

Governance and Mission Working Group Notes

August 31, 2011 @ 1 p.m.

Creating a management structure that allows professional wildlife management/guided by science and reporting to an elected body preferable? Have director of DFG and senior management report to the F&GC rather than administration? More rationale resource management.

Current structure and membership of F&GC needs to be reconsidered before shifting responsibilities from administration. F&GC an important body with no compensation for members; should be treated as a more serious responsibility. Diminish the political influence of changing administrations. Expand number of commissioners? Regional representation? Hunting, fishing, environmental, etc. representation? Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has looked at this question, report available on the CFWSV website.

May be helpful to have someone do some homework on different governance structures. Examples include SWRCB (termed, identified expertise, regional sub-units), Air Resources Board (chair full time, others part time, stated expertise, regional air boards), Energy Commission without regional

structure (full time members, stated expertise). Dan Taylor would like to help with this homework.

Budget authority is part of the structural conversation. Who controls the budget is as important as who hires and fires the director. F&GC has authority for reviewing DFG budget, but not currently using due to insufficient capacity. Time may have come and gone for a volunteer body for this level of requested commitment.

Need rational approach for prioritizing assignments from F&GC along with overall mandates – limited resources that require synchronizing. F&GC currently uses DFG as its “staff” since it only has eight of own. Costs for rulemaking increasing exponentially as public demand for participation and transparency increases.

Urge caution about proposing structural changes that could lead to unintended consequences. Any changes need to lead to a more improved delivery of services.

DFG really only has one mission, others are a means to an end; strategies to achieve the mission. Perhaps more appropriate to say too many functions.

Water used as an example of too much “governance” in state government – DFG, DWR, SWRCB, regional boards. Overlap in responsibilities. Make DFG responsible for surface water since

fish depend upon? Review other DFG functions in light of DFG mission?

Staff caution to remain focused on direction provided in AB 2376.

Request for senior DFG staff member to provide a presentation or briefing about how, over the last 20 or so years, has meted out or structured responsibilities. See article from first executive committee meeting that describes the history of DFG – good resource.

In some cases, tasks have been given to DFG that may not be most appropriate. In other cases DFG only one spoke in the wheel (i.e., fisheries) by design.

Website for status of permits/projects.

Over years seems like there are more managers and not enough rank and file. Not clear what has created this situation. Sonke suggested result of multiple hiring freezes and “holes” in the age structure – employees advance, but no new people in the field. Example given of approval for hunt plan – taking too long to approve without enough field staff. Another example of hatcheries and not enough staff to do the stocking.

More formal training overall, not just vision and mission – would help DFG staff. Are there policies and procedures manuals that should be reviewed?

Judges and DAs not enforcing citations, so wardens sometimes feel efforts are not helpful in protecting resources. Fish and Game Court rather than going through traditional court system? Use concept of parking ticket (infractions), pay through mail? Circuit environmental court system?

Would like to see increase in number of enforcement personnel in field, parity in pay, better prosecution of the crimes, etc.

Fish and game violations are part of a long line of citation types waiting to be prosecuted, given the overloaded court system. Might be helpful to identify judges with experience in wildlife laws and create a way to increase their hearing of wildlife cases.

Please see letter from Huffman to Harris on the CFWSV website under Submitted Documents. Reference to having judges that specialize in wildlife. "Input to AG Working Group on Environmental Enforcement, Huffman to Attorney General Harris."

Chief Foley: 390 warden positions and over 8000 CHP positions. Written test, ranked on list, if selected go thru partial background, interview with chiefs and then full background (including physical and psychological tests). Academy is 30 weeks – P.O.S.T. (peace officer) training plus ten weeks of fish and game specific training. If hired, three 4-week training cycles – have lost up to 50% during the field training. Looking for a

way to consolidate dispatch so that CHP and DFG wardens can talk to one another. Some counties install sheriff's radios in each warden vehicle to improve communication.

In rural counties, use local agencies (i.e., sheriff) for dispatch might be more helpful than joining CHP.

Perhaps a presentation from DFG about land ownership and management versus habitat and critter protection.

DFG staff: Long history of land acquisition and management via Wildlife Conservation Board, mostly for migratory waterfowl. Best way to ensure perpetuity is to "own" the land. WCB helps acquire/purchase critical habitats. Wintering deer habitat was next. In last 2-30 years have moved toward "ecological" lands or easements. More land trusts being created in recent years that. Arguments that land will never be cheaper than now, so purchase now, versus can't afford to manage in the long-term so don't purchase any more land.

Suggestion that DFG may want to sell some lands (not for development purposes) or lease some for private use (such as oil and gas, cattle grazing, or other activities that are compatible with resource protection).

Perhaps greater emphasis on partnerships for managing such properties to reduce burden on DFG or any one entity?

Volunteers are underutilized; considering leveraging. Approach

local site managers and ask about needs, then design fundraising and volunteer efforts around those needs. Possible to manage a property with only volunteers through an NGO?

AB 436 (Kehoe) provides authority for up to ten NGOs to hold trusts for land management, while ownership is held by DFG.

DFG owes county taxes when properties are purchased; however rarely has the budget to pay, which leads to hard feelings.

Discussion by the BRCC about whether DFG should acquire lands for which there are no monies appropriated for long-term management. Just because there is a grant, doesn't mean have to spend.

This process is supposed to be based on what we want DFG and F&GC to look like tomorrow and not the reality we know today.

Let's think big picture – caution about making recommendations that are more micromanaging (i.e., posting calendar on website). There are some basic functions that are not appropriate to be done “naked” and could lead to paralysis. Context is everything – putting “raw” stuff out in the public realm without context can be dangerous.

Tracking system for documents, permits, etc.

Recruitment in DFG has become more difficult with the evolving economy and growing environmental field. Those who

come to DFG tend to stay until retirement and stay because they love work, not pay; pay tends to be lower than most departments. Lose a lot of top employees to federal government where pay is higher (though benefits tend to be less). Seasonal employee survey found that many stayed in the seasonal classification for up to ten years because they love the work.

Technological challenges – California DFG one of the last in nation to implement an online licensing system. Major changes have to go through a technology czar for state.

What is the problem trying to solve with a reorganization, but important to ask whether there is an improvement in services, employee satisfaction, efficiencies, etc. with those changes. Otherwise just spending a lot of money.

Fish and wildlife management authorities are divided among DFG, F&GC, and legislature. Not very efficient and creates uncertainty – sometimes creates conflicting statutes/regs.

In first BRCC meeting packet, look for letter from Huffman to LAO requesting report on different state fish and wildlife management structures. Where and how are decisions made and where do you want the politics to come into play?

UC and CSU originally were to provide science for state agencies. Need adequate time built into the structure. Example of CESA and timing of reports/peer review.

Wildlife Division v. Ecological Services Division – overlap?