

LANDOWNER-LESSEE/SPORTSMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes of Regular Meeting

Saturday, January 14, 2012

Arizona Game and Fish Department - Phoenix

Committee Members Present

Robert Woodhouse, Arizona Game and Fish Commission

Norm Freeman, 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

June Shoemaker, Bureau of Land Management

James O'Haco, Livestock Grower

Tami Emmett, Coronado National Forest

Larry Audsley, Sportsmen Group

Committee Members Absent

Sanford Cohen, OHV-Sportsmen Group

Duane Coleman, Livestock Grower

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

Larry Riley, Assistant Director to Wildlife Management Division, AGFD

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 June Shoemaker, who joined the Committee as the new representative from the Bureau of Land Management.

Commissioner's Comments

Jim O'Haco thanked Commissioners Robert Woodhouse and Norm Freeman for all their efforts to help with access issues. Commissioner Woodhouse, whose term on the Game and Fish Commission was coming to an end, said it was more difficult than he expected to leave his position. He added that he plans to stay involved. Commissioner Woodhouse told the Committee about the addition of an improved (and evolving) sportsman's ethics page in the hunting regulation booklets. He said the Landowner Relations Program has some good ideas and is working hard to improve landowner issues; he admitted that this would not be a quick fix because education takes time. Commissioner Woodhouse hoped discussions would continue with Senator Steve Pierce,

even though he has many responsibilities as the new President of the Senate. Commissioner Norm Freeman is now assuming the role of chairman to the Game and Fish Commission and will also serve as liaison to this committee. Commissioner Freeman said he appreciated the warm reception and enjoyed filling in for Commissioner Woodhouse at the last meeting which was held at the Arizona Cattle Growers Convention. Being in agriculture himself, Commissioner Freeman can understand the issues facing landowners and he can also relate to the sportsmen's perspective. He said he looks forward to working with the Committee to address these complex issues.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Committee accepted the meeting minutes for July 28, 2011.

Nomination of New Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman

After a description of the duties of the positions and some discussion amongst the Committee, it was decided to adopt a rotation system for the chair and vice-chair positions. There would be one year terms and the positions would alternate from livestock grower to sportsman representative. It would begin with Jim O'Haco serving as chairman and Steve Carmickle as vice-chairman. Furthermore, there was discussion about trying to get additional people to sit in on the meetings to get additional perspectives. Commissioner Woodhouse suggested that the summer meetings should continue to be held in conjunction with the Arizona Cattle Growers Convention, where we often get additional landowners participating in our meetings. In addition, the group agreed that each member would try to invite/bring one person to the next meeting.

Updates from Land Management Agencies

June Shoemaker from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) explained the duties of her position as the Branch Chief for Planning and Renewable Resources. She gave the Committee an update on the Travel Management Plans that her agency has in various stages of completion. The ten Travel Management Plans cover 3.4 million acres so it is a huge job. Ms. Shoemaker mentioned that the BLM is working to remove feral burros from the area near the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) headquarters. * In fact, at the time of this update, seven burros have been trapped/removed from the Ben Avery Shooting Facility (as per, Jay Cook, Shooting range Branch Chief).

Tami Emmett gave the Committee an update from the Coronado National Forest (CNF). She said that George McKay, who was formerly on this committee, has accepted a special detail as the acting Assistant Regional Surveyor covering both Arizona and New Mexico; his current position will be vacant for those four months. Ms. Emmett mentioned that George McKay would be receiving one of the Game and Fish Commission Awards later this evening and the agency was thrilled about that. The CNF is working with AGFD to try to gain a permanent legal access to the north end of the Whetstone Mountains while the developer of a new subdivision goes through the Cochise County's rezoning process. The developer offered to provide a parking area and walk-in access, at the discretion of the homeowners' association. CNF and AGFD maintain that there is a major need for a public vehicular Right-of-Way to this mountain range and also that having hunters and other users in a parking area within the subdivision would likely

create conflicts. Larry Audsley provided some additional information on their efforts to gain this vehicular access. Since an agreement couldn't be reached at the Rezoning Commission meeting, the Cochise County Board of Supervisors will make the decision. There was also some discussion about an upcoming conflict resolution meeting pertaining to one of the Travel Management Plans. Commissioner Woodhouse and Tami Emmett both stated that Larry Audsley was deserving of the commission award that he would receive this evening.

Stephen Williams from the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) provided his update. He started with an update on the implementation of the OHV bill from a couple years ago. Due to inadequate funding and staff to tackle the route designations on the 9.2 million acres of State Trust land, ASLD is using the services of consulting engineering firm Coe & Van Loo to work cooperatively with BLM and USFS on travel management planning. The agency continues to work on an updated memorandum of understanding for the Desert Wells Multi-Use Area (DWMUA). The ongoing negotiations involving the new dust regulations are a factor holding up decisions on recreational access to areas in Maricopa, Pinal, and Pima Counties. There has been increased OHV enforcement at DWMUA. Commissioner Freeman added that AGFD is using aerial patrols to locate OHV hotspots and dispatch ground enforcement. Steve Carmickle said they are promoting that all OHV riders join a club – it is an effective way to get the riders educated and compliant.

Landowner Relations Program Updates/Current Issues

Al Eiden provided the Committee with an update from the Landowner Relations Program (LRP). He made sure everyone noted in the agency updates how the agencies were working together to address these issues – the cooperation is very important. He said the “Open Fields” Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program has already allowed us to create a dozen agreements above what we would have normally done, which shows that the more funding we get, the more ranches we can work with. Mr. Eiden gave a PowerPoint presentation, which included a comparison of Arizona with other western states that we are looking at to see if any of their access programs/concepts could be incorporated into ours. Information is being gathered from other states, sportsmen, and landowners to improve the LRP. He talked about ongoing work to digitally compile an inventory of access routes currently available and identify non-accessible locations that should be priorities to focus our efforts on. Mr. Eiden said work continues with the Arizona Cattle Growers Association and Senator Pierce to use the information we collect to create a pilot project. He briefed the Committee on all the existing LRP programs that are currently working with hundreds of landowners statewide to address issues, build good relations, and increase public access. The three million acres of private land or landlocked areas that we have secured access to were shown on digital maps. Mr. Eiden explained that a cost-benefit analysis which considers the amount of public use is completed to determine the amount of funding that can be provided in any access agreement. Unlike some other states' access programs, AGFD doesn't pay strictly for access, but rather for mutually-beneficial habitat improvement or access enhancement projects. AGFD doesn't pay for access because it could backfire and make ranches that are presently open, lock up so they could get paid to reopen; a second

reason to not pay for access is Arizona state law says that if a landowner is given money for access they accept liability for the people recreating on their property. Mr. Eiden added that it is not usually a matter of money, but rather the landowner wanting issues to be recognized and to get assistance with managing the recreation. Mark Weise suggested that the new sportsman's ethics page be provided to the Committee for input. Commissioner Freeman added that the digital maps that LRP is creating regarding access will also be useful information which AGFD will tie into the rest of resource management as well. The Committee could appreciate the maps that the LRP GIS person was creating and asked that more details be provided at the next meeting. It was decided to also include a presentation on using HabiMap.

Identification of Current Issues and Possible Solutions

The Committee had a discussion about the proposed Arizona House Bill 2072, a bill that would have reserved about 350 big game tags for one "qualified organization" to resell at auction or raffle. The bill came as a surprise to the Commission, AGFD, and almost all sportsmen at the very end of last week. During a special meeting earlier this week, the Commission voted unanimously to oppose the bill and also directed its representatives to clearly inform the sponsor and supporters of this bill that the opposition is not just to the bill as written, but to the entire concept of removing any big game tags from the pool of tags available for the general public and transferring them to any private organization. During that special meeting, nine constituents representing organizations or themselves spoke in opposition to the bill; no constituents addressed the commission in the bill's favor. Prior to the meeting, each commissioner had received many personal expressions of strong opposition from various members of the public. HB 2072 was originally slated for a hearing in the House Commerce Committee on Jan. 11, but due to overwhelming opposition the bill was pulled.

Along with putting an end to this bill which would have benefited only a few people, this success also exhibited the importance and power of the public's involvement in legislation. George Reiners offered to help organize a presentation for the next meeting on how to use the web to stay informed about proposed state and federal legislation affecting wildlife and outdoor recreation. On a related issue, Darcy Ely said the webcasts of Commission meetings were a great benefit for ranchers and people who live in remote areas who are unable to get to the meetings. Both Commissioners Woodhouse and Freeman were pleased to hear Ms. Ely's comment because they had each made real efforts to make the commission meetings available to everyone.

Since the Committee had proposed a presentation on GIS and HabiMap at the next meeting, Commissioner Freeman asked Tami Emmett to provide CNF's shape file of all the sky island access points so he could combine it with Google Earth for the next meeting. These web tools are free and available for people to use. Knowing the product would be a very useful tool, Steve Carmickle offered his assistance to help gather GIS data from the various sources.

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 17-19. 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)
3. Provide the new sportsman's ethics page to the Committee for input. (LRP staff)
4. Provide more information on LRP's GIS efforts and instruction on using HabiMap at the next meeting. (LRP staff)
5. Organize a presentation for the next meeting on how to stay informed about proposed state and federal legislation. (George Reiners)
6. Provide CNF's shape file of sky island access points to Commissioner Freeman. (Tami Emmett)
7. Organize a presentation for the next meeting using Google Earth and CNF's shape file of sky island access points. (Commissioner Freeman)

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