

Minutes of the Telephonic Meeting of the
Arizona Game and Fish Commission
Monday, March 28, 2014 – 1:00 p.m.
Arizona Game and Fish Department
5000 W. Carefree Highway
Phoenix, Arizona 85086

PRESENT: (Commission)

(Director's Staff)

In person:

Chairman John W. Harris
Vice Chairman Robert E. Mansell
Commissioner Kurt R. Davis
Commissioner James R. Ammons

In person:

Director Larry D. Voyles
Deputy Director Ty E. Gray
Assistant Attorney General Jim Odenkirk

Via video teleconference:

Commissioner Edward "Pat" Madden

Chairman Harris called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Harris conducted roll call and confirmed that all Commissioners were present. Several members of the public and Department staff were present. This meeting followed an agenda dated March 14, 2014.

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1. Review of Heritage IAPM Expenditures and Programmatic Activities

Presenter: Jim deVos, Assistant Director, Wildlife Management Division

Mr. deVos provided a PowerPoint presentation and briefing on the array of funding and expenditures from the Heritage Identification, Inventory, Acquisition, Protection and Management (IAPM) and other funds including acquisitions, and operations and maintenance of Heritage properties. This was an informational briefing and included charts, graphs and historical information. The presentation included the following information:

\$3.6 million in IIPAM funds are used to leverage additional funds and used for nongame and endangered wildlife conservation:

- State Wildlife Grants- are used to implement the State Wildlife Action Plan; these funds have been proposed to receive a 15% cut in the President's budget
- National Fish and Wildlife Grants
- Endangered species funds (USFWS)
- Multistate Conservation Grants
- Competitive State Wildlife Grants.

Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program IIPAM Heritage Funding:

- Heritage IIPAM funds both people and projects to deliver conservation in Arizona
 - 28.5 full time positions funded (20 in Regional nongame programs, 5 in fisheries to deliver Conservation and Mitigation Program, 5 in Habitat (Heritage

Database Management System and Invasive Species coordinator, 3 in Nongame Wildlife Branch, ½ of stewardship position in Development).

Heritage Project examples:

- California condor recovery
- Black-footed ferret
- Chiricahua Leopard frog recovery
- Heritage Database Management System

IIAPM Allocations (60%)

- Identification
- Inventory
- Acquisition
- Protection and
- Management of Sensitive Habitat

- 60%- IIAPM (Excluding Acquisitions)-\$3.6M
 - Nongame Program; sensitive species and habitat management

- 40%-IIAPM (Acquisitions)-\$2.4M
 - Required by Statute to be spent only on acquisition

Purposes for Property Acquisitions:

- Acquisition of sensitive habitat utilized by threatened, endangered and candidate species (Title 17-298)
- Reintroduction efforts
- Protection of water to benefit habitat and wildlife
- Provides recreational and educational opportunities for constituents

Commission Owned Properties:

- 64 deeded properties comprised of 121 parcels
 - 24 Wildlife Areas (Commission Rule R12-4-802 and 803)
 - 19 Habitat Properties
 - 8 Shooting Ranges
 - 5 Administrative
 - 5 Lakes
 - 2 Fish Hatcheries
 - 1 Access
- Deeded properties are comprised of one or more parcels with each parcel having a unique funding make-up
- 16 Heritage deeded properties comprised of 25 parcels

Heritage Acquired Properties:

- Sipe White Mountain Wildlife Area
- Buck Springs
- Upper Verde River Wildlife Area
- Yuma East Wetlands (Headstream & McVey)
- Coal Mine Springs

- Arlington Wildlife Area
- Becker Lake Wildlife Area
- Cibola Valley Conservation and Wildlife Area
- Horseshoe Ranch
- Lower San Pedro River Property
- McFarland Property
- Quigley Wildlife Area
- Robbins Butte Wildlife Area
- Wenima Wildlife Area
- White Mountain Grasslands Wildlife Area
- Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area

Examples of Operation and Maintenance Expenditures Above Base Budget (Unanticipated emergency repairs; corrective actions relating to health and life safety; actions relating to preservation of assets):

White Water Draw

- FY11 manager's residence renovation; exterior painting, new windows, new ceilings, asbestos removal, mold removal - \$18,000
- FY12 well repair - \$12,080;
- FY12 water pumping - \$45,000
- FY12 water pumping - \$45,000
- FY13 water pumping - \$35,000
- FY13 tractor repair - \$2,000

Quigley

- FY11 agricultural well renovation - \$18,000
- FY11 16 ditch panels replaced (entire ditch/40ft) - \$5,800
- Tractor repair - \$985
- FY12 ditch repair - \$18,300

Sipe/Wenima/Grassland

- FY13 bunkhouse septic system replacement - \$12,000
- FY13 re-roof manager's residence - \$8,000
- FY 3 install helical piling to support chimney foundation at residence - \$4,500

White Water Draw

- Stabilize wetlands to reduce permeability - \$200,000
- Replace sliding door on equipment barn - \$8,000
- Renovate bunkhouse - \$20,000
- Restore pole barn (public meeting facility) - \$7,000
- Refurbish agricultural well #1 - \$10,000

Horseshoe Ranch

- Renovate domestic water distribution system - \$35,000
- Renovate manager's residence

Sipe/Wenima/Grassland

- Implement Fire Management Plan at Grasslands - \$8,000
- Construct Elk-Proof Fence Along Rudd Creek - \$40,000
- Construct Flood Control Levee at Visitor - \$100,000
- Repair South Solar Well - \$6,500
- Replace Culverts and Remove Exotic Vegetation at Rudd Creek - \$20,000

Upper Verde

- Remove Old Fence Lines from River Corridor - \$5,000
- Invasive Plant Removal (Tamarisk, Siberian Elm, Russian Knapweed) - \$25,000

TOTAL: \$484,500

Pending Heritage Acquisition:

- 31.5 acres adjacent to Page Springs Fish Hatchery (value related to water rights and benefits to the Northern Mexican gartersnake, bald eagle, yellow-billed cuckoo, Gila topminnow, razorback sucker, roundtail chub).

Zuni Indian Tribe Water Rights Settlement Agreement:

- Given the Department's riparian habitat improvement objectives along the Little Colorado River, this agreement contemplated the potential use of Heritage funds for this purpose (given eligible properties).

Commission Guidance for Solution to Operation & Maintenance from March 17, 2014 Meeting:

By September 1st, produce a list of viable solutions and final recommendation to the Commission on the O&M issue. The proposed solutions are to adhere to the following tenets:

- Protect current Heritage properties
- Future Heritage funds acquisitions must have O&M built-in
- Must avoid further use of sportsmen's dollars
- Must not negatively impact the Nongame Endangered Wildlife Program
- Must not use federal grants due to their unreliability, not a viable approach to construct a long-term solvent future acquisitions
- Solutions must include flexibility to make appropriate financial acquisitions for current and future Department professionals and Commissions.

Commissioner Davis discussed with Director Voyles that removing structures from the properties that require maintenance and upkeep was one of the solutions considered when evaluating these properties. Director Voyles stated that all options are on the table as a fiscal reality.

Chairman Harris commented on White Water Draw and the expense of dealing with water and water resource issues, which is the purpose behind purchasing this property. These O&M costs will be ongoing expenses that we have to deal with as long as we have that property.

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2. Commission Acquisition of Heritage Properties

Presenter: Presenter: Jim deVos, Assistant Director, Wildlife Management Division

Mr. deVos presented potential options for Commission discussion related to future property acquisitions funded through the Heritage acquisition funds and establishing guidelines for addressing increased costs and liabilities associated with operating and maintaining Heritage properties. The options presented included the following:

- Take no action and continue status quo
- Defer acquisitions and direct the Department to develop a solution to bring back to the Commission
- Defer purchases of property and direct the Department to form a stakeholder group (similar to the wildlife council or the Catalina bighorn sheep)

Chairman Harris stated that the stakeholder group process works very well and further suggested that Page Springs and the Zuni settlement be excluded from any new acquisition suspension, if the Commission considers that option.

Commissioner Davis stated that he would support a stakeholder process, but he wouldn't want to confine the stakeholders to having to have a consensus on one solution. Multiple options would be perfectly acceptable. He also supports deferring new acquisitions until there is a viable solution on the table.

The Commission discussed the Zuni settlement and Page Springs, and the importance of excluding these two properties.

Angie Lohse, Lands and Habitat Program Manager, addressed the Commission and stated that the Department is in the final stages of the due diligence process and will be bringing that acquisition to the Commission for approval before September 1, however, the entire process of the acquisition will not be completed by September 1.

Commissioner Davis stated that he understands the importance and value of Page Springs, but that property will include additional expenses downstream. He is uncomfortable with acquiring additional properties until there is some kind of solution on the table.

Commissioner Madden stated that the Page Springs acquisition is important to the future of sportsfishing and he believes the Department should proceed with that acquisition.

Commissioner Mansell stated that he would support excluding the Page Springs property and the Zuni settlement from any motion to suspend acquisitions.

The Commission discussed the three residences included in the Page Springs acquisition and what might become of those properties in the future, whether they might be used and maintained or sold. Discussion and decisions on that will be for future consideration.

Commissioner Ammons stated that he understands the costs associated with acquiring Page Springs, but also agrees that Page Springs and the Zuni settlement should be excluded from acquisition suspension.

Public Comment

Pete Cimellaro, representing himself, addressed the Commission in support of the Heritage Fund and agreed that operations and maintenance is a big issue and must be solved. He urged the Commission to form a stakeholders group to look at long-term solutions.

Motion: Harris moved and Mansell seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO SUSPEND THE ACQUISITION OF NEW HERITAGE PROPERTIES WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE PAGE SPRINGS AND ZUNI SETTLEMENT PROPERTIES (THESE WILL BE DEALT WITH SPECIFICALLY AND SEPARATELY), AND THAT AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE BE FORMED TO BRING BACK SOLUTIONS TO THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE ISSUES FOLLOWING THE TENETS AS PRESENTED: MUST PROTECT CURRENT HERITAGE PROPERTIES; FUTURE HERITAGE FUNDS ACQUISITIONS MUST HAVE O&M BUILT-IN; MUST AVOID FURTHER USE OF SPORTSMEN’S DOLLARS; MUST NOT NEGATIVELY IMPACT THE NONGAME ENDANGERED WILDLIFE PROGRAM; MUST NOT USE FEDERAL GRANTS DUE TO THEIR UNRELIABILITY, NOT A VIABLE APPROACH TO CONSTRUCT A LONG-TERM SOLVENT FUTURE ACQUISITIONS; SOLUTIONS MUST INCLUDE FLEXIBILITY TO MAKE APPROPRIATE FINANCIAL ACQUISITIONS FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE DEPARTMENT PROFESSIONALS AND COMMISSIONS; AND DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT TO HAVE A FINAL RECOMMENDATION TO THE COMMISSION BY SEPTEMBER 1, 2014.

Vote: Aye - Harris, Mansell, Madden, Ammons
Nay - Davis
Passed 4 to 1

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Chairman Harris adjourned the meeting.

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Meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

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John W. Harris, Chairman



Robert E. Mansell, Vice Chair



Kurt R. Davis, Member



Edward "Pat" Madden, Member



James R. Ammons, Member

ATTEST:



Larry D. Voyles
Secretary and Director