

**HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN
Stakeholder Advisory Committee
February 2, 2006. 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Arizona Game and Fish Department Conference Room
555 North Greasewood Road
Tucson, Arizona 85745-3612**

MEETING SUMMARY

Attendees: Karen LaMartina, Nancy Zierenberg, Mima Falk, Emily Brott (Sonoran Institute), Carolyn Campbell, Catherine Balzano (Arizona State Lands Department), Tina Lee (Ward 2 City Council Office), Lisa Duncan (Town of Marana), Robert Peterson (City of Tucson – Transportation), Barney Riley and Sarah Craighead (Saguaro National Park), Staffan Schorr (Pima Association of Governments), Pricilla Storm (Diamond Ventures), Richard Byrd (City of Tucson – Environmental Services), Michael Wyneken (City of Tucson – Urban Planning and Design), Leslie Liberti (City of Tucson – Manager’s Office), Jessica Lee and Geoff Soroka (SWCA)

1) Update on Recent TAC Meetings/Upcoming Meetings

a. Scheduled SAC Meetings:

- **None**

b. Scheduled TAC Meetings: (subject to change)*

- **February 7 and 21**
- **March 7 and 21**
- **April 4 and 18**
- **May 2 and 16**
- **June 6 and 20**
- **July 4** (will be rescheduled due to holiday) and **18**
- **August 1 and 15**
- **September 5 and 19**
- **October 3 and 17**
- **November 7 and 21**
- **December 5**

* TAC meetings are 9-11 am, in the Arizona Game and Fish Department Conference Room.

Leslie welcomed everyone to the meeting. Leslie explained that the proposed expansion of the HCP planning area would extend the planning area to be adjacent to Saguaro National Park, thus the National Park Service had been invited to attend the meeting. Leslie provided a summary of the upcoming Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings, explaining that these meetings have been scheduled for the first and third Tuesday mornings of every month. However, the schedule provided in the agenda may still be revised. She said that she would provide updates to the TAC schedule if the dates were changed.

2) Old Business

- a. *Meeting Minutes – Discussion and Approval of October 19, 2005, November 2, 2005 and December 7, 2005 Minutes*

Leslie asked the SAC if they had a chance to review the three outstanding meeting minutes. The SAC approved the three meeting minutes.

- b. *Action Items Held Over from Previous Meeting*

No action items were held over from the previous meeting.

- c. *Topics Held Over from Previous Meeting*

No topics were held over from the previous meeting.

3) New Business

- a. *New Developments*
 - *Buffelgrass management*
 - *Santa Cruz River corridor*
 - *Wash Ordinance*

Leslie noted that there have been several new developments since the SAC last met in December 2005. She said that the first update involves the buffelgrass management effort in Avra Valley. She said that at the last SAC meeting, she relayed the concerns that TAC had with buffelgrass, especially regarding ecological and economic impacts. Leslie also mentioned that due to liability issues, Tucson Water has been trying to figure out how to manage City-owned lands in Avra Valley that are covered with buffelgrass. She noted that there are two houses that are imbedded in approximately 2,000 acres of buffelgrass. She explained that since the City owns more than 25,000 acres in Avra Valley, tackling buffelgrass solely by hand pulling would not be an effective way to deal with the issue. Sarah noted that the National Park Service opted to use an herbicide application on buffelgrass within Saguaro National Park. Leslie noted that the option using herbicides raised concerns about potential impacts to the prey base and restoration potential in Avra Valley. She mentioned that in the last few months, Ann Phillips (Tucson Audubon Society), Travis Bean (University of Arizona Desert Lab), Julio Betancourt (U.S. Geological Survey, Tucson), and Todd Esque (U.S. Geological Survey, Las Vegas) have all been working together to decide how to deal with the buffelgrass problem in Avra Valley. Leslie then noted that Todd is helping to draft a protocol for a buffelgrass eradication program in Avra Valley, which will allow local experts to conduct baseline biological monitoring on the effects of the herbicide application. She noted that experts believe it will require three consecutive years of herbicide application to get rid of the buffelgrass seed bank; however, such actions could leave the land susceptible to soil erosion and the introduction of other invasive species. Emily asked if the City has been involved with Sonoran Desert Weedwackers group and the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. Leslie said that the City and the University of Arizona Desert Lab have been working with those groups, and that the Museum would be helping with the effort to map

buffelgrass in the area. Leslie noted that the TAC would discuss the buffelgrass issue in detail at the next meeting. She noted that there is also a University of Arizona graduate student that would be helping with the mapping effort.

Leslie noted that the buffelgrass concerns in Avra Valley are part of a larger regional effort to deal with invasive species. There have been discussions about establishing a Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) for Pima County. She noted that the first meeting to discuss a CWMA is February 8, 9:00am to noon, at the Pima County Cooperative Extension Office (4210 North Campbell Avenue). Carolyn asked if the City had identified other buffelgrass infested areas besides Avra Valley. Leslie said that the City is focusing on Avra Valley first due to liability issues, but that eventually it will evolve into a larger effort. She noted that Travis is concerned about the transient communities that reside in these buffelgrass infested areas. Leslie said that brush fire sites are now evaluated to see if buffelgrass had existed in the area. She noted that Travis believes there has been one fatality due to a buffelgrass fire already. Leslie noted that while fire is the main liability, the City has been sued in the past for the spreading of tumbleweeds.

Karen noted that buffelgrass is now recognized by the State as a noxious weed. Leslie said that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Partner's Program was offering a grant to work on the eradication of non-native species. Leslie noted that another grant was available from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) for invasive species management efforts in areas that affect rangeland. She said that the NRCS emphasizes partnerships and that the grant award is up to \$500,000. The deadline is April 3, 2006.

Nancy asked if there was a possibility to put door hangers in neighborhoods to help people identify buffelgrass and fountain grass. Leslie and Karen said that they thought there would be an opportunity for that. Karen suggested contacting Mitch Basefsky. Mima said that USFWS could help with a buffelgrass line drawing for the door hangers. Leslie noted that Travis Bean (University of Arizona Desert Lab) has already produced buffelgrass flyers. Leslie also mentioned that the neighborhood resources newsletter is sent to all neighborhood association presidents. Leslie noted that she had also talked with Travis Bean to get a program on City Channel 12. Staffan said that, at this time, because PAG is a 501c4 non-profit organization, they could not take a lead role on grant applications. Leslie noted that if the partnership includes a Tribal entity, a greater percentage of the local contribution could be in kind. Emily asked if the Tohono O'odham Nation has been invited to the Cooperative Weed Management Area committee meeting next week. Leslie said that she did not think so. Leslie noted that a better buffelgrass mapping effort is an important first step. Carolyn asked if the groundwater and soil in Avra Valley would be monitored for herbicide. Karen noted that Tucson Water currently already monitors the groundwater in Avra Valley.

b. Structure and Function of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee

Leslie mentioned that Phase I of the HCP is being wrapped up. She noted that there is some money left over in the Phase I budget, which would be allocated towards the buffelgrass eradication study and the second part of the Arizona Game and Fish Department western burrowing owl survey this spring. Leslie mentioned that until the IGA for Phase 2 is finalized at the end of March, the TAC would focus on Avra Valley and the Phase 1 deliverables, which includes the Preliminary Draft HCP. She noted that

the SAC has only seen parts of the Draft. She said that the Draft would be prepared by the end of February, and it is on the schedule to be presented to Mayor and Council on March 7. Mayor and Council must approve the Draft before it can be submitted to USFWS. Leslie explained the different parts of the Preliminary Draft HCP. She noted that the bulk of it includes the species-specific biological information. She said that several sections have not yet been developed, including adaptive management and monitoring, effects of implementing the HCP, funding, and alternatives. Leslie said that at the request of the TAC, a buffleggrass section was inserted into the introduction of the Draft.

Michael noted that the Preliminary Draft covers the original Southlands planning sub-area, not the newly expanded area. Leslie said that, due to land ownership and land use concerns, the City would be working with the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) in developing the HCP for the Southlands and Santa Cruz River planning sub-areas. She mentioned that due to the regional coordination required for these two sub-areas, the TAC could not develop final conservation strategies for these sub-areas yet. She said that the Avra Valley planning sub-area is much more straightforward, however, and in the next Phase of the HCP this sub-area would be separated into its own HCP. This will enable the Avra Valley planning sub-area HCP to move along at a quicker pace, and the goal is to have an internal Draft completed at the end of Phase 2 so the NEPA process could be initiated in Phase 3. Leslie said that Avra Valley is going to be separated from the other two sub-planning areas because the Tucson Water developments will happen fairly soon.

Leslie explained that there are development projects being proposed within the Santa Cruz River planning sub-area. She said that, due to the HCP and future Army Corps restoration projects, the City is struggling with how to deal with the early stages of these proposed development projects. Carolyn asked where the development is being proposed. Leslie said a development is being planned between Irvington Road and Drexel Road along the Santa Cruz River. Leslie said that Pima County has met with the owners of the gravel pit at Los Reales and the Santa Cruz River about acquiring that property. She said that the property owner indicated they might sell the parcel for development.

Leslie mentioned that the City is beginning a process of revising the City wash ordinances. She said that the first step is the addition of new segments of washes designated under the wash ordinance or Environmental Resource Zone (ERZ) ordinance. She noted that there have been a number of public meetings regarding this topic, and that there will soon be a re-zoning application submitted. Leslie noted that there are many washes in the Southlands that have only been "proposed" for ERZ designation, so the first step is to officially classify those washes with the ERZ ordinance. The next step would be to integrate the two ordinances into a single City code. Leslie said that, right now, the washes are just designated by name and that the protections are just descriptive. She said that this has been confusing, and it has not been clear what protections are obtained through the ordinance designations. She mentioned that the third step would be to shift towards an envelope-driven approach in which wash and adjacent riparian habitat to be protected would be identified on a map. She noted that these envelopes are currently in development. The result will be a refinement and consolidation of the various data layers and the evaluation of their accuracy. Leslie said that there would ultimately be a discussion about including the wash ordinances, the Native Plant Preservation Ordinance, and the Environmentally-

Sensitive Roadway Design Guidelines into one environmentally sensitive land ordinance. Carolyn noted that these same efforts have been dropped in Pima County. Carolyn suggested that if the City finds a way to make this workable, that the County would be interested, too. Leslie noted that there are a number of different ways to structure a City Code. Carolyn asked if the ordinance revisions were an internal or a public process. Leslie said the City is still figuring out what the process is going to look like. She said that first the City is focusing on designating the proposed washes. She noted that there has been some initial work on revisiting the envelopes, and that perhaps from the HCP grant there might be an opportunity to do ground truthing in the Southlands. Leslie noted that the City faces challenges that the County does not have, for example, degraded and channelized washes. She explained that the City is finding it difficult to write a single City code that applies to both washes in the urban core and undeveloped areas outside the City.

Leslie changed the discussion to the new structure of the SAC. She said that there have been several times the TAC has wanted to transmit information to Mayor and Council, but since the SAC and TAC are ad hoc committees, there was not an appropriate way to communicate to them. Leslie said that the plan is to ask Mayor and Council in March to approve an ordinance for an Urban Sustainability Advisory Committee, as well as another ordinance to make the SAC a formal advisory committee. Leslie noted that the SAC is valued, especially when the TAC provides suggestions, but that it is difficult to do substantive work without being able to formally make recommendations to Mayor and Council. Leslie noted that there are many other natural resource issues that would be nice to have advisement on. She said that this would also allow the membership and scope of the SAC to be expanded. She said that there would be new seats on the committee that will need to be filled. She suggested a brainstorming session to identify people that might be appropriate to sit on this committee in addition to the current members.

Leslie noted that City staff cannot be voting members on a Mayor and Council advisory committee, thus staff will be ex-officio members. She said that one challenge would be to get more City Departments involved in the HCP. She explained that Mayor and Council form advisory committees by approving a new City ordinance. She said that City codes pose some restrictions, such as term limits. She said that the natural resources Advisory Committee would advise the City Manager's Office and provide recommendations to Mayor and Council through working with City staff, the public, and other advisory committees, and by accepting recommendations from the TAC. She said that the natural resources Advisory Committee would first focus on Endangered Species Act (ESA) issues, and then would more broadly focus on resource management and planning issues. Carolyn asked what the future role of the TAC would be.

Leslie said that they would continue to be an ad hoc committee, because their sole task is to provide the SAC with biological recommendations. Leslie noted that no one could be a voting member on two Mayor and Council Advisory Committees. Leslie explained that there would be 11 voting members, and those members would represent a number of disciplines. She said that the goal is for the natural resources Advisory Committee to be a well-rounded group of technical experts, along with public and private sector members. Leslie noted that there are currently more than 100 advisory committees in existence. Leslie noted that both committees would have ex-officio, non-voting seats that could be filled by agencies, voting members of other committees, etc. These individuals would help to provide information and coordination opportunities.

Leslie said that the natural resources Advisory Committee members are nominated by a City Department, Mayor and Council, or the City Manager's Office. She noted that Mayor and Council requested that the City Manager make the nominations for this Advisory Committee. Leslie said that the SAC could suggest members, but that the City Manager would ultimately make the formal nomination. Leslie explained that voting members would be limited to 4-year terms, but could serve an additional 4-year term. She said that terms would be staggered to prevent a complete turnover of members at one time. No one member could serve on the natural resources Advisory Committee for more than 8 continuous years without a full year off. She said that members could be removed at the request of the City Manager or Mayor and Council, and would be approved through a majority vote by Mayor and Council. Ex-officio members can be removed at the request of the City Manager without the approval of a Mayor and Council vote.

Carolyn asked Leslie what the mission statement of the natural resources Advisory Committee would be. Leslie said that the functions and duties of the committee are still in draft form, but that they will be responsible for the same functions that the SAC currently has, but will also expand to taking on the longer-term involvement of the actual implementation of the HCP. Leslie said that the committee would also solicit information from other Advisory Committees (the TAC specifically), but would also tackle requests by Mayor and Council for input on other natural resource issues. Leslie suggested that this committee could prove to be helpful in the development of a CWMA. Leslie noted that the natural resources Advisory Committee would have formal procedures; agendas and meeting minutes would be filed with the City Clerk, the committee would select a chair and vice chair, develop and implement procedural rules, a meeting time, etc. The natural resources Advisory Committee would also be able to form subcommittees.

Carolyn asked about the function of the natural resources Advisory Committee and why the City Manager wanted a new advisory committee to deal with broader issues. Leslie explained that the City wants to get the maximum utility of such a group. Carolyn asked if there are any City Advisory Committees established to deal directly with Santa Cruz River issues, and if not, would the new natural resources Advisory Committee deal with it. Leslie said that, no, there was not a specific committee, and that, yes, the natural resources Advisory Committee would be responsible for this topic. She said that there have been past discussions regarding the development of a local Santa Cruz River restoration plan, and figuring out how to integrate such a plan with other plans such as Rio Nuevo, the various HCPs, Tucson Parks and Recreation plans, etc. She said that the City is concerned that federal funding through the Army Corps will ultimately not come through for their restoration plans.

Carolyn stressed her concern with one committee trying to take on so many issues. Leslie responded that the City wants to keep the committee as focused as possible, by establishing a clear mission statement and function while having the flexibility to take on other relevant issues. Leslie asked other City staff how often Mayor and Council asks for information and/or recommendations outside of the specified duties of the Advisory Committee. Karen said that, from her experience, not very often. Leslie noted that the ex-officio seats would provide a liaison between the natural resources Advisory Committee and other groups, and would be responsible for soliciting needed information from other Advisory Committees. Pricilla asked Leslie if she could provide a list of relevant standing Advisory Committees, and perhaps suggest who the appropriate liaisons might be. Carolyn asked if there was an Advisory Committee established to deal

with the Native Plant Preservation Ordinance (NPPO). Pricilla said that the scope of these advisory committees is so broad, that sometimes it is difficult to know what they are working on. Pricilla noted that, while they had good intentions, many of the committees often fail to meet quorum, meeting minutes, etc. Pricilla asked Leslie if Mayor and Council had requested an urban sustainability advisory committee, and Leslie said yes. Carolyn suggested that some issues that the natural resources Advisory Committee would confront might be more appropriate for this advisory committee.

Pricilla mentioned that there was a study that found that there are many inactive advisory committees. Tina said she could look into this study. Pricilla stressed that it is important to create a strong, functioning advisory committee.

Sarah noted that the NPS is interested in the HCP process, but does not have the ability to participate with all the other issues that the natural resources Advisory Committee might deal with. Leslie suggested that perhaps the NPS could just participate through the TAC, or that they could just follow the agenda and show up at meetings that involve the HCP. Carolyn echoed Sarah's concern, and said that the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection was created solely to work on HCPs and not necessarily all natural resource issues. Leslie responded that she believes the bulk of what the natural resources Advisory Committee works on would be related to the HCP, but that other issues, when appropriate, would supplement their responsibilities.

Leslie noted that the way the ordinance is being drafted to create the natural resources Advisory Committee, any current voting SAC member could remain a member if they would like to. Leslie suggested that the SAC brainstorm about whom else they might want to recommend to the natural resources Advisory Committee. Emily suggested it might be helpful to give current SAC members a written description of their expected responsibilities and time commitment as voting members on the natural resources Advisory Committee. Leslie noted that Emily's questions are difficult to answer at this point. She said that she believes that all of the "other" issues would be relevant to the HCP. Emily noted that she could not make formal recommendations from Sonoran Institute without input from her superiors. Mima suggested to the SAC members that she does not think the nature of the committee would change much, but would just obtain the ability to communicate directly with Mayor and Council. Carolyn asked if the new committee charter would have representation of organizations, or individuals. Leslie responded that individuals would be represented. Leslie stressed that the committee would have to balance the environmental interests with the development interests. Leslie noted that the committee does not have all the expertise available currently, and asked the SAC to make suggestions. Carolyn noted that Diana Hadley was interested, but just could not make this meeting. Carolyn asked if the TAC has any hydrological experts. Leslie said yes, that Ann Phillips is a hydrologist.

Leslie noted that it might be possible to have as a voting member, a representative of another governmental agency, but that she would have to check with the City Attorney's Office. The SAC discussed what disciplines are or are not represented currently on the SAC or TAC, and they decided that, in general, an environmental/civil engineer representative was missing. Pricilla suggested inviting someone from an environmental/civil engineering firm who could do conservation designs (e.g. EEC, Stantec, RBF, MMLA, Westland, Rick Engineering). Pricilla also suggested finding a solid land planning engineer, and suggested the Southern Arizona Home Builders Association (SAHBA) might be able to recommend someone. Pricilla suggested

someone might be interested from the University of Arizona Science and Technology Park. Pricilla also suggested inviting a transportation planner and suggested Bill Carol (EEC). Emily expressed concerns about the natural resources Advisory Committee choosing voting members on an individual, rather than organizational, level. Pricilla suggested naming a voting member and an alternative. Leslie said that she would run that idea by the City Attorney's Office. Pricilla noted that committee members not being able to send an alternate is often the reason Advisory Committees fail to reach quorum. Carolyn suggested that it would be beneficial to have other jurisdictions working on HCPs to attend the meetings. Leslie noted that the HCP meetings are open to the public, so anyone is always welcome to attend.

Leslie said that she would send out the list of relevant City advisory committees to the SAC, as well as the list of disciplines currently, and not currently, represented on the SAC. Leslie said that she would also email details about the NRCS grant to the SAC members. She also said that she would bring up the SAC concern about soil and groundwater monitoring in Avra Valley to the TAC at their next meeting.

4) Call to the Public

The SAC made a call to the public. No members of the public spoke up.

5) Future Meetings

Leslie asked the SAC when they wanted to meet again. The SAC agreed to meet after the March 7 City Mayor and Council session. The next meeting was scheduled for March 15, 2006, from 3:00 – 5:00 pm at the Arizona Game and Fish Department Conference Room.