

SAS Board Minutes

Feb. 23, 2021

Via Zoom call

Participating: Tim Johnson, Michael Babbitt, Maureen Leong-Kee, Carolyn Homan, Judy Brunkal, Michael Williams, Jenny Ammon, Cynthia Donald, Lowell Spring, Doug Spencer (via phone), Laurie Buswell, administrator

Guest: Joseph Youren, SAS Conservation Committee member

Call to Order: Tim called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Board member announcement – Doug announced that he and his wife will soon be moving to Wisconsin to be near family. He still wants to be involved via Zoom and will decide on resignation whenever in-person Board meetings and events resume.

Potential lawsuit participation – Joseph Youren presented an update on the potential lawsuit initiated by Corvallis Audubon against Oregon Department of Forestry for logging practices in the Santiam Canyon area after the September 2020 fires. He said the waters have muddied a bit and Bob Salinger, of Portland Audubon, was a no-show on a recent conference call to discuss details. After being notified about concerns about requirements that had not been addressed as part of the restoration plan for Santiam Forest, the plan was revised and most of the things that had been omitted have been addressed. This makes the case for a lawsuit much weaker. A meeting between the conservation groups and Forestry is set Thursday but he said it's not realistic to think salvage logging can be stopped and even getting any concessions is questionable. May just have to discuss values and what's considered "acting in bad faith" -- disregard for spotted owl habitat, problems with even-age stands as an outcome, etc. The final ask will be to "pause" salvage sales until those concerns can be addressed. Bottom line – litigation probably not in the cards.

Judy asked if DOF improved the areas of concern in its plan revisions. Joseph said it looks like they "got good legal advice" and found ways to circumvent a lawsuit. There are no real guarantees that changes will be put into effect and there's no way to insert observers because the areas are closed to all but logging operations because of safety issues. Tim asked if the water quality issues created for Salem's water supply had been addressed. Joseph said the plan notes that "riparian conservation issues" will be respected but the buffer size wasn't specified. Michael B. said it was disturbing that no observers were allowed and asked if there could be a challenge to the restrictive area and Joseph said that will be discussed on Thursday. The contention is that if timber buyers can go in, others should be able to as well. He said the request to pause salvage sales will include a request for observers to have access to the areas.

Tim wondered if the city of Salem or Marion County would have an interest in this. Joseph said it would be good if SAS was in conversation with those entities on issues like this. Doug noted that U.S. Fish and Wildlife should be involved since there are endangered species issues. Joseph said that the plan says it is "in consultation" with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, USFWS, etc., but there are no specifics. He said involvement may come about as a result of the request for ODFW's spotted owl plan. He will keep SAS posted and provide an update after the Thursday call.

Minutes from January – Mike Williams moved minutes be approved as submitted and Doug seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Action items: 1) Revision of strategic plan's Nature Center section, Carolyn and Mike W. – Item on tonight's agenda.

2) Duck stamp sales, Tim – He has not yet contacted the Friends group or Ducks Unlimited. Doug said the Friends had received a bunch of unframed stamps. He said some may have been sold at the Friends store at Finley and a few were given away as gifts. * **Action Item: Doug said the Friends store is still closed due to Covid but he will follow up with the store contact on the possibility of the stamps being sold at the Friends store.**

3) Judy to work with Lowell on a plan to help someone take over the Traveling Education program – Judy met with Lowell. She said he has an outline of how he ran the Build a Bird Box program and a list of potential volunteers. She will type up a summary. Tim said we need to find someone to take this over because it's an important program.

4) Laurie to check with Turtle Ridge on wildlife care or referral – She said they are again taking animals and birds for treatment.

Financial report – Delayed by ice storm this month.

SAS office move update – Marion Soil and Water Conservation District asked SAS to update its property tax exemption, which had expired. This is important to the property owner, since they don't qualify for an exemption. Tim said he has the paperwork, which needs to be filed before April 1 to prevent a penalty.

Website update – Festival information on the website has been updated. Mike Unger emailed the Board a Webinar update report and plans to do an oral report next month. He said some people have asked to pay to see the Raptor webinar that they missed. Access to YouTube offerings can be controlled and Mike is researching some options to allow SAS to sell access to their webinars posted to YouTube.

Nature Center update

Strategic plan revision – Carolyn had done a draft revision to the Nature Center section and emailed it to Mike W. who is working on some additions. In support of developing a plan for programs and other education/interpretation opportunities, goals should include ensuring Internet service at the Center, developing and supporting a Center website and ensuring facility security. Mike is also concerned that the strategic plan should emphasize the need for a staff person at the Center to increase educational offerings. Judy supported having some paid staff at the Center, even if just part-time. Doug said the Service is planning for staffing and any discussion of staff should include Damien, Eddie and/or Graham. The Service is in the process of hiring an intern for the summer. Jenny said when she talked with Samantha, Samantha had already mentioned staffing and is aware what it takes to support a center like this. Jenny said she could help with the strategic plan update.

N.C. opening – Tim said this may not happen until May.

Committee Reports

Nature Reserve – Tim said that as a result of the recent ice storm, a tree at the Reserve fell onto a building on property next to the Reserve. He checked with insurance and SAS is not responsible for the damage but we could offer to clean it up. There was discussion about the proper approach. Consensus seemed to be to contact the property owner about how to proceed or whether any assistance is even requested. ***Action item: Michael B. said he would make the contact.**

Conservation – Tim is setting up bird surveys at the Noble Oaks property west of Salem. The Nature Conservancy recently transferred this property to the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde and the tribes want horned lark surveys to continue. Tim has three dates planned and asked anyone interested in participating to let him know. SAS also has been asked to set up more surveys on Hayden Island's Gail Acterman reserve, controlled by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The property is across the Willamette from Minto Brown Park.

Jenny mentioned the Marion Soil and Water YouTube "Plan Your Land" series on wildlife habitat as a great conservation resource.

Increasing Diversity – Mike W. has done a great job getting the Nature Center website bilingual and would like to move the Salem Audubon website to SquareSpace and make it bilingual as well.

Adjournment – 8 p.m.

Next meeting – 6 p.m., March 23 via Zoom