

**City of Tucson
Habitat Conservation Plan
Stakeholder Advisory Committee
May 26, 2005 3:00 – 5:00pm
Arizona Game and Fish Department Conference Room
555 N. Greasewood Road**

Meeting Summary

Attendees: Sherry Barrett, Lori Lustig, Karen La Martina, Larry Marshall, Brooks Keenan, Nancy Zierenberg, Nancy Peterson (Environmental Services), Fran LaSala (Environmental Services), Diana Rhoades (alternate Emily Brott for Sonoran Institute), Susan Shobe (alternate for Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection), Michael Wyneken (City of Tucson – Planning), Leslie Liberti (SWCA), Jessica Lee (SWCA), Ken Kingsley (SWCA)

1) Update on Recent TAC Meetings/Upcoming Meetings

a. *Scheduled SAC Meetings:*

- **June 22**, 1-4pm @ AGFD. Joint Meeting with TAC. Tentative Topics: (1) Introductions, (2) Biological stressors and threats, (3) Initial conservation strategy thoughts, (4) Presentation on Pima County's species-specific mitigation strategies.
- **July 13**, 3-5 pm, @ AGFD. Tentative Topics: Conservation measures for Southlands species and implementation options.
- **July 27**, 3-5 pm, @ AGFD. Tentative Topics: see previous meeting.
- **August 17**, 3-5 pm, @ AGFD. Tentative Topics: Conservation measures for Avra Valley species and implementation options.
- **August 31**, 3-5 pm, @ AGFD. Tentative Topics: Conservation measures for Santa Cruz River species and implementation options.

b. *Scheduled TAC Meetings:*

- **May 27**, 8-11am @ AGFD. Tentative Topics: Biological stressors/threats for species not covered May 3 or 24.
- **June 7**, 1-4 pm @ **USFWS**. Tentative Topics: Biological goals, objectives, and initial conservation measures for Southlands species.
- **June 22**, 1-4pm @ AGFD. Joint Meeting with TAC. See above.
- **July 12**, 1-4 pm, @ AGFD. Tentative Topics: Conservation measures for Southlands species.
- **July 26**, 1-4 pm, @ AGFD. Tentative Topics: Biological goals, objectives, and initial conservation measures for Avra Valley species.
- **August 9**, 1-4 pm, @ **USFWS**. Tentative Topics: see previous meeting.
- **August 23**, 1-4 pm, @ AGFD. Tentative Topics: Biological goals, objectives, and conservation measures for Santa Cruz River species.

Michael opened up the meeting and welcomed everyone. Ken Kinglsey announced that he is retiring and this is likely his last SAC meeting. Ken Kertell will be providing support for the HCP for the remainder of the process.

2) Old Business

a. Meeting Minutes – Discussion/Approval of March 15, March 31 and April 4, 2005 Minutes

Some SAC members were confused because they had not received the March 31 minutes along with the March 15 and April 4 minutes sent out by email the week before. Michael and Leslie said it was because the March 31 meeting notes had gone out previously and had not changed since they went out the first time; only the new minutes from April 4 and the revised minutes from March 15 were sent in the last email. Michael asked for comments or questions. No one had comments; the meeting minutes are approved and will be posted to the Tucson HCP website.

b. Action Items from Previous Meeting

No action items had been 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. Discussion of Southlands Handouts

Handouts were provided to the SAC at the last meeting relating to zoning, landownership, potential habitat, important riparian areas and designated washes, vegetation, and other characteristics of the Southlands planning area. Leslie asked if anyone had questions about the handouts. There were no immediate questions or comments.

Leslie highlighted some of the key facts from the materials. The Southlands are comprised of approximately 35,000 acres, of which nearly 30,000 acres are owned by the Arizona State Lands Department (ASLD). Out of the other approximately 5,000 acres, 2,400 acres are owned by the City of Tucson: Tucson Water has some well sites, Tucson Fire Department has some property and so does the Tucson Airport Authority. The rest of the acreage is owned by the Federal Prison, Tucson Electric Power and a few private landowners.

The zoning is predominately rural/homestead (RH) and residence zone RX-1, which is a low-density residential zoning. Sherry asked about the lot size of the lowest density zoning category. Michael thought that it is about 3. Sherry wanted to know if there is any agricultural zoning within City lands. Michael replied that the City doesn't have any agricultural zoning per se, but some of the uses under rural/homestead may accommodate certain agricultural uses. Michael added that the City also has the "open space" zoning category. Leslie noted that most of the Southlands has low-density zoning; only in the very northern of portions of the planning area are there areas designated as industrial zoning. Michael said that the County kept this area zoned low-density and the City kept the designations when the area was annexed from the County. Michael suggested that this is a good approach because it forces most people to go

through rezoning process, allowing the City to apply plan policy and zoning conditions. Susan asked why some of the zoning categories did not have minimum lot size or a density per acre. Michael replied that the categories without lot size or density limits are commercial, industrial, or mixed-use areas with a predominance of commercial and high-density residential (i.e., apartments). Michael said that the OCR zoning is most dense zoning, which is what is applied downtown.

Leslie noted that there will eventually be a shift in zoning in the Southlands to a new category that is currently being developed by the City. Michael explained that the City is coming up with a new development zone for “master planned communities.” Michael said that the City wants to specify guidelines and targets for master planned areas, but then allow the flexibility for developers to come up with creative ways to achieve these goals. He noted that this is a standard approach in other communities. Michael said this zoning category will be for developments of 500-1,200 acres. Michael added that the City wants to have “master plan” zoning in the Southlands so that there is consistent considerations of issues such as trail connections, wash protection, and guidelines for community parks. Leslie asked if Pima County has identified a proposed trail system for the Southlands. Michael thought that the regional trail system would probably have connections set up across the Southlands. Leslie suggested that this could be a good factor to consider when developing the HCP.

In the last meeting a question had come up about whether the washes in the Southlands were only proposed or were actually designated under ERZ or WASH. Leslie said that most of the washes in the Southlands are designated. Michael added that, in the lands the City annexed 3-4 years ago, the washes are designated, but the land annexed 1-2 years ago does not yet have designated washes. Michael also noted that the washes in the Houghton area are not designated. Leslie said the only WASH designated washes are north of the interstate. South of the interstate, the washes are zoned ERZ. Leslie noted that there are 165 miles of ERZ washes in the southern portion of the Southlands; all but 8.8 miles of those washes are approved and designated.

Larry asked about mixed trail use, and whether some trails would be for all uses, or if trails will be designated for single uses, just hiking for example. Larry mentioned his experience of riding horses on the Anza Trail, a mixed-use trail, and how horses get spooked easily while walking on the embanked trails. He also mentioned potential liability issues due to safety concerns with having hikers/bikers/horses all on the same trail. Larry suggested building embanked walking trails for hikers, leaving the washes for equestrian uses. Sherry said that horses and bicycles can have damaging impacts to washes. Larry agreed, saying there were trade-offs. Sherry responded that it is better to separate trails. Nancy Zierenberg asked about the City’s procedure for wash designation. Michael said that staff proposes a wash designation, then it goes to public hearing at planning commission, then eventually to mayor and council for approval. Susan asked Michael about the timeline for the development of the “master plan zoning” designation. Michael said it should be completed by late fall this year. Diana asked if the City was proposing to rezone the HAMP and approve the proposed wash designations. Michael said yes, but that that the approval of the HAMP and the wash designations will be separate.

Leslie referenced the maps of the Southlands suitability analysis that was done as part of the draft Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) conceptual land use plan. Leslie said that one could get a sense of what ASLD is planning to do with the Southlands from

these maps, although they are draft and likely to change. Michael clarified that the conceptual land use plan has not yet been adopted by the state. He noted that the County is talking about doing a basin management plan, that would extend from I-10 to the Santa Rita Experimental Range and from I-19 to Highway 83, to study drainage and storm water management in that area. He doesn't not know the timeline of the plan.

Trevor noted that, at the last STAT meeting for the Pima County HCP, it was suggested that the Southlands is a critical linkage for PPC and they are very concerned that the County needs to establish a relationship with the City to collaborate on the conservation of this species. He said that the County just revealed a priority conservation area for PPC which includes a portion of the Southlands. Leslie said originally there were two designations (PCA 1 and PCA 2) and they have now combined into a single PCA 1 unit.

Leslie noted that, in the Southlands, there is about 1,600 acres of pygmy-owl potential habitat; most of it is dispersal, but some is designated as wintering habitat. There is approximately 4,200 acres of burrowing owl potential habitat, and about 25,000 of potential habitat for PPC. Leslie said that Marc Baker has done some PPC surveys in the Southlands and he seems to have found that some areas have denser populations than others. Marc thinks that he can refine the potential habitat model to reflect the differences in PPC density. Marc has proposed creating a model that differentiates between higher and lower PPC densities and then doing additional surveys to verify the accuracy of the model. In terms of needle-spined pineapple cactus, Marc thinks that there may not actually be any within the planning area. The species is currently included as an HCP target based on the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan models that show moderate potential habitat in the extreme northeast and southeast corners of the Southlands planning area. Marc has proposed surveying for the needle-spine pineapple cactus in these areas and, if it is not found, it may end up being removed from the list of HCP target species because the City would have no impact on this species. Leslie explained that the Southlands has lots of foraging habitat for the pale Townsend big-eared bat, but there are no maternity and/or winter roost sites in the Southlands. There is, however, new information on how far the bat forages. She said that scientists found that one bat traveled 93 miles one-way to forage. This new information means that the entire planning area is within the conceivable foraging area for the bat. Leslie noted that there is no critical habitat or recovery areas designated in the Southlands, but there are a few priority conservation areas (PCAs) in and around the Southlands. She said that the PCA maps that were provided may not be correct because we have since found out that the City received older versions of the PCAs from the County. We'll work to figure out which PCAs are current and then update the maps, if necessary.

Leslie noted that the upland vegetation in the Southlands is mapped as paloverde-mixed cacti, although it is resemble more of a creosote-bursage community. Most of the vegetation is creosote. There are few saguaros in the Southlands, although there are lots of chain-fruit cholla, ocotillo and prickly pear. Leslie said that there is some riparian habitat, but the washes are all impacted to some extent by dirt roads, channelization, stock tanks, spreaders, grazing, and other land uses. There is very little existing development in the Southlands, but grazing, dumping, shooting and the use of off-road vehicles is fairly widespread and in some areas has created enormous impacts. Leslie pointed out that there are also a lot of power lines and utility easements, which will be a challenge for development. She noted that the power lines came up in the discussion of threats/stressors because they provide good perches for raptors, and predation is a threat to both burrowing owls and pygmy-owls. Leslie added that planning around the

federal prison will be another interesting urban planning challenge. Michael said that there are very few acres in the Southlands that don't show "a human touch."

Susan mentioned that the County is proposing revisions to their floodplain management ordinance and wanted to know which version of the County's riparian maps was included on the riparian handout. Leslie said that the map only included designated Important Riparian Areas and did not show either the current or proposed riparian habitat areas. Brooks said they are proposing to protect more by adopting new models (based on the maps SAC were given), and that the old models were based on the land conservation system which were less extensive. (Leslie: did I capture this ok? This terminology/concept was a little confusing).

Susan asked what percentage of the City habitat is within the County. Ken thought that it would be about one to five percent. Leslie responded that the difficulty in determining those numbers is that the City of Tucson HCP habitat models don't extend beyond the Tucson planning areas. Leslie said that we could say what percentage of County habitat is in the City planning area. Leslie said we cannot correlate this habitat data to the rest of the county. Susan said that if the County said there is a certain percentage of habitat in the City planning area, and from the new City habitat models there is new data that perhaps shows less habitat, then it would impact the County. Leslie said that she didn't have numbers off the top of her head, but said that when the Town of Marana and the County compared numbers they were quite different; Leslie said for the ground snake the Town of Marana had 90 percent less habitat than Pima County had. Sherry said she agrees that this is important from USFWS perspective as well to be able to look at these different numbers. Susan said this would be helpful if the City could give comment to the County on their draft HCP. Sherry added that the City could also suggest to the County to consider looking at the additional information the City has accumulated in the Southlands. Ken said this will be a challenge because the premises in developing the two HCPs were different. He said that the County looked at the very broad picture, while the City's approach has been more fine tuned. Ken said sooner or later these plans will have to be reconciled and he believes there will be strong resistance from the County to doing fine tuning, like the approach we have been doing, although there would be support from the County steering community. Susan said she doesn't think that committee exists anymore. Leslie said to for the County to redo the modeling would set the HCP back five years. Leslie said that due to the smaller planning area, the City has been able to look at it parcel by parcel basis. Leslie said that even the snake models are completely geographic based are NRCS data and were an enormous amount of work. Susan added that the County doesn't even have the resources to do the monitoring and/or surveying they need for this broad modeling approach. Ken said that the County's approach was a regional approach and the City approach is a much more localized approach and to get the two plans reconciled will be a challenge, and that is something that USFWS is going to require.

Lori asked due to the differences in the two approaches, how will that be looked at by the federal government to grant section 10 permits? Sherry answered that her biggest concern is how to calculate the cumulative effects when we aren't speaking the same language. She suggested to perhaps lay the different models on top of each other to see how they compare. Michael said SAC will also have the challenge of how to deal with annexation issues. Sherry said that this HCP is not going to deal with any future annexation. Michael said the City is working on it, by talking to Sahuarita, the ASLD and the County to get everyone into the effort, which is something that makes sense from

both a conservation and development standpoint. Leslie said this is something we are building into the process because it will give us a sense of where the City needs to go, and help us identify where our priority areas are. Leslie said that the City just applied for another grant for the draft EIS that will bring in more information, and will be looking beyond just the biological factors, and studying the coordination between the County, ADOT, PAG, ASLD, Sahuarita, etc. Michael said that the ASLD needs to come to the table and stop ignoring this, and they know that. Sherry asked if the potential annexed lands could be planned so it doesn't matter who annexed it, the same rules would apply. Michael said that each group would still need to come to the table with the same data. Larry asked if there has been any attempt to work with the Tohono O'odham Tribe to assess the species on their property and how that might change how the City of Tucson makes decisions on their lands. Sherry said that the Tribe doesn't want their lands to become the mitigation area while everyone else develops. She said that they have signed a conservation agreement with Pima County. She said the O'odham Tribe doesn't want anyone surveying on their property or making them release any information. She said that the Tribe is currently applying for money so can do they can do an HCP.

b. Santa Cruz River Restoration Projects

Leslie gave a PowerPoint presentation titled, "Army Corps Feasibility Studies: Paseo de las Iglesias, El Rio Medio, and Tres Rios del Norte."

The Santa Cruz River restoration projects are sponsored by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and Pima County, although the majority of the projects are in City of Tucson property. Paseo de las Iglesias was initiated in 2001, and is 5,000 acres along 7 miles of river from Los Reales to Congress Street. They anticipate the FEIS will be completed in the Fall 2005 with construction starting in 2006. This is the project that is furthest along. This project is the most southern project involving the Santa Cruz River and the West Branch of the Santa Cruz River. Leslie talked about how the river channels are right now, with steep banks on the sides. The steep banks don't allow for vegetation to grow. Rather, the alternatives call for flattening down the steep sides and constructing terraces to support more vegetation. The alternatives also support several smaller channels of water because this could support more vegetation across the channel. There were originally hundreds of alternatives, and it has been boiled down to three alternatives, differentiated by how much water they would use. Leslie quickly went through the two alternatives that were not chosen, the high water alternative and the low water alternative. Larry asked about how all the alternatives require the use of water, when Tucson Water made it clear that in 2030 the City will be out of water. Larry asked how open is the City into committing water resources in the future for these projects knowing that in future the City will be out of water? Leslie said that there is 10,000 acre feet of effluent that has been dedicated to restoration that will be spread between the three projects. Ken said that the amount of water needed by plants is grossly overestimated according to new studies that were just released. Leslie said that is a major concern because how do you manage an intensive resource over the long term? She said that this is why the plan shifted to a more rainwater intensive alternative. Under the high water alternative, the Corps anticipates it will benefit 95 species. Ken Kinglsey said he was the one who determined that number through surveys and his knowledge of local ecology. Nancy Z. said that once the vegetation is established, it will need less water resources over time. Leslie said yes and no because the Corps want to restore a hydrosiparian community, thus they'll need flow for that. Larry asked if the plan calls for

watering only outside the rainy season, and Ken Kingsley said that rainfall and water harvesting was calculated into it. The main differences in the three alternatives are the amount of water and thus the type of vegetation that could be supported. The high water alternative would have more water intensive cottonwood/willow vegetative, while the low water alternative would be more desert and xeroriparian vegetation. Leslie noted that there is more information on this restoration projects on the Corps or Pima County Flood Control websites. Leslie quickly went through the low water alternative. Leslie talked in greater detail about the chosen alternative which uses a moderate amount of water, and is likely to restore the river closer to historic conditions.

The medium water alternative calls for water harvesting with supplemental irrigation, plus periodic flows through the channel. Vegetation composition would be 65% mesquite, 35% scrub-shrub, 18 acres of cottonwood/willow, and six acres of emergent wash. Water harvesting basins would be put in eight tributary confluences to store water in deep gravel-type beds. The terracing will be a 5:1 slope, and the removed soil would be placed in the nearby sand/gravel pits. Leslie said that some parts of the banks are too unstable to be terraced. Leslie stressed that this project will likely to adversely affect the burrowing owl. Burrowing owl distributions are largely along the Santa Cruz River and on the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. Leslie said that historically owls were found only on the river until agricultural fields were constructed and that currently the owls do really well along the river.

El Rio Medio is just started to get going in the planning process and the study area is approximately 4.5 miles of Santa Cruz River from Congress Street to Prince Road. Tres Rios del Norte involves the Town of Marana as well and the DEIS is currently under development, with an anticipated release in fall 2005. The study area is 18 miles of river from Prince Road to Sanders Road. Two features of this plan include moving the waste water treatment outflows from Roger Road to Prince Road in order to gain the benefits of the effluent stream for an additional mile, and adding a grade control structure upstream of El Camino del Cerro bridge to create a riparian area.

Ken said he read in the newspaper that Pima County was committing themselves to improving effluent water quality, which would impact fish and wildlife. Nancy Z. asked Karen to give background on the conservation pool to be used for an approved HCP. (Leslie: I couldn't hear Karen's response...could you put in a sentence or two on the background of this?) Leslie said that the City doesn't want to make decision on who gets water until the HCP gets done so we know what our priorities are and so there can be coordination between the projects. Michael said one comment that was in the EIS for Paseo de las Iglesias said maybe we should wait for all river projects to be planned before anyone dedicates any water. Ken said this is more demand on the conservation pool than can be supplied.

Leslie passed out several packets of information and maps including: summary sheets Avra Valley and the Santa Cruz River; maps of the important riparian areas, land ownership, the CLS, PCAs, Pima County acquisitions and acquisition priorities in Avra Valley; maps of the important riparian areas and designated WASH and ERZ washes, land ownership, zoning, and PCAs along the Santa Cruz River; and larger scale maps of the potential modeled habitat overlay for the planning area (i.e., the number of species that has potential habitat in each area).

Leslie passed out informational packs on the stressors/threats and goals and objectives for the Pale Townsend Big-eared Bat (PTBB). She said that this is the one species TAC has done the most work on so SAC can see the process of how TAC goes about the HCP process on evaluating species. The information comes from the individual species subcommittee of experts. Leslie stressed that they are all drafts and that the suggested action items are still very general on how they relate to the biology of the species. Leslie asked SAC to review the information so they could ask the TAC members questions at the June 22 joint meeting.

4) Call to the public

No members of the public were present.

5) Next steps/Future meetings

Next meeting is the joint SAC/TAC meeting on June 22 at AGFD. Julia Fonseca will be giving a presentation on Pima County's species-specific mitigation measures and Ann Philips will give a presentation on dry land approaches to restoration.