

LANDOWNER-LESSEE/SPORTSMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes of Regular Meeting Thursday, July 22, 2010 Loews Ventana Canyon Resort - Tucson

Committee Members Present

Sanford Cohen, OHV-Sportsmen Group
Julie Decker, Bureau of Land Management
James O'Haco, Livestock Grower
Robert Woodhouse, Arizona Game and Fish Commission
Duane Coleman, Livestock Grower
Tami Emmett, Coronado National Forest
Stephen Williams, Arizona State Land Department
Joe King, Livestock Grower
George Reiners, Sportsmen Group
Larry Audsley, Sportsmen Group

Committee Members Absent

Darcy Ely, Livestock Grower
David Hoyle, Sportsmen Group
Steve Carmickle, Sportsmen Group
Dennis Moroney, Livestock Grower

Others Present

Mark Weise, Development Branch Chief, AGFD
Al Eiden, acting Landowner Relations Program Manager, AGFD
Troy Christensen, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD
Sue Chilton, Livestock Grower
Jesse Davis, Livestock Grower
Daric Knight, Livestock Grower
Dominic Barrett, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bonnie Jones, Arizona Farm Bureau

Meeting Notes

The Landowner-Lessee/Sportsman Relations Committee (Committee) meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. An introduction of those present was initiated.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Committee accepted the meeting minutes for January 16, 2010.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Robert Woodhouse commented on the successful efforts made at the Chino Grande Ranch to address issues so this ranch stays open to public access. This was a good example of what could be accomplished. He stated that public access and issues that arise from it are very important to the entire Game and Fish Commission.

Commissioner Woodhouse informed the Committee about work the Commission had completed to correct potentially problematic language in Proposition 109, a proposed amendment to the Constitution of Arizona to change hunting and fishing from being a privilege to being a guaranteed right. George Reiners provided detailed information on Proposition 109 and the Committee discussed it. Sue Chilton stated that the proposition will not exceed other property rights or current legal restrictions. Ten states already recognize hunting and fishing as a right; four additional states, including Arizona, will have it on this year's ballot.

Universal Cattle Guard

Therese Griffin Hicks talked about her ranch near Globe and problems they faced with gates being left open. To help address the gate issue, her company created a portable, NEPA-friendly, lower cost cattle guard. She provided information on the cattle guards which could be helpful in addressing access issues, especially on federal lands.

Updates from Land Management Agencies

Julie Decker gave an update from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). She informed the Committee of the progress on Resource Management Plans (RMP) and Travel Management efforts. There was discussion about the Department of Agriculture creating a Resource Advisory Council (RAC) in each county, which will make recommendations to the Forest Service regarding project proposals for using funding from the Secure Rural Schools Act. This funding source is for projects on federal lands to maintain infrastructure, improve the health of watersheds and ecosystems, protect communities, and strengthen local economies (more information can be found at fs@fed.us/srs). Ms. Decker provided the Committee with information about the BLM's RAC, which plays an important role for their agency.

Tami Emmett gave an update on Travel Management Plans (TMP) and various access projects the Coronado National Forest is working on. She told the Committee that the High Creek Access should be complete in time for this hunting season and answered a few questions regarding it.

Stephen Williams gave an update from the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD). His department is working on various state land issues related to the federal RMP and TMP processes. ASLD has no funding to support the added workload of route designations required by the OHV bill (SB1167), so not much headway is being made there. In the meantime, Mr. Williams offered that other agencies can apply for a Right-of Way or a Special Land Use Permit to upgrade an OHV trail to a public access road. ASLD is attempting to hire a part-timer to assist with route designations. Sanford Cohen mentioned that hundreds of volunteers are available to help the ASLD – especially with the signing of routes, which is needed for enforcement purposes.

Landowner Relations Program Updates/Current Issues

Al Eiden provided the Committee with an update from the Landowner Relations Program (LRP). He said LRP survived the funding crisis; he thanked Commissioner Woodhouse for the Commission's support. He informed the Committee of a \$100,000 grant received

to help landowners with problems caused by undocumented aliens, and another \$100,000 over the next 5 years to help with access issues involved with TMP's. Mr. Eiden said LRP is submitting grant applications with the hope of getting up to two million dollars per year, for the next 3 years, through "Open Fields" Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP). VPA-HIP was authorized by Congress as part of the 2008 Farm Bill, but delays in finalizing the regulation and budgeting of the program prevented any release of funds until this month. This Farm Bill program is designed to support state and tribal governments as they encourage landowners to open parts of their property to public hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation. The funding appears to be quite flexible and would be very beneficial. The Committee brainstormed some ideas on how to best use that funding if it is obtained.

Identification of Current Issues and Possible Solutions

Jesse Davis asked questions about purchasing Landowner Respect Program signs, which he says are more effective than other signs he has tried; he would like to get 300 signs to post his land no trespassing. To address Mr. Davis's issues, the Respect Program has provided the ranch with many signs, including some 'no trespassing' signs for specific areas. However, it is contrary to the Department's and program's mission to provide a ranch with thousands of dollars worth of 'no trespassing' signs. Furthermore, many potential problems were identified regarding the idea of allowing a person to purchase and post Arizona Game and Fish Department signs on their own. There was also discussion about a specific game violation which occurred on Mr. Davis's ranch. Commissioner Woodhouse assured Mr. Davis that the Commission is hard on offenders; however, the Commission can only impose additional fines after the County makes a conviction.

Next Meeting

For various reasons, the Committee decided that the next meeting would not be held in conjunction with AGFD's Meet the Commission Event. Other possible venues for the winter meeting will be looked into and then Committee members will be contacted for input.

Action Items:

1. Meeting minutes distributed. (LRP staff)
2. Look into possible venues for next meeting and contact Committee. (LRP staff)