

LANDOWNER-LESSEE/SPORTSMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes of Regular Meeting Saturday, January 16, 2010 Crowne Plaza Hotel - Phoenix

Committee Members Present

Julie Decker, Bureau of Land Management
Darcy Ely, Livestock Grower
James O'Haco, Livestock Grower
Robert Woodhouse, Arizona Game and Fish Commission
David Hoyle, Sportsmen Group
Tami Emmett, Coronado National Forest
Stephen Williams, Arizona State Land Department
Joe King, Livestock Grower
Dennis Moroney, Livestock Grower
Larry Audsley, Sportsmen Group

Committee Members Absent

Jon Fugate, Sportsmen Group
Scott Heap, Sportsmen Group
Sanford Cohen, OHV-Sportsmen Group
Duane Coleman, Livestock Grower

Others Present

George Reiners, Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club
Gary Ely, Four Drag Ranch
Allie Moroney, 47 Ranch
Bob Hernbrode, Arizona Game and Fish Commission
Gabriel Paz, Law Enforcement Program Manager, AGFD Region V
Leonard Ordway, Assistant Director, Field Operations, AGFD
John Bullington, Assistant Director, Special Services Division, AGFD
Larry Riley, Wildlife Management Division Coordinator, AGFD
Tony Guiles, Game and Fish Legislative Liaison
Bob Broschied, Deputy Director, AGFD
Mark Weise, Development Branch Chief, AGFD
Wade Albrecht, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD Region III
Brendan Witt, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD Region I
Troy Christensen, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD

Meeting Notes

The Landowner-Lessee/Sportsman Relations Committee (Committee) meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. An introduction of those present was initiated.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Committee accepted the meeting minutes for July 29, 2009.

Nomination of New Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman

The Committee unanimously reelected Sanford Cohen and James O'Haco to serve another two-year term as Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively. Larry Audsley, a new member to the Committee, introduced himself and talked about access issues he has encountered in southern Arizona.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Robert Woodhouse commented that Mr. Audsley brings a lot of experience and expertise to the Committee. He also introduced Commissioner Bob Hernbrode who was sitting in on this meeting.

Commissioner Woodhouse said that public access and issues that arise from it are very important to the Game and Fish Commission. He informed the Committee that the owner of the Chino Grande Ranch had recently spoke to the Commission regarding problems he was encountering due to public access. Commissioner Woodhouse has been working with the rancher and Landowner Relations Program (LRP) to help address the issues so this ranch stays open. He stated that the Commission would like the Committee's help in finding ways to resolve these kinds of issues that affect landowner-lessees and threaten recreational access. Although funding presents limitations, we need to do everything we can to unlock gates. Commissioner Woodhouse said that the Arizona Bowhunters Association had offered their volunteer labor to help at the Chino Grande Ranch. He added that there are a lot of good people who are willing to help; we need to find ways to reach them and notify them of what is needed.

This led into a discussion about two vacant positions on the Committee. Due to his new job, Jon Fugate reluctantly resigned from the Committee; Jon did recommend a replacement, George Reiners from the Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club. Mr. Reiners was present; he introduced himself and talked about what he thought he could offer the Committee. Mr. Reiners had already been in touch with Troy Christensen regarding some recommendations for the LRP web page and the Chino Grande Ranch. Scott Heap was also unable to attend meetings. Sanford Cohen had suggested another individual who would like to serve, Steve Carmickle. Commissioner Woodhouse was familiar with both of these nominees and thought they had a lot to offer in situations such as the Chino Grande Ranch. Darcy Ely suggested one more possible candidate – Frank Hayes, a retired Forest Service District Ranger and current member of the South Eastern Arizona Sportsman Club. The Committee voted to recommend that all three nominees be presented to the Commission for consideration.

Updates from Land Management Agencies

Julie Decker gave an update from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). She informed the Committee of personnel changes, which included her moving to the position of Acting Deputy State Director. She added that the vacancies had created an opportunity for BLM to realign some programs. When a new branch chief is hired, that individual will likely take over her seat on the Committee. Ms. Decker updated the Committee on the progress of Resource Management Plans (RMP) and Travel

Management efforts. Detailed information on all the RMP can be viewed at www.blm.gov.

Tami Emmett welcomed Larry Audsley; she stated that he has helped the Coronado National Forest deal with access issues in southeast Arizona. She told the Committee that the High Creek Access is almost complete. Stimulus money was used to realign roads to bypass private property and assure permanent legal access to the Galiuro Mountains. Leonard Ordway commented that the High Creek Access was a major success, which will resolve a long standing problem. Ms. Emmett informed the Committee that the nationwide Forest Plan is being revised. However, while the new Plan's rules are being developed, twelve of the nation's forests, including all of Arizona's national forests, have been allowed to continue moving forward under the old Forest Plan. Progress on Travel Management Plans has slowed due to Laura White being out with valley fever and no staff to take over for her. She added that funding cuts have hurt many projects and are creating the toughest demands on Forest Service staff in her 21 year career. Larry Audsley suggested that the Forest Service consider help from skilled volunteers.

Stephen Williams gave an update from the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD). The ASLD is also being severely affected by the State's budget crisis. Prior cuts to their budget were covered by reductions in work force; the loss of even more funds recently has led to programs being cut. He said the OHV and NRCD Programs will likely be hit very hard – both programs will continue to operate in a limited manner. Mr. Williams informed the Committee that the ASLD and AGFD have almost completed the development of new administrative protocols for addressing illegally locked gates on State Trust land. Once finalized, the new protocol should allow for trying to resolve the problem with relationship building before pursuing a more bureaucratic process.

Landowner Relations Program Updates/Current Issues

Mark Weise provided the Committee with an update from the LRP. He informed the Committee of recent personnel changes. Mr. Weise said that one thing helping LRP to continue its work is their ability to secure and leverage funds – last year, for example, \$40,000 of Game and Fish funds were matched with \$600,000 of outside funds. Wade Albrecht and Brendan Witt elaborated on some of the LRP projects they are working on in their Regions.

Wildlife Manager's Perspective

Gabriel Paz, Law Enforcement Program Manager from the Tucson office, gave a presentation on a very successful clean up program in southern Arizona. Volunteers were brought together to conduct two clean ups every year to remove trash left by undocumented aliens from several ranches in Unit 36. Wildlife managers handing out flyers when checking hunters' camps, as well as, donations, raffles, food, and media outreach have led to large turnouts of volunteers. Pima County is also partnering on the projects. The efforts have helped in establishing access agreements and volunteer hours have been used as match to receive BLM Mitigation Funds. The Committee expressed

their gratitude for the great effort and their hope that Mr. Paz's replacement continues the work.

Identification of Current Issues and Possible Solutions

Dennis Moroney made sure the Committee was aware of several issues affecting southern Arizona, including drug smugglers posing as hunters and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service considering designating critical habitat for jaguars. There was a discussion about Mexico's plan to reintroduce captive Mexican wolves south of the border – there have been lots of rumors going around about this, but, as far as AGFD knows, no wolves have been released yet. Mr. Moroney talked about the difficulties the rugged landscape can pose to law enforcement; he suggested finding ways to gather donations to purchase ATV's for officers.

There was discussion on the recent news stories about environmentalists accused of using tax dollars to sue the Government. Commissioner Woodhouse said it was a shame that more money is going to litigation than to wildlife. The Western Legacy Alliance's efforts to expose flaws in the Equal Access to Justice Act are detailed in the following website: <http://www.westernlegacyalliance.org/eaja-abuse-home-page/>.

Tony Guiles, Game and Fish Legislative Liaison, and Bob Broschied, Deputy Director, gave the Committee a quick update on the Department's budget. They said salary cuts were proposed along with major cuts to Watercraft, OHV, Wildlife Conservation, and Heritage Funds. The Heritage Fund is an important part of LRP's funding and losing these funds will hurt the program's ability to leverage the funds with outside match, which is often at a ratio of 6 or 7 to one. Mr. Broschied added that the Heritage Fund has also helped to keep animals from being listed as threatened or endangered, which also benefits ranchers. Commissioner Woodhouse commented that Arizona Game and Fish is a "business-model" agency reliant wholly on non-tax dollars, but the Capitol still wanted to sweep these funds.

Jim O'Haco updated the Committee on a couple action items from the last meeting. Mr. O'Haco was not successful at getting the Forest Service to accept the NRCS cultural resources training, which would have allowed Game and Fish employees to assist archaeologists in the completion of ground surveys for habitat improvement projects. The second item had to do with possible cooperation between the Department, AZ Cattlemen's Association (ACA), and possibly other producer groups to address the problem of theft of ranch infrastructure. Sal Palazzolo had talked with the Operation Game Thief Coordinator and gathered the information on the Department's end. However Mr. O'Haco had not discussed it with the cattlemen's group. He commented that it is important –in fact, his ranch had been robbed since the last meeting – and he said he would still contact the ACA about it.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in conjunction with the Arizona Cattlemen's Association Convention, which will be held in Tucson July 22-24. Committee members will be informed of the date and time of the meeting once it has been determined.

Action Items:

1. Look into possibilities of cooperative efforts between ACA and AGFD to address theft of ranch infrastructure and present findings at next meeting. (Jim O'Haco)
2. Contact Frank Hayes to see if he is interested in serving on the Committee. (Darcy Ely)
3. Provide website address of the article regarding environmentalists accused of using tax dollars to sue the Government. (Larry Audsley)
4. Meeting minutes distributed. (LRP staff)
5. Prepare nominations to fill two vacant Committee seats for the March Commission meeting. (LRP staff)

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