

# LANDOWNER-LESSEE/SPORTSMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

## **Minutes of Regular Meeting**

**Saturday, January 29, 2011**

**Arizona Game and Fish Department - Phoenix**

### **Committee Members Present**

Sanford Cohen, OHV-Sportsmen Group

Robert Woodhouse, Arizona Game and Fish Commission

Stephen Williams, Arizona State Land Department

Joe King, Livestock Grower

George Reiners, Sportsmen Group

Darcy Ely, Livestock Grower

Steve Carmickle, Sportsmen Group

### **Committee Members Absent**

Julie Decker, Bureau of Land Management

James O'Haco, Livestock Grower

Duane Coleman, Livestock Grower

Tami Emmett, Coronado National Forest

Larry Audsley, Sportsmen Group

David Hoyle, Sportsmen Group

Dennis Moroney, Livestock Grower

### **Others Present**

Mark Weise, Development Branch Chief, AGFD

Al Eiden, Landowner Relations Program Manager, AGFD

Troy Christensen, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD

Terry Johnson, Endangered Species Coordinator, AGFD

Bill Morrison, Sportsman

### **Meeting Notes**

The Landowner-Lessee/Sportsman Relations Committee (Committee) meeting was called to order at 9:15 a.m. An introduction of those present was initiated, including the newest member of the Committee, Steve Carmickle. Mr. Carmickle informed the Committee about some of the resources he could provide to support relations between landowner/lessees and the public.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The Committee accepted the meeting minutes for July 22, 2010.

### **Commissioner's Comments**

Commissioner Robert Woodhouse talked about the defeat of Proposition 109, the proposed amendment to the Constitution of Arizona that would have changed hunting and fishing from being a privilege to being a guaranteed right. The expensive campaign of false information against that proposition along with other campaigns against livestock operations make it clear that sportsmen and the agriculture community need to unite as

the true conservationists against propaganda from the Humane Society of the United States, which should not be confused with the local Humane Societies which help with pets and strays. Commissioner Woodhouse stated that public access issues remain a critical part of the Game and Fish Commission's new goals and objectives. He added that much more still needs to be done to help with public access issues. Sanford Cohen asked if the budget would have adequate funding for access. Commissioner Woodhouse said they remind the Legislators at every opportunity that the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) is a self-funded organization and receives no money from the State's General Fund. This fact has helped AGFD to fare better than some of the other state agencies and currently the budget looks okay. Mark Weise added that our constituents are to be thanked for all the support they have provided.

### **Updates from Land Management Agencies**

Stephen Williams from the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) was the only land management agency representative present at this meeting. ASLD has been able to designate funding for the route designations, which were required by the OHV bill. Also encouraging is that the ASLD has been getting better interaction from other agencies in regards to managing OHV's - Christine Dawe, who works out of the Tonto National Forest, was assigned as the Arizona State Liaison and will be the ASLD's contact with the USFS on travel management planning. ASLD has also been working with AGFD on some access related agreements. Mr. Williams provided the Committee with some information about last year's threat of a mass layoff at his department and where the issue currently stands in the courts – the Court of Appeals has allowed a stay through the end of the fiscal year but has not yet made their determination regarding the legality of using a portion of the proceeds from land sales for employee wages. Steve Carmickle offered to talk with some legislators in support of the ASLD, if needed.

### **Landowner Relations Program Updates/Current Issues**

Al Eiden provided the Committee with an update from the Landowner Relations Program (LRP). He said the Region II LRP position was refilled by Steve Cassady, who came from the Natural Resource Conservation Service – Stephen Williams added that Mr. Cassady has considerable experience and will be a good addition. Mr. Eiden said LRP's "Open Fields" Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) grant application was successful. This 2008 Farm Bill program will provide LRP with \$450,000 per year, for the next 3 years. The funding is fairly flexible but must be tied to landowners providing recreational access on or across their private property. To help administer this funding, two vacant LRP positions at the headquarters will be refilled. Mr. Eiden has also been doing work to help with the reauthorization of the next Farm Bill. He informed the Committee that alternative energy has been causing some problems because the industry preference is to not allow public access around their expensive equipment – we will probably have to rely on our good relationships with landowners to help with this.

### **Identification of Current Issues and Possible Solutions**

George Reiners mentioned a change to the scheduling of AGF Commission meetings – the closed-door Executive Session will be at the end of the day rather than the beginning,

which will make it much more convenient for the public to participate in or listen to agenda items that they are interested in. Sanford Cohen relayed a question from a citizen regarding a road near Dewey which recently had an AGFD 'foot access only' sign posted on it. Troy Christensen said that he would check with one rancher that may have posted the sign while Mr. Cohen attempted to obtain an exact location or directions. Steve Carmickle requested a box of the *AZ Off-Highway Vehicle Guide, OHV Laws and Places to Ride* brochures to include in his organization's mass mailing; the mailing will include promotion of the OHV decal program. Recent data shows that a larger percentage of OHV's are in compliance with the decal program, however, the Motor Vehicle Division does not send out renewal notices for the OHV decals and that could reduce future compliance. Mr. Christensen stated that two OHV Law Enforcement Specialists have been working in the Phoenix area and two others, who recently finished training, were assigned to Prescott Valley and Tucson; five more were recently hired and, when their training is complete, will be stationed in Kingman, Flagstaff, Yuma, Pinetop, and Springerville. There was some discussion about road maintenance options for ranches. Mr. Cohen made the Committee aware of the Travel Management Plan process which is ongoing for the Lake Havasu area; unlike other TMP's, this one was poorly publicized and organized, which led to conflicts and an extension being needed. Mr. Christensen will make sure that the Region III office is aware of the TMP and February 11 deadline. Mr. Cohen relayed another question – this one was from the AZ Sunriders Club, out of Quartzsite, regarding vehicular access to Dripping Spring. Mr. Christensen recalled that Mr. Cohen had previously e-mailed him regarding this issue and it had been assigned to the regional staff; he would contact the wildlife manager for an update.

While waiting for Terry Johnson to arrive, the Committee broke into small groups to discuss various specific issues and/or projects.

### **Update on the AGFD's Mexican Gray Wolf Reintroduction Program**

Terry Johnson gave a detailed history of the Mexican wolf reintroduction program and explained why the AGFD believes delisting the wolf will improve the recovery effort. Politics, law, and a lack of commitment from New Mexico are holding back the program. He said the vast majority of the public want wolves in the wild so reintroductions are inevitable and sportsmen must get together and support it along with proper management of the populations.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held in conjunction with the Arizona Cattlemen's Association Convention, which will be held in Prescott on July 28-29. Committee members will be informed of the date and time of the meeting once it has been determined.

### **Action Items:**

1. Meeting minutes distributed. (LRP staff)
2. Coordinate venue for next meeting and inform Committee. (LRP staff)