of these in our county libraries.

Monthly Member Walks: Ed discussed ways to increase participation in these walks. A goal is to schedule them in a predictable pattern, like the Saturday after the Monthly COT Master Naturalist meeting that occurs on the second Wednesday of each month so the timely promotion of the walk can be made. Ed will schedule a Nature Note presentation featuring the refuge walks at an upcoming COT meeting. The Dance Bayou Unit will be the site of the November walk

The 2023 Board: Lisa requested that each current board member let her know of their intent to serve in 2023. She also requested that we begin to think how to celebrate the 30th anniversary of FOBWR, which will occur in 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:19 pm.

Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuge Board Action Register November 2022				
Action Item	Who? Date Started?	Due Date?	Status	Comments
Develop a New Outdoor Environmental Education Display for our canopy	Lisa/ 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; pulldown window shades, large map of Complex lands
Develop text on FOBWR history for website	Ed Barrios	Sometime in 2021	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	Lisa, Mickey	Before the end of 2022	Researched succession planning	Kim is looking into protocol (bylaws, P&P), board consensus is needed to define skill needs. <i>Want thoughts for November meeting. Want diversity to broaden pool. We need someone with Ravi's contact expertise. Hire executive director.? Hire part time for corporate and community involvement.</i>
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 met with Mark Allison at the DC, Priced animals wants to charge per size, then 20% discount. So far bobcat on stump, redo inside base. \$1,300. Bryan committed to \$1500 for this project this year; possibly same amount for next year.
More promotion of refuges	Lisa, Mickey, Marty	Oct. 2022	not stated	A open house for area chambers of commerce will be held on October 28 th 2022.

Master Contact Spreadsheet	Ed	Ongoing	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 reformatted and need to get done this month updated this. Ed will be administrator.
Create a Grant Solutions account to enable applying for federal grants	Regina	Before end of 2022	The ASAP system is used for reimbursements. Regina will pursue a Grant Solutions account. ASAP up and running. GS current grant is there. We are not in yet. Not done yet
Design concept for B. Burkhart memorial	Oron and Lisa		An idea is a memorial entrance arch for the BWT pollinator garden. Metal options have been rejected. Now exploring a granite bench with an etched design. Or perhaps a concrete bench with bench with imbedded tiles Lisa probing options, ref to lisa's email. 18" x 18' glass inlay display at DC is another option. A wood-looking concrete Bench would cost \$1259 A stain glass commemorative plaque would cost at least \$1000. Lisa will look into stain glass.
Design rack card with all trails	Lisa	ongoing	Guests like them and easy to hand out 7/22 Note: Lisa reprinted refuge trifold and bookmark. These do not describe all of the tarils
Define the role/cost of a paid Community Liaison Director	Not specified		This role would contract for work performed by Ravi and Phil in soliciting donations. Must avoid creating an employee status. Thinking a paid part time position.
Correct the Brazosport Chamber of Commerce information about trails on the refuges.	Ed		Also change listing from Ed's home # The BP Chamber has not been responsive. Will keep trying
Create informational PowerPoint presentation on refuges & FOBWR to present to community organizations/groups	Lisa	Soon	Cody will look for Jennifer's refuge presentation; Ed will look for FOBWR's; Marty supplied Lisa with a PwrPt on 8/25 collecting info. Use video with more drone shots.
Check on ability to hold hybrid board meetings when members cannot attend in person	Lisa		Check with GCBO. Ok for voice participation. Could use zoom. Need for bylaws to allow. Kim will check with bylaws to include remote participation.

Winter Break Open House
at Discovery Center

Ruby +

12/26 thru
1/1

Hispanic chamber one day perhaps

Schedule a Nature Note
Presentation at a COT
monthly meeting

Ed, 11Nov22

FOBWR FINANCIAL STATEMENT October 31, 2022

TDECU				\$60,155.10
Merrill Lynch Cash				\$296,909.77
Merrill Lynch Certificates of Deposit				\$96,752.92
ACCOUNT BALANCE				\$453,817.79
-				
FUNDED GRANTS and ALLOCATED FUNDS	Grantor	Total Awarded	Amount Spent	Amt Available
20131230 McGovern Brazoria NWR non committed	Katherine McGovern	295,279.33	173,229.40	122,049.93
20131220 McGovern San Bernard NWR	Katherine McGovern	137,000.00	90,894.05	46,105.95
20130919 Poole Track Land Acquisition	Trull Foundation	10,000.00	-	10,000.00
20181231 Houston Endowment Land Acquisition 4	Houston Endowment	325,000.00	291,072.19	33,927.81
20201228 Houston Endowment Land Acquisition 5	Houston Endowment	150,000.00	55,500.00	94,500.00
20211229 Damuth Foundation Land Acquisition	Damuth Foundation	35,000.00	30,500.00	4,500.00
20220112 Equistar Chemicals - Motus Tower Fees	Equistar Chemicals	7,000.00	-	7,000.00
20210722 Black Rail Habitat (\$78,000 Reimbursable grant)	USFWS	75,626.68	75,626.68	-
TOTAL ALLOCATED FUNDS		\$1,034,906.01	\$716,822.32	\$318,083.69
FOBWR PROJECTS		Amt Allocated	Amount Spent	Amt Available
46400 Birds of Prey	FOBWR	35,793.40	27,734.20	8,059.20
Migration Celebration	FOBWR	28,679.58	2,954.14	25,725.44
20170101 BNWR Donation Box	Donations	2,204.35	-	2,204.35
20201231 General Donations, Membership Fees, etc.	Donations	4,107.15	-	4,107.15
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	-	18,399.86

*G

*E

20190601 ATFN 2019 Cannan Bend	FOBWR	211,436.29	174,088.64	37,347.65	*B
TOTAL FOBWR PROJECTS		\$303,295.98	\$204,776.98	\$98,519.00	
OPERATIONS		\$31,045.66	\$6,842.47	\$24,203.19	*E, *F
FUNDS IN TRANSIT				\$13,011.91	*I
TDECU SAVINGS				\$15.70	
TOTAL Funds in Bank Accounts				\$453,833.49	

COMPLETED PROJECTS OR GRANTS

NOTES

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

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

*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 two Certificates of Deposit for \$50,000 each. Maturity dates are Feb 03, 2023, 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)