

# Minutes

## US National Ramsar Annual Meeting

### April 20, 2005

**Meeting Started at 2:08 PM**

**Meeting Location:** Westin Hotel, Independence Room, Charlotte, North Carolina.

**Members Attending:** Vaughn Collins, Ducks Unlimited; Dwight Shellman, Caddo Lake; Roy Darville, Caddo Lake (via phone); Royal Gardner, Stetson University College of Law; Mike Caron, Save the Wetlands (via phone); George Furness, CTST; Gary Kania, TNC; John Cecil, Audubon Society; Kim Diana-Connolly, USC Law School; Bronwyn Mitchell, Environmental Concern; Suzanne Pittenger-Slear, Environmental Concern; David Pashley, American Bird Conservancy

**Observers Attending:** Marina Ratchford, FWS; Kathy Hurl, EPA (via phone); Joyce Namde, US State Dept (via phone); Kathleen Kutschenreuter, EPA (via phone); Patricia Delgado, NOAA (via phone)

**Proxies:** Don McLaughlin (given to Vaughn Collins), Bill Howard (given to Vaughn Collins), Larry Mason (given to George Furness), Bruce Monroe (given to Dwight Shellman), Ronald Miska (given to Dwight Shellman).

**Approval of Minutes** - Secretary will arrange to have the minutes from February meeting posted to the Committee's website so that the membership can review and solicit any comments. Motion to table approval of the February minutes until the next meeting (made by Suzanne, second by V. Collins).

**Treasurer's Report** – George Furness gave a brief oral report of the Treasurer's report (attached). Dwight reported on what checks he received for 2005 dues (list will be on next Treasurer's report). Dwight gave George some member dues checks that he had received via mail. Motion was made by David Pashley to approve the Treasurer's report and it was seconded by Roy Gardner. Gary Kania asked what is the time frame of the Committee's fiscal year. A brief discussion ensued about when the fiscal year is and or should be. Vaughn reported that the Bylaws allow the Committee to set its own fiscal year. This issue will be discussed and a fiscal year will be set at a future meeting. The question was moved and it passed on voice vote.

#### **Old Business**

Outreach - Dwight reported on some recent outreach activities that he, Joyce and Marina have conducted. Dwight explained that he would like to keep a focus on building capacity at the local level to expand the outreach of Ramsar. Dwight mentioned that the

Committee has a strategic plan and that the plan calls for the use of local workshops as an outreach activity. Gary Kania asked to see the plan and it was agreed that it would be posted to the Committee's website.

Website – Roy Gardner announced that Stetson University will take over the role of hosting the Committee's website. The current web address for the Committee will remain the same. Roy reported that he will be able to expand the material that can and will be posted on the website, as he has direct contact with Stetson's webmaster. Marina commented that the Ramsar National Report should also be posted on the website.

Ramsar National Report – Marina thanked everyone who provided comments on the Report. It was a big undertaking and it was delivered on time. Marina hopes that there will be even more input and comments on the next version, which is required three years from now.

Report on Recent Designations – Marnia reported that three new sites have now been officially listed.....Tijuana, Grassland Ecological Area, and Kawainui and Mamakua Marshes. A list of all US sites will be posted on the Committee's website. Marina raised the issue that each Ramsar site should have a sign. Dwight reported that there is a worldwide shortage of alpine wetland.....need more designation and protection. Gary Kania asked if these issues are covered in the strategic plan. Within the next week the Tijuana and Hawaii sites will be having celebrations. Joyce reported that the official designation certificates have arrived from Switzerland and will be available at the celebrations.

David Pashley asked whether there is interest by the FWS Refuge System to designate any existing refuges. Gary Kania raised the issue of whether there is any strategic framework for FWS to do Ramsar in the US. Marina reported that FWS does not have any funds to do designations (which takes strong local level support, resources and effort). Gary raised the issue that there needs to be motivations for sites to become designated (preferred grant status).

Kathy Hurlid suggested that the Committee promote the benefits of being a Ramsar site and post that. Roy mentioned that we need to do some research polling the existing sites to learn what they see as benefits. Dwight mentioned that largely the benefits are unknown. Gary Kania agreed that we need a better handle on the benefits and help FWS in their efforts to expand sites. Roy and Kim will work together to develop a formal survey.

Marina reported on a workshop that will be held at the Tijuana site next week. Dwight will attend and will be speaking to the importance of local involvement. A Mexican speaker will give a report on Mexican Ramsar activities. Mike McCoy will talk about trans-border issues and benefits. There will also be other speakers and issues covered. There will also be a discussion about other possible sites in California. Marina requested that the FWS Ramsar fact sheet be posted on the Committee's website.

Roy asked about the fencing issue on the Tijuana site. Joyce reported on some recent House action that provided for Canada and Mexican border policy and how to control illegal entry. It allows Homeland Security to install fencing without any public input or legal review (any and all environmental laws) and such work would not be subject to judicial review. Because this is a sensitive issue with the Mexican government, it will not be discussed at the Tijuana workshop.

At this time Vaughn made a motion to officially commend Marina Ratchford for her extensive and fine work on the US Ramsar report (Roy Gardner seconded...it passed on a voice vote). Later in the meeting.....Gary Kania suggested that this motion be mailed to Marina on letter head....Roy Gardner will do this

Kathy Hurlid mentioned that EPA has designated May as wetland month.

Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA). - Marina reported that the Committee will serve as the non-governmental CEPA. This designation was made by the Ramsar Secretariat, and the responsibilities are quite extensive. Roy explained that education is a key part of the CEPA role that we now play. Roy mentioned that he could work with the American Bar Association to help provide educate at local schools (Roy will help develop a speakers list relative to wetland issues).

A new member of the Committee then spoke. Suzanne Pittenger-Slear, who is President of Environmental Concern (EC), a company that has its headquarters in Maryland and that has been in existence for the past 33 years. They do wetland restoration and wetland education on a national and international basis. EC has done extensive wetland research and helped develop scientific restoration techniques. They work in and with public schools to do wetland education. Suzanne suggested that folks check out their website at [www.wetlands.org](http://www.wetlands.org). She offered to host a future meeting in St. Michaels, MD.

EC is willing to help with the Committee's CEPA responsibilities. They shared a recent publication that they produced (a piece on nutria in the Black Water Refuge). EC agreed to develop some ideas relative to CEPA and report back to the Committee at the next meeting. Marina commented that it is the Committee that is the focal point (Roy as next Chair) and so EC can help provide in kind services, but it must flow through the Committee. A motion was then made to have EC take a lead role in helping the Committee develop and implement our responsibilities as CEPA point of contact (Roy Gardner made the motion and Gary Kania seconded....passed via voice vote).

Dwight mentioned that as we all do our work we should promote the Ramsar process. Dwight also reported that Project Wet is trying to get designated by Ramsar....no success to date. Project Wet is focused primarily on water quality issues. [?? I don't recall what Project Wet was trying to be designated as.]

Gary Kania asked if the strategic plan includes reference to the Committee's CEPA role....the plan should be reviewed and expanded as needed.

Dwight reminded the group of the importance of local capacity and suggested ways to build it. Dwight suggested that each member group try to accomplish this as we all do our work.

Mike Caron talked to the need to educate tribal nations. Save the Wetlands is taking a lead role in this effort and will promote Ramsar designation in its efforts.

Kathleen Kutschenreuter reported that there will be a Western wetlands conference during October in Denver. It will involve tribe state, local and federal governmental organizations as well as nonprofits. Roy Gardner thought that this would be a good opportunity for the Committee to do some outreach and he will explore how we could participate. Dwight said he could cover this event given that he is so close to Denver. A working group consisting of Kim, Dwight, Bronwyn, Gary and Roy will discuss this matter and contact the conference organizers to see what opportunities might work.

Gary Kania suggested that we should try to include some facts from existing sites to strengthen the Committee's presentation.

The issue of whether there were any privacy problems with listing the Committee's contact info on the web was discussed. The group agreed that their names could be included on a list of members that will be posted on the Committee's website.

### **New Business**

Committee Bylaw Issue – Marina suggested that the most updated bylaws be posted on Committee website, Roy Gardner agreed to do this.

COP 9 – This meeting will be held November 7-15, 2005 in Uganda. There was a brief discussion about COP 8 and who will be attending COP 9 this fall. US attendees have not yet been identified.

Nomination Committee – On behalf of Don M. and Larry Mason, Vaughn gave a brief Nominating Committee report. The following slate was recommended:

Chair – Royal Gardner  
Vice Chair – Vaughn Collins  
Secretary – Gary Kania  
Treasurer – Roy Darville

Gary Kania asked if Suzanne from EC would like to serve as Secretary and she agreed. David Pashley then moved the slate as proposed by the Nominating Committee except switching Gary Kania for Suzanne Pittenger-Slear as the Secretary. Kim Diana-Connolly seconded and the entire slate passed on a voice vote.

Vaughn then made the following motion on behalf of the Nominating Committee. In recognition of their years of service to the US Ramsar Committee, the Members of the

Committee hereby thank Dwight Shellman and George Furness. Mr. Shellman has served for the past two years as Chairman of the Committee, and Mr. Furness has served as Treasurer since the formation of the Committee back in 1999. Both men have given generously of their time and resources. Mr. Shellman will continue to serve the Committee in the capacity of Immediate Past Chair. The newly elected Chair is hereby authorized to award these men with an engraved plaque that commemorates their contributions to the U.S. Ramsar Committee. The motion was seconded by Roy Gardner and it passed by voice vote.

**Meeting Adjourned at 4:20 PM.**

**Minutes taken and submitted by Vaughn Collins, Secretary.**