

Saw Mill River Audubon
September 14, 2015 Board Meeting Minutes
Held at Croton Point Park Nature Center, Croton-on-Hudson, NY

Present: Robert McCrillis, Jan Bass, Valerie Heemstra, Philip Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, Bill Kellner, Karalyn Lamb, Donna Lassiter, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Jr., Joanne McAuley, Christine McCluskey, Tom McEnerney, John Phillips, Tom Ruth, Richard Saravay, Jean Sparacin, and Anne Swaim

Meeting started at 7:30pm. Minutes of June 8, 2015 Board Meeting were approved.

President's Report – Robert McCrillis

Robert reminded everyone that October 19 is the new date for our next Board meeting.

We will be meeting here at Croton Point Nature Center through the end of the year. John Phillips was thanked for helping with this change of venue.

Community Relations and Development – Robert McCrillis

Please look at report for period ending September 14, 2015. Membership is up. Donations are up. Everything looks very good.

Finance Committee – Philip Heidelberger

For our official quarterly report, as of July 1, 2015 the portfolio balance was \$965,689 a year-to-date increase of 1.7% over the January 1, 2015 balance of \$949,940. The year-to-date, one year and three year investment rates of return were 1.7%, 2.9% and 10.6% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of 1.0%, 0.7% and 7.4% for same periods.

In July, we received a stock donation worth approximately \$10,300 to be earmarked for improvements to Pruyn. As noted at the bottom of the Asset Allocation Report, this donation is not included in the portfolio balance. The stock was deposited in our Fidelity account, sold the next day and then transferred to our Chase checking account.

There have been \$0 in withdrawals from the portfolio during 2015 and \$600 in additions to the Larry Light Scholarship fund during 2015.

The portfolio balance on August 1, 2015 was \$969,919, a 0.4% increase for the month of July. After a very down and volatile August in which the Dow and S&P 500 both lost more than 6%, the portfolio balance on September 1, 2015 was \$931,875 representing a 3.9% loss for the month of August and a 2.4% decline for the year. SMRA has just over two years' worth of budgeted withdrawals in cash, in accordance with our guidelines, so we do not have to sell stock anytime soon during this down market.

Treasurer's Report – Tom McEnerney

Tom handed out his report of SMRA revenue and expenses for the eight months ending August 31, 2015. This has been a very good year financially so far. Revenues are significantly in excess of budget due primarily to unexpected donations. Expenses are slightly under budget. Our audit for 2014 is completed. Everything went smoothly – no problems or issues. Copies of Audit report are available at the office.

Executive Director's Report – Anne Swaim

Anne shared with us that she is no longer working half-time at Community Bible Church of Northern Westchester. Tom indicated that Anne's health insurance will be ending 12/31/15 and that we may want to discuss this at a later meeting.

We are entering into bow-hunting season once again. We are still in contact with our bow hunters from 2014. Only 2 deer were killed in 2014. We have no data on the number of deer in our sanctuaries or on the impact of last winter or coyotes on the Brinton Brook deer population. A brief discussion followed with the following resolution voted on and accepted:

We will have an annual review and vote every May on the continuation of our hunting program during the period November 1 – December 31, with approved hunters, at Brinton Brook Sanctuary and/or other sanctuaries.

Anne also acted upon the following summer sign-on letters:

- 1) July 27 – Letter thanking acting director of DEC on draft wildlife action plan.
- 2) Mid-August letter concerning bill in NYS Assembly providing State funding in support of feral cat colonies. A discussion followed: Does anyone know what happened to this bill? What is the policy on this issue in Westchester County?

Post meeting addendum: Assembly Bill AO2778 and Senate Bill S1081-2015 both passed and are waiting for Cuomo to sign or veto.

Advocacy

Tom Ruth reported on the Hudson to Housatonic Initiative (H2H). A team from SMRA has been working since December with Westchester Land Trust and Teatown on the H2H project.

The first task will be to gather a small group (20+) landowners on Sunday, September 20, to connect them with resource partners like the Native Plant Center, Teatown, Ossining Environmental Advisory Committee and Westchester Land Trust to encourage conservation practices on their land. This meeting will be held at the Weinstains' home adjacent to Brinton Brook Sanctuary between 10 am – 12 noon. If you are interested in coming please let Tom know. Tom thanked Jan Bass for use of her photo of her own backyard's barred owl in the postcard invitation to this H2H event (passed around.)

Richard Saravay announced NYS Audubon Council Fall 2015 Convention (November 6 - 8, 2015) in Windham, NY (near Hunter Mt). Does anyone have an interest in attending? There may be money in the budget to cover some costs. Meeting will address Catskills history and forest conservation for watershed protection. Karalyn, Valerie and Bill said they were interested in receiving more information.

Also passed around was the "Field Guides – Birding Tours Worldwide" for 2016-2017. Please go to their website: www.fieldguides.com for more information.

Programs and Field Trips – Christine McCluskey

Upcoming programs announced:

Thursday/September 17 program at Teatown – "In Search of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker"
 Saturday/ September 19 field trip at Hook Mountain – Hawk Watch
 Sunday / September 27 field trip at Sandy Hook - Fall Birding at Sandy Hook (Larry leading)
 Thursday, October 22 program at Croton Library – Reptiles
 Thursday, November 12 program at Croton Library – Exploring Bolivia with Brian Kluepfel
 Friday/Sat/Sun, November 13-15 - Weekend Field Trip: Forsythe NWR & Cape May

Sanctuaries Committee – Michael Madias Jr.

Mike reported on Brinton Brook's neighboring golf driving range which is next to a large area of wetland. There may be a meeting with SMRA reps and the golf course to review the buffer area, coordinated by Karalyn Lamb.

Mike handed out booklet on 16th Annual Hudson River Valley Ramble 2015. The Brinton Brook Audubon hike took place last Saturday, September 12th. 15-16 people attended. All had a good time. See booklet for other offerings.

Karalyn Lamb reported that "Operation Kiwi" received a good response from Con Edison – they just blitzed their whole area. Golf course people will not do anything until fall. On own patch it appears that deer may be eating the vines. There was not much to re-spray on Patch #1. This will continue to be monitored by Tom Lewis of Trillium Associates as part of the grant from the Lower Hudson Partnership for Invasive Species Management (PRISM).

Karalyn also reported on "Hydrilla" – an aquatic invasive plant. She provided handouts to the Board. The DEC has given \$50,000 to a company to look at aquatic invaders in the Hudson River and at Croton Bay. Anne stated that she would like SMRA to help with this – educating the public on what is happening and how they can help stop the spread of these plants. This was suggested as a possible SMRA newsletter article. Possibly work with PRISM on future outreach efforts.

Newsletter

The newsletter deadline is November 1.

Bird Seed Sale

Our Fall Seed Sale is in Chappaqua on October 3rd and 4th. Sign-up sheets were sent around for calling past customers who have not yet ordered and for volunteers for days of sale. First delivery of seed will be this Friday, September 18 at 9am at Pruyn. Looking for volunteers to help unload truck into shed.

Hospitality

Robert McCrillis thanked Jean Sparacin for coordinating the refreshments.

New Business: None.

Meeting ended at: 8:45pm **Next 2015 meeting:** October 19, 2015

Minutes by Joanne McAuley