

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 11, 2011

Phone Conference

In attendance: Joan Bruchman, Matthew Cvetas, Donnie Dann, Bob Fisher, Glenn Gabanski, Mary Lou Mellon, Judy Pollock,

President, Joan Bruchman, called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

1. Treasurer's Report – Glenn

In 2010 BCN had an income of \$2,137.67 and expenses of \$2,156.05. This gave us a net loss of \$18.38. The checkbook balance on 12/31/10 was \$3,955.05. A budget for 2011 will be presented at the January Quarterly Meeting and submitted to the representatives for approval.

2. Grant Program/IWPF Grant Update – Glenn

In early December we finally received the \$1,200 check for the IWPF Grant and on 12/6/10 it was deposited in the BCN checking account. This completes the IWPF Grant and no other grants are planned as of this date.

3. BCN and taxes – Glenn

Our current fiscal practice is to spend all our yearly income to avoid paying income tax. This means our funds balance either stays the same or slowly decreases. It will never grow. This could limit our activities in the future if we plan for or need to spend a large sum of money for a major project.

Here are two alternatives: pay corporate tax to increase our funds or apply for 501(c)(3) non-profit status. The former allows us to continue playing a supporting role in politics, which we don't seem to do, while the latter would not. Non-profit status does not prevent us from supporting environmental issues.

Disadvantages to applying for non-profit status are the restriction on supporting candidates in elections, completing the 30-page application, the many-month process involved in applying, and the \$400 application fee. (At the 15% corporate tax rate BCN could have income of \$2,666.67 before paying \$400 in taxes.) Advantages are enabling donations to BCN to be deductible, not losing any income to taxes, and simpler tax filing each year.

The disadvantage to paying taxes is losing 15% of our net income, but the advantage would be keeping 85% of our net income to allow our funds balance to grow.

After discussion the ExCom decided we should simply drop the practice of always spending all our income and start paying tax as needed. However, the question of whether BCN should apply for non-profit status will be raised at the January meeting to see if there is any consensus on the part of the representatives that this is a direction BCN should take.

4. Advocacy – Donnie

Donnie listed a number of letters of support he had done on behalf of BCN. As is our current practice Donnie will forward copies of each letter to Joan who will keep them on file for future reference and for anyone wishing to request copies.

5. Great Lakes IBA Dedication – Donnie

The dedication is scheduled for Thursday, 4/21, at Great Lakes. Time will be determined later. A Give Back To Birds event in conjunction with the dedication was discussed but it would involve people moving

buckets of sand. Since this is not a very attractive activity and could be done more efficiently by a front-loader we will wait to see if that can be arranged. Donnie will also find out about how to get people into Great Lakes to see the dedication.

6. Great Lakes Off Shore Wind Power, BCN Policy draft –Judy, Matt, Donnie

No Report

7. Nominations – Judy

BCN has not had a secretary for a year now and Judy is out of ideas for whom to ask to run. Also, no one volunteered to serve with Judy on this committee. Secretary is a very important job and is also one of our elected positions as described in our by-laws and we decided to make a strong effort to find a candidate. Two names that were mentioned again were Bobbie Asher and Suzanne Checchia. Judy will contact them and strongly urge them to run. If this is unsuccessful a strong plea will be made at the January meeting.

8. Monitors 2011 Brunch – Joan, Judy

The location for the bird walks will be Schaumburg Road Grasslands. Lee Ramsey is supposed to know of a good restaurant nearby for the brunch. Joan will check with Lee. Date is likely late May.

9. Calumet Firing Range Update – Joan

Joan reported on an article Carolyn Marsh had written summarizing the situation and had then shared with BCN ExCom. Several members could not remember the article and Joan will send each of us a copy for reference. (See Appendix A.) Here also is a link to the article.

http://www.chicagoaudubon.org/pages/2011/vol25_1/compass_vol25-1_2011_web.pdf

10. Wild things Conference Update – Mary Lou, Judy

The Wild Things conference will be held March 5 at the University of Illinois at Chicago (Mary Lou is co-chair with Jane Balaban).

Registration is at about 150 to 200, which is about right for this for now. We expect over 1,000 registrants, probably closer to 1300. Judy had inquired about closing it down at about 1200, but the feeling is to take as many people as are interested.

Mary Lou will send out reminders on or about Jan 24th to the local listservs: BCN, IBET and Birder's Forum and Judy will send reminders to all who came last year and to others. Once the registration closes on January 30th the entry fee goes up from \$28 to \$40.

BCN brochures and Birds of Concern brochures will be put on the Habitat Project Table. If BCN folks could stop by the table and help out and talk to new people to encourage new monitors to register, that would be great. We will also provide some brochures at any session that relates to bird monitoring.

We considered putting the Birds of Concern brochure into every registrant's packet, but decided that it probably wouldn't be productive.

11. Forest Preserve Fishing Line Containers – Judy

Judy has tried to contact the person at the FPDCC but has been unsuccessful. She will try again. It is suggested that new ones with lids have been installed. (Do we know if this is true?)

12. Zebra Mussels/Gobies Killing Birds in the Great Lakes – Mary Lou

Mary Lou mentioned the sad report from the Chicago Tribune, Nov. 28, re the large bird die-off in northern Michigan, which seems to be connected to the spread of invasive zebra and quagga mussels, which entered the great Lakes aboard ocean going vessels decades ago. Some estimates claim more than 100,000 birds have died in the past 15 years. The thought is that the cause involves a naturally occurring but deadly botulism linked to the spread of the nonnative mussels. The die-off has devastated the populations of a number of important and protected bird species such as loons in Michigan, which has given researchers rallying point to draw attention and hopefully more funding to this issue.

13. Other items.

Joan mentioned an article in the Jan. 10 Chicago Tribune about the Chicago Park District board accepting a transfer of 556 acres of marshland from the city, pending approval from the City Council, as part of Mayor Richard Daley's plan to transform nearly 3,900 acres of the region into Chicago's largest open-space reserve. Later Matt sent each of us the link to the article:

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/chibrknews-southeast-side-to-get-556-acre-01102011,0,1075713.story>

Joan also reminded everyone to send her agenda items for the January Meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Glenn Gabanski
Temporary Acting-Secretary

Appendix A.

Protecting Lake Calumet Wetlands All Over Again

Update on the Proposed Outdoor Firing Range

**By Carolyn A. Marsh
Conservation Chair
Chicago Audubon Society**

Efforts are continuing by conservationists to protect the Lake Calumet wetland complex in southeast Chicago. For months, wildlife advocates have focused their opposition to an outdoor firing range on the owner of the land, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD).

The MWRD land that is under contention is 33 acres of 140 open-space acreage located at O'Brien Lock & Dam on the Calumet River. The neighboring properties are the Hegewisch Marsh, O'Brien Lock Marsh, and Whitford Pond. The Chicago Police Department proposed to the City of Chicago that the Police Department lease the 33 acres for 39 years for a shooting range, arsenal, and police-training center.

Conservationists attended three consecutive MWRD board meetings and gave two key objections to the location of the firing range. The first objection was that no wildlife study had yet been conducted on the 140-acre property, which has a history of state-endangered Black-crowned Night Herons nesting at that location. In addition, in 2010, Great Blue Heron and Great Egrets were discovered nesting in Whitford Pond trees.

The second objection was that for two and a half years the Chicago Police Department had searched for available property only within the Chicago city limits while more suitable land is available for the project outside the city proper. The project is financed by the State Asset Forfeiture Fund which indicates that the firing range can most likely be located outside Chicago. Chicago police training is currently conducted at various locations outside the city. At the meetings, Lt. Raymond Hamilton stated that the facility would be made available to federal, state, suburban, and Chicago police units.

While seven MWRD commissioners voted to enter into lease negotiations with the city for the shooting range, two commissioners courageously voted against it. Commissioner Debra Shore stated the process was not satisfactory. She thought the noise would diminish the outdoor experience for families walking the nature trails at the Ford Environmental Center which will be built at Hegewisch Marsh. Commissioner Frank Avila voted against the project because he believed a wildlife survey was necessary to determine if any State of Illinois endangered species are nesting on the property.

It became very clear to wildlife advocates that the Chicago Department of Environment (DOE) was retracting on its previous commitment to provide for a Calumet Open Space Reserve Plan. The city had originally claimed that the Plan is a blueprint for habitat restoration, recreation, and trail connections covering 4,800 acres of one of the largest and most diverse natural wetland complexes in the Midwest.

The DOE presently manages the 140-acre Hegewisch Marsh trails and is responsible for the future Ford Environmental Center. However, now the DOE has taken the dreadful position of supporting the firing range. They minimized the inevitable lead and noise pollution that the project would have on the environment.

Chicago officials also devalued the wetlands by stating that Black-crowned Night Herons are widespread in the country. Their untenable attitude contends that it doesn't matter if wetland bird species have to relocate due to human induced disturbances.

Tens of millions of federal, state and local tax dollars have been spent on studies of Lake Calumet wildlife habitats. The local community had been promised revitalization of the local economy and the natural environment. The costly revitalization plans offered ecotourism as a viable course of economic recovery, but now all those promises sound like humbug.