

LANDOWNER-LESSEE/SPORTSMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes of Regular Meeting

Tuesday, July 27, 2004

Prescott Resort - Prescott

Committee Members Present

Sue Chilton, Arizona Game and Fish Commission
Sanford Cohen, OHV-Sportsmen Group
Darcy Ely, Livestock Grower
Shelby Bennett, Livestock Grower
Ron Eichelberger, Sportsmen Group
George McKay, Coronado National Forest
Hubby Grounds, Livestock Grower
John P. King, Livestock Grower
Phil Smith, Sportsmen Group
Jim O'Haco, Livestock Grower

Committee Members Absent

Richard Rico, Special Services Assistant Director, AGFD
Stephen Williams, Arizona State Land Department
Jerry Reid, Sportsmen Group
Jon Fugate, Sportsmen Group
Steve Gobat, Bureau of Land Management

Others Present

Mark Weise, Development Branch Chief, AGFD
Ed Jahrke, Watercraft/OHV Law Enforcement Program Manager, AGFD
Troy Christensen, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD
Debbie Wright, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD
Micaela King McGibbon, Livestock Grower
Tom Stuart, Sportsmen Group
Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Buchanan, Livestock Growers

Meeting Notes

The Landowner-Lessee/ Sportsman Relations Committee (Committee) meeting was called to order at 3:40 p.m.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Committee accepted the meeting minutes for January 17, 2004.

New Members/Presentations

Mark Weise presented a certificate of appreciation to Jim O'Haco to recognize his achievement in being chosen by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission to serve on the Committee. Mr. Weise gave the Committee some background information on Mr. O'Haco's extensive experience in

ranching and participation in numerous organizations. (The Landowner Relations Program (LRP) also contacted Jim Chilton, Joe Austin, Wayne Lackner, and the Mohave Livestock Association regarding serving on the Committee. All of them had to decline, however, Mr. Lackner stated that he would be very interested when he retires from the U.S. Border Patrol in two years.)

Commissioner's Comments

Sanford Cohen informed the Committee that Sue Chilton was leaving the Commission and that this would be her last meeting with us. Mr. Cohen thanked Commissioner Chilton for all her input while serving as the Commission Representative on the Committee. Commissioner Chilton said that she enjoyed serving on this committee and appreciated the constructive work the Committee does to resolve problems between landowners and sportsmen.

Commissioner Chilton restated her opposition to the Tumacacori Highlands Wilderness Proposal because of the obstacles it would create for appropriate multiple uses of the land, law enforcement, and wildlife management. The Buchanan's, who live in Arivaca, told the Committee how the proponents of the massive wilderness plan get support from various user groups. Sanford Cohen stated that, in March, the Committee had sent a letter in opposition to the Tumacacori Highlands Wilderness Proposal to the U. S. Congress, the governor, and state officials. No response has been received.

Updates/Current Issues

Mark Weise stated that he was filling in for Josh Avey, who was at the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Conference, in Idaho. Mr. Weise informed the Committee of two memorandums of understanding (MOU's) that will be presented at the August Commission meeting. The first one involves the U.S. Border Patrol, Arizona State Land Department and the Arizona Game and Fish Department regarding the closure of wildcat roads created by the Border Patrol while in pursuit of undocumented aliens within five miles of the international border. The second MOU is for the Granite Mountain Multi-Use Area, a proactive OHV management area similar to Desert Wells Multi-Use Area. Ed Jahrke and Sanford Cohen gave some additional information on this State Trust land in north Scottsdale that will be protected from development so that recreation can continue on this area and its trails that give access to the Tonto National Forest.

Troy Christensen informed the Committee that the Director's Office requested that the Committee choose its nomination for the Habitat Stewardship Award during this meeting. This was earlier than was expected and Committee members present had no nominations. Mr. Christensen stated that he knew of two nominations being worked on. Wildlife Manager Brad Fulk was going to submit a nomination for Jack Tellas of the Double U Ranch, near Tombstone; Mr. Fulk was on vacation so there was no way to get information on that nomination. Committee member Jon Fugate was preparing a nomination for Paul Humphries of the U Cross Ranch, near Camp Wood; in a phone call earlier that day, Mr. Fugate said that he could complete the nomination and send it the next day. Mr. Christensen relayed some information that Mr. Fugate had given regarding the ranch. Luckily, Sanford Cohen had some personal knowledge of the ranch and was able to add some information regarding the stewardship and access on the ranch. He told the Committee that the U-Cross is about 20 miles north of Prescott and experiences heavy outdoor recreation. He stated that the ranchers have done much to ensure that there is minimal impact on the land in the midst of all the recreational activity. Mr. Cohen added that the U Cross Ranch fits a lot of the criteria that our access-oriented Committee supports and would want to have publicized. The Committee favored waiting until they had more information on the nominees, but since that was not possible, it was

decided to support the nomination of Paul Humphries and save the nomination of Mr. Tellas for consideration next year.

Update on OHV Rules

Ed Jahrke gave a PowerPoint presentation to show the efforts being made to create consistent laws regulating OHV's. Mr. Jahrke said that on a busy weekend, there are an estimated 500,000 OHV's (ATV's, jeeps, dirt bikes, rock crawlers, etc.) recreating in the state. He is very aware of the need for uniform laws and very committed to getting them set up as soon as possible to improve the abilities of the various law enforcement agencies. However, he explained that it needs to be tackled on a statewide level and requires MOU's and changing statutes. He stated that the changes couldn't be completed until 2006.

Micaela King McGibbon brought up the issue of off-road activities by the U.S. Border Patrol. She stated that their ranch is not helped by the MOU mentioned earlier because it is more than five miles from the international border. Discussion began regarding the Border Patrol abusing their rights to drive off-road and then blamed hunters for creating them. Due to it leading to diminished access for sportsmen, a motion passed for the Committee to write a letter requesting that the Director ask for the Border Patrol's cooperation in this OHV issue.

Ed Jahrke told the Committee about some of the OHV education and outreach efforts. He added that an individual was recently hired to generate OHV information for the public.

Additional Assistance/ Recognition for Volunteers

Troy Christensen mentioned how important and effective volunteers have been through the Adopt-a-Ranch Program. He added, at the last meeting, the Committee had briefly discussed organizing a volunteer force that could be used for outreach/education and helping law enforcement efforts. Phil Smith elaborated on the idea and told how volunteers have helped make up for the lack of sufficient law enforcement by patrolling the Desert Wells Multi-Use Area, reporting violations, and informing recreationists of laws. He explained some of the training, recognition, and support this type of group might require. Mr. Christensen said that the Volunteer Coordinator position, which will be a good resource for getting the needed support, is in the process of being filled. He said that he would make sure that that individual attended our next meeting. Phil Smith suggested that even prior to our next meeting, the LRP should set up a meeting with the Volunteer Coordinator, Sanford Cohen, and himself to get this project going. Hubby Grounds agreed with rushing this project, stating that it sounded like a great idea that could benefit many ranches. Ron Eichelberger suggested also putting an emphasis on using these volunteers to help with the antler shed-hunting situation that is so difficult to control. Phil Smith and Sanford Cohen both felt that many people would be willing to volunteer because they know they need to protect their access and sports.

Identification of Current Issues and Possible Solutions

Shelby Bennett initiated a discussion about a letter from Thomas Kelly, Attorney at Law, regarding a group of ranches closing off access due to damages caused by wildlife and/or sportsmen. Mr. Bennett added that another 6-8 ranches from southern Arizona are considering joining with the 19 ranches mentioned in the letter. Darcy Ely made a motion to recommend a facilitated meeting between these ranchers and the Department. The motion was passed. Commissioner Chilton added that the Department should sit down with these ranchers and work out a solution rather than just sending a response to the attorney. Sanford Cohen offered to attend any such meetings if it would be useful for him to be there.

Next Meeting

The Committee decided that the next meeting should be scheduled in conjunction with the January Arizona Game and Fish Commission meeting. Troy Christensen stated that there would be no conflict with the HPC meeting on that day. Sanford Cohen informed the Committee that Joe Melton would be our new Commission Representative; Mr. Melton served on the Committee as a sportsman representative prior to being appointed as a commissioner.

The next LLSRC meeting will be held at the Arizona Game and Fish Department offices at 2222 W. Greenway Road in Phoenix. The meeting is scheduled to begin Saturday, January 15, 2005, at 9:00 a.m.

Action Items:

1. Inform Director's Office of the Committee's recommendation of Paul Humphries of the U Cross Ranch for the Habitat Stewardship Award (LRP Staff)
2. Meeting minutes distributed to all members. (LRP Staff)
3. Hold a meeting with the Volunteer Coordinator, Phil Smith, and Sanford Cohen regarding organizing, training, and supporting volunteers for outreach and monitoring efforts. (LRP Staff)
4. Invite Volunteer Coordinator to next Committee meeting and reserve time on the agenda. (LRP Staff)
5. Write a letter recommending that a facilitator be secured and a meeting be set up with the ranchers on the letter from Thomas Kelly, Attorney at Law. (Sanford Cohen)
6. Write a letter requesting that the Director ask for the U.S. Border Patrol's cooperation in their off-road activities because it is leading to diminished access for sportsmen. (Sanford Cohen)

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