

CARSON CITY ADVISORY BOARD TO MANAGE WILDLIFE

Minutes of the August 14, 2000 Meeting

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A special meeting of the Carson City Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife was held at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, August 14, 2000 in the Carson City Fire Department Conference Room, 777 South Stewart Street, Carson City, Nevada.

PRESENT: Vice Chairperson Norman Pedersen
Larry Blank
Greg Davis

STAFF: Kathleen King, Recording Secretary
(ABMW 08/14/00; Tape 1-0001)

NOTE: Unless indicated otherwise, each item was introduced by Vice Chairperson Pedersen. A tape recording of these proceedings is on file in the Clerk-Recorder's Office and is available for review and inspection during regular business hours.

1. CALL TO ORDER, DETERMINATION OF QUORUM (1-0634) - Vice Chairperson Pedersen called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. He introduced Members Blank and Davis and discussed the role of the Advisory Board. A quorum was present.

2. PRESENTATION BY PATRICK J. SOLLBERGER, NEVADA DIVISION OF WILDLIFE WESTERN REGION BIOLOGIST, REGARDING THE TOPAZ LAKE AND LAKE TAHOE FISHERIES AND CURRENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES; AND 3. DISCUSSION REGARDING SCOPING, MANAGEMENT ISSUES, AND DEVELOPMENT OF FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLANS ("FMP") FOR TOPAZ LAKE AND LAKE TAHOE (1-0693) - Vice Chairperson Pedersen introduced Patrick Sollberger. Mike Sevon, the Supervising Fisheries Biologist for the Western Region, introduced himself. He thanked the Board members and the citizens for their attendance, and provided background information on the development of fisheries management plans. He explained that the Nevada Division of Wildlife ("NDOW") staff has decided that the public should be included in fisheries management decisions as part of the comprehensive strategic plan developed in 1997. He indicated that the presentations would include water biology, management problems, management prescriptions, and solicitation of comments.

Mr. Sevon discussed the contributions of former Chief of Fisheries, Gene Weller, to the process of developing the fisheries management plans. He displayed a matrix of the Fisheries Bureau program plan, and advised that the implementation schedules will cover ten years. He advised that the Fisheries Bureau staff had reviewed sport fishing and native fishes with the goals of maintenance, enhancement and promotion. Mr. Sevon discussed plans to publish the fisheries management plans, present them to the public, receive public input, and finalize the plans by the end of December 2000. He indicated that Mr. Sollberger has led the way in the region in producing the East Carson River and the East Walker River Fisheries Management Plans. Draft versions of the East Carson River plan have been available for approximately three years. Mr. Sevon advised that Mr. Sollberger would present the East Walker River Fisheries Management Plan and information regarding the biology of Topaz Reservoir. The process for developing the Topaz Reservoir plan is just beginning.

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Mr. Sevon provided an overview of the presentation, including management, regulations, anticipated angler success (target goals), the fisheries locations, the fish species and their origin, fish size and growth rates, and what biologists expect for fish carry over. He provided an example of some of the extremes being considered for trophy management concepts, which is considered a special interest category. Regulations are intended to restrict the harvest and/or the methods by which the fish are caught; angler success is .5 to 1.75 fish per hour and 0 to 1 fish per angler; the fishery location is usually isolated; the fish species may come from the hatchery or they may be naturally reproducing; the fish size should be memorable; and the fish carry over should be sustained.

Mr. Sevon then reviewed the “next extreme” - urban fisheries. He advised that management for an urban fishery would be supply and demand, and provided the example of Sparks Marina Park. Regulations include reduced harvest and standard methods; angler success ranges from .25 to .5 fish per hour and 1 to 1.5 fish per angler; the fishery location is usually urban; the fish come from a hatchery; the standard catchable fish size is between 8” and 10”; little or no fish growth because the fish are taken out as soon as they are put in; and fish carry over is probably less than thirty days. Mr. Sevon noted an important consideration is that regulations cannot be imposed on a water that can’t produce fish. For example, a trophy fishery has to be able to sustain carry over and produce fish that are of memorable size. Biologists have the option of hatchery stocking or naturally reproducing fish but if the regulations don’t make the change over time, the public will not support them. The biologists are, therefore, considering the productivity of each body of water in order to develop a realistic fisheries management concept. Mr. Sevon then referred to a Schedule of Fisheries Management Plans and discussed the development of the Fisheries Management Plan for Walker Lake which was completed in 1988. He pointed out the waters that have existing fisheries management plans and the waters that need fisheries management plans.

Mr. Sevon introduced Kim Tisdale, the fisheries biologist for the Reno office, and advised that she has been working on fisheries management plans in the Reno area. Ms. Tisdale indicated that scoping for the Truckee River will be done in the near future. Mr. Sevon explained the process for the presentations and for receiving public comment. He advised that comments would be incorporated into the management plans.

Mr. Sollberger provided background information on development of the fisheries management plans. He advised that the East Carson River has been submitted to a thorough in-house review but has not yet been presented to the public. He encouraged the Board members and the citizens to provide comments at the appropriate time. He explained that at the time the fisheries management plans were agendaized he planned to review Topaz Lake and Lake Tahoe. He discussed the reasons for presenting draft plans for the East Walker River and the East Carson River. He advised that the comment period would remain open for thirty days after the presentation. Once the public comment period is completed, an additional in-house review will be required. The goal is to implement the fisheries management plans by July of 2001 to cover the following ten years.

EAST WALKER RIVER: Mr. Sollberger distributed the Draft Fisheries Management Plan for the East Walker River. He displayed a map and indicated the area to which the plan will apply. He described physical characteristics of the River, and advised that 21 miles of it can be publicly accessed. Rainbow

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trout, brown trout, mountain whitefish, speckled dace, Tahoe sucker, mountain sucker and red-side shiner are the fish species found in the River. Mr. Sollberger discussed regulations at the Rosaschi Ranch, including a zero-harvest limit, and single barbless hooks. The remainder of the River is under a general fishing regulation which provides for catching and keeping 5 trout species and 10 mountain whitefish using any legal angling method. Mr. Sollberger displayed Angler Origin charts (Attachment 10) and reviewed the same. He attributes the increase in use after 1995 to the fact that the Rosaschi Ranch became public at that time.

Mr. Sollberger then reviewed the Mail-In Questionnaire History (Attachment 9) and the Rainbow Trout Population Survey at the Rosaschi Ranch (Attachment 8). He explained the method by which the fish are counted, and advised that the number of naturally reproduced fish have increased. He attributes this to the habitat at the Rosaschi Ranch. Discussion took place regarding the reason for the increase in fish population between 1995 and 1996. Mr. Sollberger then reviewed the Brown Trout Population Survey (Attachment 8) at the Rosaschi Ranch and noted that the population densities are high. Natural reproduction is indicated by the large number of fingerling fish in the area and he noted that the fish in the area are primarily wild.

Mr. Sollberger then reviewed the Rainbow and Brown Trout Population Surveys (Attachment 5) for the area of the Elbow, which is 6.5 to 7 miles down river of the Rosaschi Ranch. He noted that the habitat and reproduction for the area are good. He advised that the rainbow trout which have grown into the 8" to 12" size class are all stocked, hatchery fish. He indicated that he is not certain as to the reason the smaller rainbow trout have not grown larger. With regard to the brown trout, Mr. Sollberger indicated that some recruitment into the higher age classes is taking place. NDOW stopped stocking fingerling brown trout in 1994 so all the younger fish are from natural reproduction. The difference between Rosaschi Ranch and the Elbow is the harvest which takes place at the Elbow.

Mr. Sollberger reviewed the Rainbow and Brown Trout Population Surveys (Attachment 7) for Raccoon Beach, which is another 7 to 8 miles down river. He indicated that habitat in the area of Raccoon Beach is not as good. NDOW began stocking rainbow trout at Raccoon Beach in 1998, and carry over is minimal. Mr. Sollberger indicated that NDOW has stocked 10,000-20,000 fingerling brown trout for the last twenty to thirty years and it is difficult to determine whether natural reproduction occurs.

Mr. Sollberger reviewed the Trout Stocking History (Attachment 6). He proposed that the number of stocked fish be dropped from 9,500 to 9,000 total, and that 5,000 of those fish be allocated to the Elbow. He believes there is competition between the wild fish and the hatchery fish. If more wild fish could be allowed to grow to the next size class, the anglers would be more likely to keep them which would result in more wild fish in the spring time. Mr. Sollberger indicated that if this proposal doesn't reflect the desired result in two to four years, the management practice can be changed back. He advised that NDOW used to stock at Raccoon Beach and Zanis twenty years ago. The practice has been resumed with the goal of planting 2,000 fish at each site. He indicated that a total of 20,000 fingerling brown trout will continue to be stocked at Raccoon Beach and Zanis.

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Mr. Sollberger advised that the entire Walker River is “put and take on paper.” As he previously indicated, successful fishing and natural reproduction are taking place in the upper section. This indicates that the fishery should not be classified as “put and take.” He pointed out that the regulations will not be changed, but that each section of the water will be classified so that a management plan can be developed. The Rosaschi Ranch area will be termed a “quality fishery,” the zero limit will be continued, and it will not be stocked. The Elbow will be termed a “quality” and “general” fishery and he will be looking for the wild fish to be able to carry over from one year to the next. Sites further down river will be termed “general fishery” and “put and take” although he hopes to see some carry over from year to year.

Mr. Sollberger reviewed the Implementation Schedule (Attachment 14) and advised that he would be visiting the area more often throughout the year. Streamside questionnaire boxes are located at the Elbow and at Rosaschi Ranch and three more will be installed in the near future. The mail-in questionnaire surveys will be revised in order to obtain better information. He commented that invertebrate collections are valuable in determining problems with water bodies.

Mr. Sollberger solicited questions, comments, and suggestions. Mr. Sevon commented that the Fish and Wildlife Service is in the process of revising the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Recovery Plan. He anticipates that the plan will include the Walker River and Truckee River drainage as recovery objectives. The Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to expand those waters which have terminal lakes. They would like to see a run developed from Walker Lake all the way up the Walker River system, through Yerington and into the headwaters of the east and west forks of the Walker River. NDOW biologists have provided a position statement on western Nevada rivers to work together on developing a run from Pyramid Lake through the Truckee River system. An agreement has been reached that NDOW biologists will not stock rainbow trout in the Truckee River below the City of Reno in order to target the area as a recovery/spawning area for Lahontan Cutthroat Trout. With regard to the Walker River, however, NDOW biologists have taken a strong position that current management practices have been effective, and that development of a run from Walker Lake will not be supported. Mr. Sevon stated that the lower 60 miles of the Walker River system is not healthy enough to support trout.

In response to a question, Mr. Sollberger described the electroshock process and its various effects. In response to a further question, Mr. Sollberger discussed the sampling technique and the accuracy of the results. He estimated that the photo transect sampling picks up 70-80% of the total number of trout. With regard to migration characteristics, Mr. Sollberger indicated that trout have not been studied in the East Walker River. He discussed differences in the samplings as a result of the required drainage of Bridgeport Reservoir. He did not have information on how migration is affected by spawning in the East Walker River. He acknowledged that general movement takes place during spawning, and that habitat is a key factor. In response to a question, Mr. Sollberger advised that hatchery fish caught in the Rosaschi Ranch area would have migrated in from another area. He explained that the Elbow is the closest area to the Rosaschi Ranch that is stocked, and he was not aware of any affect the hatchery fish have on the wild fish. Member Davis indicated support for the proposed management plan. He suggested reducing the number of hatchery fish stocked in the River and expressed support for continued management of the Elbow. He expressed concern over continued sediment flushing from the Bridgeport Reservoir. Mr. Sollberger explained that the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection issues water quality standards which must

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be complied with. He commented that the hatchery crew stocks three or four times a year. Member Blank expressed appreciation for the fact that Mr. Sollberger will be spending more time in the area as he is concerned over the accuracy of the mail-in survey.

Discussion took place regarding survey participation, trash problems at the Elbow, development of a plan to manage the River property, the amount of use the area receives, the affect that fluctuations in the flow regimen have on the invertebrate population, and the migration distance of the cutthroat trout. In response to a question, Mr. Sevon explained that NDOW believes an attempt to develop a run from Walker Lake would be a wasted effort because the lower Walker River is not the habitat it was a hundred years ago. There has been no indication of rainbow trout recruitment in the West Walker River system in the last decade. Development of a cutthroat trout run in the East Walker River system may be possible but the sport fishery would be ruined. He indicated that NDOW's position is efforts should be focused on the Pyramid Lake system and the Truckee River, although questions remain regarding net loss of fishing opportunity. Discussion took place regarding the federal mandate at Stillwater, and Mr. Sevon advised that NDOW's mission is to maintain sport fishing interests and native fish.

In response to a question, Mr. Sollberger advised that the Board and the citizens in attendance would have thirty days to provide written comments/recommendations. Vice Chairperson Pedersen commended Mr. Sollberger and Mr. Sevon on the draft management plan and expressed his support for the same. Member Davis concurred and expressed appreciation for the information provided by NDOW in recent years. Vice Chairperson Pedersen solicited further public comment on the draft management plan; however, none was provided.

(2-0525) - **EAST CARSON RIVER:** Mr. Sollberger displayed a map and pointed out the boundaries of the Carson River. He advised that the East Carson River, the West Carson River and the Carson River are considered navigable. The State owns the entire River bed and public access to the channels is available. Species found in the river include brown trout, rainbow trout, mountain whitefish, Tahoe sucker, mountain sucker, speckled dace, red side shiner and Paiute sculpin. The more popular angling spots include Apple Orchard, Sheep Ridge, Horseshoe Bend, Ruhenstroth Dam, Riverview Bridge, Lutheran Bridge, and the Highway 88 Bridge. Mr. Sollberger acknowledged that the bridge over the Ruhenstroth Dam is being reconstructed. He advised there is only one irrigation diversion in the upper section which results in good flows. He indicated areas of diversion where flows are very low which causes problems with temperature and oxygen. He considers the upper portions better in terms of flow and water quality.

Mr. Sollberger reviewed user statistics, stocking recommendations, the stocking summary (Attachment 6), and the stocking versus angler catch summary (Attachment 8). Mr. Sevon advised that the angler questionnaire will be rewritten so that a determination can be made as to the number of fish caught and the number of fish released. Mr. Sollberger reviewed the Electrofishing Survey Summary (Attachment 10) for the areas of the Apple Orchard and below Ruhenstroth Dam. He discussed environmental conditions which may be affecting the fish, and reviewed Attachment 3, the East Carson River Discharge. He then reviewed the Implementation Schedule (Attachment 13).

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Discussion took place regarding a remedy for the problems associated with the River, and Mr. Sollberger advised of the need for better habitat, including reduction of sediment levels and balancing nutrient levels and temperature. He indicated that if these things are determined to affect the habitat, more support will be needed to acquire funding to remedy the situation. Discussion followed regarding purchase of water rights, improved road development, and the U.S. Forest Service's plan to address erosion problems and reforestation issues in the upper watershed.

Mr. Sollberger indicated that the proposal is to leave the East Carson River as a put and take fishery, and continue to acquire more knowledge about the River.

(2-0939) - **TOPAZ LAKE:** Mr. Sollberger advised that the fisheries management plan for Topaz Lake is still in the scoping stage. The goal is to implement the plan in July 2002, and Mr. Sollberger emphasized the importance of receiving public comment and input within thirty days of this meeting. He reviewed the Mail-In Angler Origin Survey and the Roving Creel Angler Origin (Figures 1 and 2). He indicated that the data source includes only Nevada license holders. He then reviewed the Mail-In Creel Survey History for 1994 to 1998 (Attachment 2), NDOW's Trout Stocking Summary for 1999 and the Trout Stocking History for 1995 to 1999 (Attachment 5). Mr. Sollberger explained that Topaz Lake is managed under a general fisheries concept. NDOW stocks fish, the biologists do not rely on fish running up to the West Walker River, and there is carry over from year to year.

Mr. Sollberger reviewed and discussed the water quality graphs for June 9, 1999, July 20, 1999, and September 9, 1999 (Figures 3, 4, and 5); and the Reservoir Storage Summary for 1995 to 1999 (Attachment 1). Mr. Sollberger solicited questions and comments, and in response to a question regarding fishing at the irrigation channel, advised that it is stocked and that he believes some fish come to the irrigation channel for spawning during the fall of the year. He indicated that the irrigation channel is not included in the Topaz Lake Fishery Management Plan. He discussed California Fish and Game stocking practices and the effects of the 1997 flood. In response to a question, Mr. Sollberger described the relationship between NDOW representatives and California Fish and Game representatives with regard to Topaz Lake. He discussed enforcement measures and the net pen project conducted in cooperation with Chuck Fields, of Topaz Landing.

He displayed his and Mr. Sevon's address and telephone number and invited written comments to be submitted within the next thirty days. He explained the public review process for the draft plan, and advised he would schedule a Lake Tahoe presentation at a later date. Vice Chairperson Pedersen thanked Mr. Sollberger and Mr. Sevon for their time. In response to a question, Mr. Sevon advised that testing for whirling disease had been done on the Truckee and East Walker Rivers with negative results. He described a new method for analyzing whirling disease and advised that some testing had been conducted at the Lahontan National Fish Hatchery. Some samples were discovered in one of the lots which would have come from the Carson River system. He suspects that whirling disease exists in the East Carson River in fairly low numbers, and advised that testing will continue. He thanked all in attendance for their participation.

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4. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME AND LOCATION (1-0069) - Member Blank advised that he and Chairperson MacKenzie had discussed scheduling the next meeting for Wednesday, August 30, 2000. (3-0373) Vice Chairperson Pedersen advised that the next meeting is tentatively scheduled for August 30th at 7:00 p.m.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDIZED ITEMS - None.

6. ADJOURNMENT (3-0393) - Member Davis moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 p.m. Member Blank seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.

The Minutes of the August 14, 2000 meeting of the Carson City Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife are so approved this 16th day of October, 2000.

CHRISTOPHER MacKENZIE, Chairperson