

**MINUTES**  
**of the**  
**ARIZONA STATE COMMITTEE ON TRAILS (ASCOT)**  
**of**  
**ARIZONA STATE PARKS (ASP)**  
**Meeting of January 24, 2009**  
**Arizona State University-Institute of Global Sustainability**  
**Tempe, AZ**

**A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chair DeCindis called the meeting to order at 10:00am.

**ASCOT Members Present:** Maureen DeCindis, Chair  
Don Applegate  
Cate Bradley  
Anne Ellis  
Tom Fitzgerald  
Brian Grube  
Daye Halling  
Jim Horton  
Chris Hosking  
Mary McMullen  
Stephen Saway  
Paul Schilke  
Linda Slay  
Kent Taylor  
Bruce Weidenhamer

**ASCOT Members Absent:** John Vuolo  
Erik Wilson

**Arizona State Parks (ASP) Staff:** Annie McVay, State Trails Coordinator  
Ruth Shulman, Advisory Committee Coordinator

**Guests:** Dave White, Arizona State University (ASU)  
Donna Meyers, ASU  
Michael Baker, Volunteers for Outdoor Arizona (VoAZ)  
Johnnie Grgurich VoAZ  
Maria Troche, BLM  
Sonia Overholser, former ASCOT member

**B. INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS AND STAFF**

Members and staff introduced themselves.

**C. PRESENTATIONS**

Volunteers for Outdoor Arizona President Michael Baker and Johnnie Grgurich discussed the mission of VoAZ and a new feature on the group's website. This feature allows volunteers to view VoAZ events (by type of event, or date) and sign up to participate. Trails groups can advertise events and manage volunteer sign-ups and information via eMail through the VoAZ website as well. ASCOT members were encouraged to "spread the word" to their constituents.

## **D. ACTION ITEMS**

### **1. Approve the Minutes of the October 3, 2008 ASCOT meeting.**

Mr. Horton moved that the minutes be approved as presented. Mr. Taylor seconded the motion, which carried with no further discussion.

### **2. Arizona Trails 2010 Plan Update**

Ms. McVay began the discussion by describing the Trails Plan process in ASP: every five years ASP publishes a plan for recreational trails in Arizona. The writing of the plan takes at least two years, with multifaceted public input. Some of the input is through various scientific polls. Dave White, Associate Professor in ASU's School of Community Resources and Development, and his team conducted the polls.

Professor White described the significant amount of research that went into designing the polls and interpreting the results. He described the polls in terms of what questions were asked, why the questions were asked and of whom the questions were asked.

One poll was the random Arizona household telephone poll. The households consisted only of those with landline telephones. Another poll was conducted via the Internet with land managers. Professor White gave ASCOT members a PowerPoint "tour" through some of the results.

Some of the results are: Satisfaction with Arizona trails is high at 87%, with 83% of households regarding trails as important to them. Trails users saw the major issues with trails as environmental problems, trash, erosion and lack of watchable wildlife. Land managers saw the major issues as damage to the trails, invasive species, and erosion. An interesting point was that over 80% of poll respondents want motorized and non-motorized trails to be kept separate. Another interesting point was that land managers are not using the ASP Trails Plan as a planning document, but have gotten trails grants.

Mr. Weidenhamer discussed the use of the term "trails user" in the survey, and whether that was accurately reflective of the population who are more than casual recreationists. Professor White noted that another poll collected data from a targeted population of trails enthusiasts, as well as an additional survey open to any and all posted on the ASP website. Mr. Weidenhamer asked if the enthusiasts expressed different concerns than the casual users. Professor White said that the enthusiasts noted different concerns about the environment of and around trails, as well as trails locations. Enthusiasts looked for more "back-country" experiences. Ms. Ellis asked if Arizona tourists were polled. Professor White said tourists in specific were not polled, however the part-time Arizona population ("snowbirds") was included.

Further details of the survey results, as well as a breakdown of information by county will be provided at future meetings as the Trails Plan 2010 proceeds. Ms. McVay thanked Professor White for his presentation.

### **3. Overview of ASCOT, State Trails System, New Member Orientation**

Ms. McVay began by giving a brief history of ASCOT, and the State Trails System (STS) and how both fit into the larger arena of Arizona State Parks. She noted that ASCOT exists under statutes to solicit nominations and make recommendations to the ASP Board to add trails to the STS. ASCOT also makes recommendations to the ASP Board on new STS categories, such as paddle trails. Another statutory duty is to assist in writing the Trails Plan every five years, as noted above. One function of the Trails Plan is to develop rating criteria for the Trails Heritage Fund grant program. Additional tasks include appointing a liaison to serve on the Trails Heritage Fund grant rating team.

(ASCOT adjourned for lunch and an arboretum tour at 11:30am and reconvened at 1:05pm)

Ms. Shulman discussed the Arizona Open Meeting Law, which is designed to ensure that the business of the State is conducted in public. This means that each public body must have a publicly posted agenda (which must be adhered to) and a quorum of members to conduct a meeting. Meetings must be held in publicly accessible locations. Members cannot discuss ASCOT business with each other outside of meetings, including at social gatherings, via eMail or other internet programs, or over the telephone.

She also discussed the Conflict of Interest statutes, which apply to ASCOT members primarily in serving as the liaison to the Trails Heritage Grant program. The important thing to remember about conflicts of interest, is to be aware of how one's life and business interests intersect with ASCOT's business.

Ms. Shulman's last topic was the Travel Claim form, which allows ASCOT members to be reimbursed for the cost of travel to and from ASCOT meetings. New members who wish to be reimbursed for travel must complete information forms including state and federal tax forms, and the INS Work Eligibility forms (I-9, eVerify). Because travel reimbursement is paid through the state payroll computer, no reimbursements are paid until these forms are complete and entered into the system. Once that step is complete, however, members can submit travel claim forms and be paid on paydays. Ms. Shulman provided her contact information for those who have questions.

Ms. McVay continued her discussion of the STS, by discussing the nomination subcommittee and their function. The subcommittee reviews the nomination applications and brings their recommendations to the full Committee, which then votes on the trails. ASCOT then makes a recommendation of trails to the ASP Board for inclusion into the STS. The STS has been undergoing some changes, in that "paper" trails (planned trails that remain unbuilt) are being reviewed for removal from the listings. Criteria for urban trails are another topic under review and discussion, as the need for urban trails expands. Ms. McVay noted the categories under which trails can be listed in the STS: cross-state trails, recreational, urban, interpretive, trails systems, historic trails and paddle trails.

Mr. Weidenhamer noted that he is clear on what the STS is, but does not know *why* there is an STS. Ms. McVay said that originally the STS was constituted to build a system of the best trails in Arizona. When the Heritage Fund came about, membership in the STS became a criterion for eligibility to receive grant funds. This shifted the original emphasis of the STS.

Mr. Weidenhamer went on to say that before he joined ASCOT he had not known there was a State Trails System. He said that information should be more accessible. Ms. McVay made a brief demonstration of how to find information on the STS at the ASP website. She suggested that members provide a URL for their hiking group/organization/agency for inclusion on ASP's website. Governmental agencies are also encouraged to provide their trails plans for inclusion in the ASP library available on the website.

#### **4. Discussion of ASCOT 2009 Work Plan**

Ms. McVay showed ASCOT GoogleEarth with the ASP GIS overlay with the STS trails marked. Further development of this digital map will include database lists of trails amenities, key linkage planning, and recreation inventory of all trails in Arizona. Ms. McVay asked what, of all this information, would be most useful for trails enthusiasts. Ms. Slay noted that she wants to know what amenities are available at/on a trail. Mr. Hosking said that trails monitoring, for land

managers, would be important. Creating a blog for each trail would help with monitoring. It was noted that the STS has a trail monitoring form online, which also needs to be promoted. Further discussion of the GIS information will take place at the May ASCOT meeting.

Chair DeCindis began the discussion by noting that at the final meeting of 2008, ASCOT had agreed to focus on promoting the STS in 2009. She said she feels one very effective way to do so would be to update the website information. Mr. Saway said that one way to promote awareness of the STS would be to set up external links on other websites, and also to advertise or place notices in venues such as *Backpacker Magazine*. Another thing to do would be to recommend STS trails for the *Arizona Highways* Hike of the Month.

Ms. Bradley thought that the next Trails Conference should be dedicated to the STS. Further ideas on promoting the STS followed:

- Return to the original designation of the “best” trails in Arizona. This mention led to a lengthy discussion on the pros and cons of returning to the original idea of the STS; the “delisting” of unbuilt trails or trails that have not been maintained; how ASCOT would designate trails as “gold standard;” issues caused by designating trails “best” such as overuse; and further issues. Ms. Bradley said that ASCOT is in the business of the whole STS, so any promotion should be about the whole system.
- Promote each trail by use, i.e. equestrian, bike, etc.
- Promote the wide variety of quality outdoor experiences available on STS trails
- Arrange for a weekly column in the Arizona Republic to highlight an STS trail

Following a brief discussion of how many trails are currently in the STS (approximately 780) Mr. Saway said that STS promotion also includes promoting the application process and the great reasons to apply to the STS. Mr. Taylor noted that the historic trails subcommittee needed to meet to discuss new criteria for admitting historic trails with motorized components.

The discussion jumped to subcommittee memberships, and members signed up for those subcommittees in which they felt the most interest. Chair DeCindis suggested adding a subcommittee devoted to promoting the STS. Mr. Saway noted that there might also (or instead) be a marketing strategy subcommittee. Mr. Horton said that there might be paper brochures distributed at the individual ASP parks, as well as flyers posted at REI stores. Mr. Taylor also reminded ASCOT that a subcommittee might also be devoted to a new Trails Conference for 2010 strictly on the STS.

#### **E. CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

Ms. Overholser, a former member of ASCOT and member of the International Mountain Biking Association, said she had come to say goodbye to ASCOT, and thanked Staff for their support of ASCOT. She said that the current economic situation will make for challenges all over the state, and ASCOT’s work will be more important. She noted that there may be future conflicts between open public lands and sites to develop new sustainable energy, which is a good use for the GoogleEarth GIS overlay. If there is a proposal to place windmills on a piece of public land that is a currently used trail, that information could be brought forward. She suggested that small, non-quorum-sized groups of ASCOT members meet to hike a different trail each month.

#### **F. SUMMARY OF CURRENT EVENTS, MATTERS OF BOARD PROCEDURE, REQUESTS AND ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS.**

Historic trails/subcommittee; GIS/GoogleEarth.

Mr. Taylor discussed being the liaison to the Trails Heritage Fund grant program and recommended the experience to the new ASCOT members. Mr. Horton noted that he had attended the ASP Board meeting in November, and said that Chair DeCindis had done an outstanding job of making a presentation on ASCOT. Mr. Applegate passed out a brochure from the Bureau of Land Management on roads and transportation on BLM lands. Mr. Taylor said that Pinal County had been chosen as part of a pilot project to determine the economic impact on communities of open and parks, being undertaken by the Trust for Public Land. This is a 12-14 month study, at the end of which should be all sorts of information that can be shared. Mr. Hosking noted that in his job working with trails and open space in Prescott, he expects some issues to develop around the Peavine Trail and some proposed development in the area. He asked for advice and support. Ms. Overholser mentioned Tom Fitzgerald and West Valley Recreation as sources. Ms. Bradley mentioned that she had been working on a project in Patagonia that had begun to draw in grants and gifts of money beginning with an anonymous donation of \$250.

**G. TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING**

May 15, 2009 – Phoenix – joint meeting with OHVAG

**H. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair DeCindis adjourned the meeting at 2:54pm