

Lenzi, Chelsea

From: sbcob
Subject: FW: November 17 Item D3

On Jul 30, 2015, at 12:24 AM, Mike Moropoulos <morop@cox.net> wrote:

Dear Salud:

It has been brought to my attention that there is movement afoot that suggests a possible decommissioning of the SBCoFGC. I am appalled that such a political action might become a reality.

Many years ago I wrote in my regular outdoor column for the **Santa Barbara News-Press** about the Santa Barbara Fish and Game Commission. After attending a meeting and interviewing members of the commission I titled my column: "Who Are These Guys?" I was awe-struck. Here was a panel of volunteers so expert in their fields as to make me feel inadequate in my own (and I am an expert) while their conscientious efforts were generally unknown to the general public.

Months or even years later Commission Chair Art Kvaas invited me to lunch to discuss the possibility of my name being submitted to the Board of Supervisors for consideration of membership on the commission. Again in awe, surprised, and most significantly, honored.

From my first meeting to my last I was deeply impressed. There were always discussions of the forest, fire prevention and suppression, concern for the welfare of our wild resources, species propagation, Cachuma Lake, back country trail concerns, conservation and education. And all by ultimate experts in those areas of concern along with the invited leaders of the Los Padres National Forest, Department of Fish and Game, including wardens, biologists and DFG Commissioners.

There was constant discussion and concern of and with controlled burns, including extensive study and recommendations. There was great concern for the Santa Barbara County marine environment led by a commercial fisherman/commissioner. We traveled into the back country to observe conditions, trails, and wildlife while also studying the marine environment of our coastal waters.

In addition the Commission served as consultant to the Board of Supervisors on such matters as deer hunts, quagga mussels, trout plants and concerns for the ornithological predators that follow, fish cleaning stations, and other areas where the Supervisors might not be fully informed. That included members participating in the Southern Steelhead program. But most significantly is the fact that all of this care and concern was free to the public, these years of expertise and contribution were entirely voluntary, often with personal funding. To even imagine disconnecting from those services for unstated, arbitrary, or political reasons is unfathomable.

To disrespect the countless hours, days, and years of this of commitment to our county is in itself disrespectful to these volunteers. To wit: five commissioners represent over 150 years of highly technical and expert volunteerism; Art Kvaas, Bill Giorgi, Tom Martinez, Phil Beguhl, and the late Stan Radom (among others.) In my own profession, we honor and thank those who have served so long and so conscientiously, we do not cast them adrift as flotsam. The loss of those volunteer services to fish and wildlife will damage the outreach programs of this county.

One of the more significant responsibilities of the Commission is to distribute grant monies to local organizations that practice Conservation and Education in their efforts. Those monies are retrieved through agreement with the Fish and Game Department. Information about the grants was distributed through local media outlets, clubs, and organizations. To ensure consistency and fairness a program was established presenting an application that was very serviceable, informational, and yet simple. It was recently rendered unworthy and a twelve-page substitute was invoked.

In efforts to be fair and yet operate within the regulations, the commission has studied these applications at commission meetings, reviewing, establishing priorities, and investigating and confirming proper application of the granted monies. In most occasions members participate with programs such as Boys and Girls Club sportfishing trips/seminars, nature cruises at Cachuma Lake, Hunter Safety programs, a pheasant shoot with hunting dogs, volunteers, and possibly 20 DFG Wardens with emphasis on conservation, care of game, and warden appreciation settings. Through the grant process we have sponsored free kids fishing seminars each year at Cachuma Lake with maximum participation (50) in each including seminars for adults (who pay a registration fee.) All equipment is provided free of charge through commission grants.

Personally I am aware of the existing problem relative to quorums. But to even consider this as reason to disengage the commission reeks of bureaucracy. Under normal circumstances, and in the absence of prejudice, such problems are usually best accommodated by sitting at a table with a bottle of Crystal Geysers. There are many reasons the problem exists, but none that would result in the decommissioning of a valuable adjunct and the loss of hundreds of years of expertise. I resigned my commission not with unhappiness but because my personal life would interrupt my attendance, thus becoming part of the quorum problem. A valid concern but one with a reasonable outcome.

In all of these interactions, I have yet to hear one syllable of positive comment from those who might suggest disenfranchising the Santa Barbara Fish and Game Commission, I would consider such movement as dereliction and irresponsibility. We, Santa Barbara County and the F&G Commission, are better than that. Seek the good!

cc: Bill Giorgi, Chair; Art Kvaas, past-chair; Tom Martinez, vice-Chair; Phil Beguhl, Commercial Fisherman