

## **Santa Catalina Bighorn Sheep Reintroduction Advisory Committee Minutes**

*03/05/13*

### **Meeting Schedule for next 4 meetings:**

March 19, April 2, April 4 and April 11.

Ben provided a handout and explained the information; mountain lion harvest and decision making priorities.

Ground rule changes: delete #8

#13 Proactive media outreach must be approved by Committee (elective release, not responding to requests)

#14 When responding to media inquiries stick to Talking points; example When asked a leading question respond with something like “That’s an interesting thing, but here is what we are doing” and go back to talking points.

The modified/new ground rules were adopted by the committee.

Mike Quigley and Brian Dolan will develop talking points for committee review. They should only be one to two pages in length. They must be a fluid document that can be updated at the end of each meeting as work progresses Ben’s Fund Solicitation presentation can be used as a guide. NOTE: The Advisory Committee and Agency Representatives refined the Talking Points on March 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> via email discussions.

The Game & Fish can’t operate in secrecy; we have to respond to inquiries when we receive them.

Game & Fish has a comment process and needs to provide answers.

Jenny Neeley gave members who weren’t present at the last meeting a brief review of why the committee was upset at the last meeting: Not being informed prior to press release, and not being told about the Commission meeting presentation before the meeting on the 25th of Feb. Several of their constituents called to inquire about the meeting

Commissioner Harris asked the Committee to reconsider giving the presentation and asked that Advisory Committee members provide the information as opposed to agency personnel. Brian will provide the information and Mike, Trica and Les will attend and provide support.

Joe Sacco will put together some photos to use with the presentation; Brian will give the presentation to the commission.

The first two hours of the Commission meeting is devoted to Region 5, Raul is giving updates on regional projects, it is also an open forum style so some questions may be asked.

Wilderness & Fuel Planning: Stan Helin requested a “minimum resource decision guide” (MRDG) decided on by the committee. Ben has been working on this.

Can change fire program to sheep recovery area, but needs to know which area need to be cleared so that they can be prioritized appropriately.

The National Preparedness level determines whether a fire will be fought in AZ or other areas of the country depending on the fire season if another area is having a bad fire season resources are sent there and suppression becomes the first option. The idea is to reduce the opportunity for a large fire by stopping it early. Also must consider firefighters safety and the difficulty in fighting fires in certain areas( terrain and other hazards)

Fire below 4500' has to be suppressed, saguaros can't be burned as the biome did not evolve with fire.

Smoke is also an issue on the front range. A proactive release will need to go out before any prescribed burn.

Unburned areas need to burn and burned areas need to burn again.

How many fires do you expect to need? 5 to 6

Burns will take in 2015-16

HPC grant would be needed. Prescribed burns can be funded in the 10s to 100s of thousands of dollars depending on defensibility/proximity to critical infrastructure i.e. Bigelow towers.

Brian offered to help Stan with a proposal for this HPC cycle.

Is there a way to remove fuel without burning, can Forest Service go into Wilderness area and remove fuel? Yes there are other techniques with varying degrees of success and cost.

The Forest Service needs to know the logistics of getting lions out of the wilderness area if they are part of the management plan. More than likely removals will involve ground efforts.

Collars aren't an issue in the wilderness area.

Helicopters in wilderness area, how often will they be used, duration of the use and how many?

The sheep will be released outside of wilderness area.

Arial surveys are in the wilderness plan. Brian stated that the surveys may need to be conducted on weekends because his volunteers have other obligations during the week. Stan said that the Santa Catalina Volunteer patrol would help with collar retrieval and surveys.

Mike offered to help with some of the logistics in particular if there are philosophical points to be overcome.

Need to factor in the cumulative watershed response. This may limit the extent that prescribed burning can be done in one season and needs to be considered in planning efforts.

Martin Guerena and John McGehee gave handouts on harvest data for the past 20 years. Mandatory check ins started in 2007 so any data before '07 is subjective.

Brian Dolan stated that the next meeting needs to be about the lion management strategy as we are getting close to the Commission deadline to submit for next year's Commission orders and the need to purchase collars if the sheep are to be transplanted in November.

The mountain lion Commission Order will be decided at the April Commission meeting and will take effect in July.

Brian addressed the Committee and stated that a total closure of the bighorn sheep management area to sport harvest is concerning since he feels it may make lawful sportsmen into unwitting violators. He said that he and his constituents would prefer the hound only closure if a closure is put in place. He also made the point that in many places pre-treatment; aggressive mountain lion removal is done prior to placing sheep; that has not been discussed in the case of the Catalina project.

A decision on the best approach for the Catalina Project will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

**Action Items:**

Meeting Invites – Joe (Completed)

Meeting Locations – Trica, Mike and Joe