

## Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission

Commission Meeting Minutes / Friday, May 14, 2004

Route 66 Casino Meeting Center / Laguna Pueblo, New Mexico

---

- Meeting started by Butch Blazer at 9:17 AM. Butch offered welcome, opening remarks, and agenda overview
- Ken Ferjancic, FishPro, offered a PowerPoint presentation on Mescalero Tribal Fish Hatchery (MTFH) Business Plan Update.

Notes from Ken's presentation:

The purpose of the business plan being developed by NMSU and FishPro is to evaluate the economic viability of MTFH operation for Mescalero Tribe and SWTFC. The plan, which is still under development, includes an assessment of facility repair and upgrade needs, including 2 phases (or scenarios) of fish production at MTFH. Ken started with a brief discussion on goals of the MTFH: generally, to operate MTFH at maximum production potential, at a profit, and in support of Mescalero and SWTFC programs.

Phase 1, estimated at \$2 million for construction, would consist of various facility improvements and limited trout production, approx. 108K lbs. annually (rainbow). Phase 1 work/improvements would include: (1) water supply protection and delivery, (2) aeration/de-gassing tower, (3) rearing facility repairs, and (4) permitting requirements.

Phase 2, estimated at \$4.2 million, would consist of continued facility improvements and major trout production, approx. 300K lbs. annually (rainbow and cutthroat). Phase 2 work/improvements would include: (1) cover raceways, (2) replace 6 old raceways with new above-ground raceways, (3) construct 16 new raceways (6'x40'), (4) construct 2<sup>nd</sup> hatchery building, (5) install effluent treatment, (6) modify hatchery discharge to enhance wetlands, (7) re-use pump station.

Site layouts, including facilities and springs, were presented. Production estimates are based on MTFH raceways and water supplies under Phases 1 and 2. Discussion took place on species and size-classes of fish that could be raised at MTFH.

Ken commented that Phase 1 production (108K lbs. annually) would not satisfy current SWTFC demand of approx. 155K lbs. annually. Demand was estimated using historical hatchery production/stocking records for tribes in NM, CO, AZ, and UT. Ken broke down the annual demand for rainbow trout as follows: 4" fish at 3,775 lbs. / 8" fish at 9,000 lbs. / 12" fish at 143,000 lbs..

Ken presented a spreadsheet with estimated monthly costs/revenues for MTFH under Phases 1 and 2. Costs include (but not limited to) eggs, feed, labor, utilities, delivery truck, oxygen and supplies, etc. Revenue estimates based on sale of all fish at current market rates. No assumptions made about discounted or "free" fish for Mescalero Tribe or SWTFC. Phase 1 estimated to net \$30K profit. Phase 2 estimated to net \$60K profit. (\*\*Note: figures are still under development!\*\*)

Ken projected regional (NM) economic benefits of MTFH operation based on statistical estimates (e.g., total # anglers, avg. # angler days, individual angler expenditures/day) and all SWTFC tribes in NM utilizing MTFH fish. Total annual tribal economic output resulting from MTFH stocking estimated at \$26.4 million. Assumes payment for all produced fish, with 12" rainbow trout at \$3.25/lb. and 12" cutthroat trout at \$4.25/lb.

Work on business plan will continue.

- Butch briefly discussed Mike Montoya's re-location to MTFH to initiate trout production (on a limited scale) and to fulfill Mescalero/SWTFC BIA-638 contract commitments. As such, Mike is assuming the SWTFC Executive Director position, at least on an interim basis.
- Jim White and Mike Montoya initiated SWTFC officer elections.

This was the first election to follow charter guidelines on term length/staggering. All three officer positions are open, with two-year terms for Chairman and Secretary/Treasurer and a one-year term for Vice-Chairman.

Farris Palmer nominated Butch Blazer for Chairman. Norman Jojola nominated Jim White for Vice-Chairman. Jim White nominated Steve Whiteman for Secretary/Treasurer. Paul Holmes nominated Jennifer Smith as Secretary/Treasurer. Jennifer declined the nomination. Norman Jojola motioned to close nominations and elect the nominated candidates, seconded by Ernest House. Mike Montoya called for the vote, with 12 in favor and none opposed. Butch Blazer shall serve a 2-year term as Chairman, Jim White a 1-year term as Vice-Chairman, and Steve Whiteman a 2-year term as Secretary/Treasurer

- Stuart Jacks, USFWS R2 Fisheries Program, gave a brief update on developments/activities.

Stuart advised that NM and AZ Fisheries Resource Offices (FRO's) are facing significant FY05 budget cutbacks, so tribal assistance may continue to be limited/non-existent. However, Stuart indicated that Dale Hall (R2 Director) has recently identified tribal assistance as the "number one priority" for the R2 Fisheries Program, even above endangered species programs. Stuart was enthusiastic that this may be a positive development for tribes, but time will tell.

Stuart also discussed a new national initiative by USFWS/AFS to address nuisance species and aquatic habitat problems. Tribal participation in USFWS efforts in the southwest region was encouraged. Contact Stuart for more info.

- Jim White discussed the SWTFC's application for a USFWS grant under the Tribal Wildlife Grant (TWG) program:

The proposal requests approx. \$160K for a SWTFC fish distribution system that includes vehicles, equipment, supplies, and training. The proposal describes the SWTFC's critical need for a reliable and flexible system to meet tribal stocking needs throughout the entire SWTFC region (i.e., CO, NM, AZ, UT, NV, So. CA). The system would include vehicles for short-runs as well as long-hauls. All vehicles and equipment would be the property of the SWTFC. Due to a tribal sponsor requirement under TWG, the Mescalero Tribe will be submitting this proposal on behalf of the SWTFC.

The need for strong tribal support of the TWG proposal was discussed. Tribal representatives were asked to sign a form-letter of support provided at the meeting, or have tribal support letters sent to a Commission officer ASAP to include with the proposal.

*(Lunch Break – Butch departed on personal business, Jim White to lead afternoon discussions)*

- Shenan Atcitty offered a legislative/Congressional update. Detailed information on all topics discussed was provided in a memorandum to the Commission.

Senate Bill 2301, Native American Fish and Wildlife Resources Management Act. Bill covers a wide range of topics in Indian country, including some issues potentially important for SWTFC. Jon Cooley was one of several witnesses to offer testimony to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs for S. 2301. Shenan encouraged SWTFC and tribal support of the bill. Some concerns were expressed about the bill at the recent NAFWS national conference.

BIA FY05 budget was discussed. Anticipating significant decreases that will affect BIA-funded hatchery operations/maintenance and the tribal management/development program. Shenan also briefly mentioned a congressional appropriation request for SWTFC operations by Mescalero and Jicarilla. Shenan encouraged tribal support for this request, as well. A letter template is provided with the memo from Shenan.

- John Antonio provided an update on the Southern Ute-funded "Media Campaign" for SWTFC

Southern Ute has awarded a \$10,000 gaming grant to SWTFC for 3 different media projects, including: (1) 5-7 minute video production (\$5K budget), (2) website development (\$2.5K budget), and (3) color brochure (\$2.5K budget). For the video, John is working with Falcon Enterprises (Pete..?), who did award-winning video work for NAFWS. The 5-7 min. video is estimated to cost \$5K-\$7K. Some footage may

already be useable, but additional footage will be needed. For the website, John is working with Amanda Moors (sp?), private consultant. Amanda will do web development at a special ½ price rate, est. at \$1,000 for the site. Some minor website expenses may be incurred over time. Cost for monthly updates is \$100. Mike Montoya has put together a good first-shot at a brochure (no cost). SWTFC would like to obtain a variety of tribal fishery-related photos that may be considered for further developing the brochure. Send photos to or contact John Antonio. If necessary, money is available in the 638 contract to complete the media project.

- Mike Montoya gave a PowerPoint presentation – MTFH Condition Update

Presentation included a general overview of facilities and improvement needs. Mike also presented objectives for on-the-ground work: start production of fish, develop hatchery management protocol, perform site maintenance, provide training opportunities, develop an interpretive display.

- Steve Whiteman provided an update on the SWTFC logo contest.

Logo is urgently needed for SWTFC letterhead, business cards, media campaign, etc. Contest notification was sent to Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) and Institute of American Indian Art (IAIA), with \$500 prize and May 12<sup>th</sup> deadline. Due to poor response from schools and interest expressed by SWTFC members, contest was extended to May 31<sup>st</sup>. Scanned/digital entries should be submitted to Steve Whiteman via email by May 31<sup>st</sup>. Discussion took place on judging and deciding on a logo. Steve will email all entries received to those on the SWTFC email list for review and vote. One tribe, one vote. Winner expected to be announced to membership by June 15<sup>th</sup>. Steve is sending out logo contest information via email w/meeting minutes for 5/14.

- Jim White discussed SWTFC membership drive.

Jim explained the important need to get more southwest tribes signed up with SWTFC and presented a proposal to establish a \$100 membership fee. Understanding is that this fee may go up in time, but we need to make membership very easy right now so SWTFC can build its base. Steve Whiteman motioned to adopt the \$100 annual membership due, seconded by Paul Holmes. Jim called for vote, and motion was passed unanimously, 8 for, 0 against.

- Jim White started discussion on SWTFC facilitating MOU development between NM and USFWS on fish importation.

Jim described problems between NM and USFWS on fish importation and how this negatively affects tribes relying on USFWS fish supplies. NM has stringent importation standards, exceeding USFWS standards, but State regulations specifically exempt governments, including USFWS. However, USFWS has chosen not to “take chances” with importation into NM. Jim thinks that SWTFC should consider facilitating an MOU between USFWS and NM that would reduce/eliminate future importation problems. Much discussion took place on sovereign authority, political boundaries, and whether and how tribes should respond to the importation issue. Shenan suggested that the State is over-reaching with its authority when attempting to regulate USFWS-Tribe stocking. She feels that State laws and regulations need to be amended. Similar sentiment was echoed by Paul Holmes, Joe Graham, and Alex Puglisi. Jim proposed to develop an MOU scoping paper that could be reviewed and decided upon by the SWTFC. Shenan agreed to assist with the development of this paper.

- Next meeting to be announced. Meeting adjourned at 3:20 PM.