



Douglas A. Ducey
Governor

Sue Black
Executive Director

State Parks Board

R.J. Cardin, Chairman
Kay Daggett, Vice-Chairman
Mark Brnovich, Phoenix
Alan Everett, Sedona
Shawn Orme, Mayer
Orme Lewis, Jr., Phoenix
Lisa Atkins, State Land Commissioner

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES
of
NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(NAPAC)
of
THE ARIZONA STATE PARKS BOARD

The Natural Areas Program Advisory Committee (NAPAC) and the general public that the Committee will held a meeting open to the public on **Thursday, July 23, 2015 beginning at 10:00am at Picacho Peak State Park, located 15520 Picacho Peak Road, Picacho, AZ 85241.**

AGENDA

(The Chair reserves the right to set the order of the agenda.)

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL – 10:02am

Members: Thomas Skinner, Dave Weedman, Bob Pape, Linda Stitzer, Rebecca Davidson (on phone).

Staff: Bob Casavant, Dawn Collins, Heidi Lauchstedt, Brianne Fisher.

B. CALL TO THE PUBLIC – No public in attendance.

C. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. NAPAC Will Receive a Briefing and Discuss the Status of San Rafael State Natural Area (SRSNA)

Working group lead, Thomas Skinner reported on the July 20, 2015 meeting held with Arizona State Parks (ASP) Executive Director Black regarding the future direction at SRSNA. Present NAPAC members and staff briefed her on ASP's Board direction to ASP on their policy, guidelines and the agency's previous direction in regards to the preservation, protection, and conserving of natural areas and easements and the current activities on SRSNSA including special use permit (SUP), September 25, 2015 meeting with Fish & Wildlife, and the content in the Management Framework. Skinner presented a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) video that explained Sec. 9 of ESA, and Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) development requirements for an incidental take permit, and referred to the September 2014 meeting that was held with FWS concerning the issuance of a permit for Ross Humphreys to graze cattle on SRSNA. He quoted the U.S. FWS stating, In an email following the meeting, that "ASP may not allow grazing on the SNA until Ross' HCP is complete."

Dawn Collins, Chief of Resources and Public Programs, reports that Executive Director Black was not ready to make a decision at the time but offered some options for consideration: (1) Sign an annual SUP while a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) is in place (2) Sign a 5 year lease during ASP planning process (3) Original acquisition for parcel and allow no grazing.

Skinner reported that Doug Duncan of FWS is currently working with Humphreys on the development of an HCP for grazing to meet federal requirements, as agreed to in the September 2014 meeting. The understanding is that ASP will eventually develop an overall SRSNA management plan with an accompanying HCP that will then replace Humphrey's HCP. If the decision is made now not to issue a grazing permit, then Humphreys and FWS should be informed as soon as possible.

Dave Weedman states that the outstanding question remains unanswered: **Does ASP have to go out to bid for the grazing lease?** Weedman points out that if Humphrey is not the successful bidder he assumedly would not be willing to conclude the HCP to allow grazing at all. Weedman suggests that an Attorney General's guidance on this issue is necessary. Skinner reminds members that once an HCP is completed the information is open to the public on the Fish & Wildlife Service website.

Heidi Lauchstedt, NAPAC Liaison, asks if ASP should conduct an HCP themselves. The committee unanimously agrees that it should and that the HCP must include all management decisions that are envisioned however; Collins reports that a management plan must first be conducted and that ASP has a significant amount of management plans to conduct for the rest of parks. **Collins reports that she is unaware of where SRSNA management plan is on the list of planning priorities. Skinner reiterates the importance of seeing the most updated version of the HCP.**

Collins suggests that while Executive Director Black is working on a decision based on the information she has been provided the next steps could be to utilize the SRSNA Management Framework and Decision Tool. The committee discusses the purpose/goals of the tool. Weedman summarizes the discussion by stating that it is an information-organizing tool that helps an agency/individual support a decision.

The decision is made to have a two-day working meeting. One day would be spent visiting Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch and the other at SRSNA to input the information they have in the decision tool for practice and to determine what other information is needed.

Staff will coordinate with Executive Director Black on the dates of October 13th and 14th.

2. NAPAC Will Receive a Briefing and Discuss the Status of Verde River Greenway State Natural Area (VRGSNA)

Working group lead, Rebecca Davidson, reports on the two meetings held at VRG on June 30, 2015 and July 21, 2015 for the intent to pull together all of the different properties, land owners, access issues, resources, and pressures for a comprehensive understanding. Davidson continues to explain that creating zones for the area will help create goals and guidelines for recreation and resources. This way ASP can make informed decisions when being asked to integrate a VRG parcel into larger VRG planning.

Bob Casavant, mentions Ray Warriner, Charles Eatherly, and Chip Norton as resources to use during VRG work. Linda Stitzer states that ASP management needs facts to back up their decisions when being asked about economic development and that this process will also help determine a carrying capacity.

Weedman asks if an HCP is in the future for VRGSNA and Davidson responds that there are several identified endangered species and that close coordination with Fish & Wildlife Service is necessary moving forward on any recreation plans, access points, and activities in certain time of the year.

Davidson lays out the next steps for the working group as: **(1) Type up notes from map exercise (2) Inventory of existing documentation** (3) Gain an understanding of a plan that makes sense for groups of parcels of VRG and also special issues and management guidance for specific identified zones.

3. NAPAC Will Receive a Briefing and Discuss the Status of Sonoita Creek State Natural Area (SCSNA)

Working group lead, Weedman, reports on the meeting held with John Schneeman and Willy Sommers (ASLD); Colt Alford, Dawn Collins, Shawn Schmidt and Emily Jurmu (ASP); Eddie Slade and David Jacobs (AG) to discuss the trespassing cows on ASP property. The meeting discussed the 4 ranchers involved, the 2011 State Trust Land letter, open range laws, fencing districts, monitoring, and Coalmine Springs.

Collins reports on the action items that came from that meeting including: (1) State Land research follow up of 2011 letter (2) John Patton (ASLD) and Alford conduct site visit (3) Clarification on Bergier and DeWitt partnership? (4) Gather pictures of impacted areas (5) Contact ranchers to set a meeting with a 3rd party facilitator.

Collins states that only number 3 had been answered and that Dewitt does have cows on Bergier's land but John Schneeman reported to Collins that there is no sublease on grazing agreement #05-103 (email correspondence 7-23-15).

Weedman reported that Executive Director Black attended the meeting briefly and spoke about new position being assigned to the Sonoita Creek State Natural Area again. **Collins says she will check the status of this position.**

The discussion moves to the stakeholder meeting and members suggest including the private landowners South of the property and Circle Z in the meeting

Weedman hands out a 2013 AZ Game & Fish Memo from a Regional Supervisor in Tucson about Trespass Cattle and Resource Damage at Coal Mine Springs. The memo includes a map that identifies fencing (existing, broken, gaps). Weedman reports that the Regional office sent a FY2017 budget request for fencing.

Make sure Davidson receives memo.

Collins and John Windes will work to flesh out the MOU with AZ Game & Fish and that she will report on the clarifications by next meeting.

The committee discusses the next steps for SCSNA. It is decided that an inventory of existing documents be conducted and that all monitoring data be collected. The group brainstormed useful partners and places to look for baseline data including: Sonoran Institute, USGS studies on mining and present land use, fisheries, Hummingbird Network, Pete Stacey – Research Biologist at New Mexico.

Weedman and Linda volunteer to look into instream water rights and contact ADWR. In addition, it may be important to keep an eye on the SRSNA/Santa Cruz River area and how the recent mining activity might affect instream flows.

E. MEMBER'S SUMMARY OF CURRENT EVENTS

NAPAC members will provide a verbal report on current activities and events of interest to the resource conservation community and/or the status of any projects with which they may be involved.

F. PROPOSE MEETING DATES AND FUTURE STEPS

Appleton Whittle Research Ranch October 13th and 14th – Tentatively

Staff will work with Dave, Tom, and Rebecca to collect data and documentation for the Decision Tool prior to this meeting.

G. ADJOURNMENT - 1:08pm