

**Saw Mill River Audubon  
December 7, 2015 Board Meeting Minutes  
Held at Croton Point Park Nature Center, Croton-on-Hudson, NY**

**Present:** Robert McCrillis, Valerie Heemstra, Philip Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, Bill Kellner, Brian Kluepfel, Karalyn Lamb, Donna Lassiter, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Jr., Joanne McAuley, Christine McCluskey, Tom McEnerney, Ken Novenster, John Phillips, Nina Romanoff, Richard Saravay, Ponie Sheehan, Jean Sparacin, Larry Trachtenberg, and Anne Swaim.

Meeting started at 7:25pm. Minutes of October 19, 2015 Board Meeting were approved

**President's Report – Robert McCrillis**

Robert noted that Nick Fischer is moving to North Carolina – a card is being passed around to wish him well.

A condolence letter was sent to Berna Lincoln, Stan Lincoln's wife. Stan was a member since the 1960's and was president in the 1980's. He passed away earlier this year and we were not aware of this until recently.

Follow-up fund drive letters to large donors were handed out for board members to personalize.

**Community Relations and Development – Robert McCrillis**

Please look at report submitted by Ellen Heidelberger and Barbara Campbell.

**Finance Committee – Philip Heidelberger**

For our official quarterly report, as of October 1, 2015 the portfolio balance was \$912,955 a year-to-date decrease of 3.9% below the January 1, 2015 balance of \$949,940. The year-to-date, one year and three year investment rates of return were -3.9%, -1.5% and 7.0% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of -3.8%, -2.7% and 4.3% for same periods.

The portfolio balance on November 1, 2015 recovered to \$955,277, a 4.6% increase for the month of October. The portfolio balance on December 1, 2015 was \$933,057, a 2.3% decrease for the month of November, and a 1.8% decrease for the year. However, almost all of November's \$22,220 decline was due to withdrawals to cover expenses: \$20,000 for operating expenses, \$1,249 for garden expenses, and \$735 for the Light Scholarship. These were actually the first withdrawals of the year.

There have been \$21,984 in withdrawals from the portfolio during 2015 and \$600 in additions to the Larry Light Scholarship fund during 2015. We anticipate another \$10,000 withdrawal this year.

**Treasurer's Report – Tom McEnerney**

Tom distributed his financial report showing revenues and expenses through November 2015 as compared to the 2015 Budget and showing the proposed 2016 Budget. The "Big Story" in 2015 was donations, which were significantly in excess of budget due primarily to about \$11,000 in one-time gifts and about \$9,000 in donations from unbudgeted birding trips.

Tom then reviewed the proposed 2016 Budget line by line. Anne Swaim left the room during the discussion about changing the Executive Director's position from half-time to 3/4 time for 2016. This change was being proposed with the expectation of generating additional revenue in 2016 to offset, in part, the additional costs and the new situation would be subject to review at the end of 2016.

After further discussion, the proposed 2016 Budget was approved.

**Executive Director's Report – Anne Swaim**

Anne reported on the **Brinton Brook Deer Management Program**. Our bow hunters have shot a total of 5 deer (2 bucks/3 does) so far this season. Season ends December 31. A neighbor of Pruyn has also invited a bowhunter onto his property. This bowhunter has shot one deer. Only public response received to the Brinton bowhunting was an e-mail concerning the safety of walking on the property after the individual saw our posted signs.

**Executive Director's Report – Anne Swaim** (continued)

Proposed 2016 Westchester **County Budget** is again proposing to eliminate the nature center curator positions as well as positions in the county planning department. It is expected that these positions will be restored in the county legislators' counter budget but the final decision is not certain.

Anne Swaim added Saw Mill River Audubon as a supporting organization on the following letters per our policy of following the recommendations of Audubon New York for **environmental action sign-on** decisions in-between board meetings, with a report to the Board at the following meeting:

- 1) Letter from Friends of NYS Parks to Governor Cuomo thanking him for supporting New York State Parks including this initiative combining private/public funding.

<http://www.nysparks.com/publications/documents/NYParks2020.pdf>

- 2) Letter in support of the NYS Environmental Protection Fund.

Anne reported on the background behind a Journal News article about **Year-Round RVs in Croton Point Park**. There has been no feedback from the Parks Department about the article. It is open knowledge that RVs are in the Park – there are 40 RV sites – but the usual period of occupancy is April 1 – October 15 not permanent, all year. A discussion followed on the article and what/how decisions are made by CP Park administration. Consensus was that there is a lack of conservation thinking and too many spur of the moment decisions. Karalyn has a working relationship with Mark Tabor and John Baker, Assistant Commissioner for Parks and for Conservation, respectively. We intend to keep working with the Department on Croton Point issues with the Croton Point Discussion Group throughout the coming winter.

**Sunshine Home Development:** Anne wrote a letter in support of a full environmental impact statement for this proposed expansion of a long-term care home for children in the Town of New Castle. Verdict on this will be coming soon. Discussion followed. Anne will keep everyone up to date on this

**Advocacy**

In Tom Ruth's absence Anne reported that SMRA will be extending an invitation to the **Hudson to Housatonic Conservation Initiative** landowners for our January 14 public program at The Black Cow to see the film "The Marion Lake Story." There will also be a program on Sunday, February 14 titled: "Show Some Love To Your Local Birds." This is a nest box building program during which we hope build 50 boxes for Croton Point Park.

The H2H River Towns group also discussed hosting a program with Douglas Tallamy – author of *Bringing Nature Home*. Backyard Biodiversity Ecologist Tallamy explains the reasons behind the decline of native flora and fauna, how native plants support native wildlife, and ways that homeowners can help reverse this decline.

Question: **Earth Day** 2016. Do we want to do anything?

Richard Saravay gave us an update on **Audubon New York Council** activities and passed along updates from other NYS chapters. National Audubon will have a meeting for all chapters on January 21, 2016. The National Convention will be held in Park City, Utah in July 2016.

Richard also commented finding bear scat during a walk at Teatown recently.

Karalyn Lamb gave an update on the **Lower Hudson Partnership for Invasive Species Management** (LHPRISM) work. She attended a lecture at Croton Library on November 21 about the presence of Hydrilla, an invasive aquatic plant, in the Croton River. Strong intervention was recommended by the presenters with the observation that it would take 6-10 years to get rid of it.

**Sanctuaries Committee – Michael Madias, Jr.**

Choate boundaries were walked and reposted. A Choate neighbor, Lauren Coats at 41 Crow Hill Road, joined Michael and Anne for part of this walk and seems interested to continue being involved at Choate. The Turkey Mountain Walk went well with 15+ people. A highlight was a flock of Eastern bluebirds at the top.

Anne, Karalyn and Michael met with representatives from the Hudson National Golf Course to review a proposed wetland expansion as part of a 2-for-1 mitigation to offset a smaller wetland affected by the proposed driving range. This would include a new trail connection to the village trail adjacent to Brinton Brook

**Programs and Field Trips – Christine McCluskey**

Christine noted the upcoming SMRA events, including:

December 10 – 7pm at Croton Library - “Christmas Bird Count: Tradition Meets Science” - a lecture by Michael Bochnik of the Hudson River Audubon of Westchester.

The following Christmas Bird Counts will include participants from SMRA: December 19 – Peekskill, December 20 – Greenwich / Stamford, December 27 – Bronx / Westchester, and January 2 – Putnam.

Other upcoming events include:

January 1 - Eighth Annual New Year’s Day Walk in Rockwood Hall Park.

January 9 - Croton Point Eagles walk with Charlie Roberto and 4th Annual Soup Social at CP Nature Center.

January 14 - Film night at The Black Cow, Croton - “Marion Lake Story - Defeating the Mighty Phragmites.”

**Newsletter**

Brian Kluepfel noted that the next newsletter deadline is January 1<sup>st</sup> and he encouraged articles from all areas of SMRA activities. “Write well – write often.”

**Bird Seed Sale - Ken Novenster**

Saturday December 19<sup>th</sup> - third Saturday bird seed sale at Pruyn.

**Hospitality**

Robert McCrillis thanked Jean Sparacin for coordinating the refreshments and Jean thanked those who brought refreshments this month: Rik Kaufman, Christine McCluskey and Richard Saravay.

**New Business:** None.

**Meeting ended at:** 9:20 pm **Next meeting:** January 4, 2016

Minutes taken by Joanne McAuley