

**ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
STATE OF ARIZONA
RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MAY 15, 2009
CARNEGIE CENTER
1101 W. WASHINGTON STREET, PHOENIX, ARIZONA**

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chair Drew John at 10:08am.

Committee Members Present (Motorized Interests):

Drew John, Chair
John Savino
Bob Biegel
Dave Moore
Pete Pfeifer
Hank Rogers (via telephone)

Committee Members Absent (Motorized Interests):

Rebecca Antle

Committee Members Present (Non-Motorized Interests):

Jim Horton
Don Applegate
Cate Bradley
Tom Fitzgerald
Brian Grube
Daye Halling (via telephone)
Chris Hosking
Mary McMullen (via telephone)
Paul Schilke (via telephone)
Linda Slay
Kent Taylor
John Vuolo

Committee Members Absent (Non-Motorized Interests):

Erik Wilson
Bruce Weidenhamer
Steven Saway
Anne Ellis

Arizona State Parks Staff:

Tanna Thornburg, Chief of Planning and Recreational Trails
Annie McVay, State Trails Coordinator
Amy Racki, OHV Coordinator
Bob Baldwin, Recreational Trails Program/ Trails Heritage Grants Coordinator
Ruth Shulman, Advisory Committee Coordinator

Guests:

Bill Gibson, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Laddie Cox, Arizona Trail Association

B. INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS AND STAFF

Members and Staff introduced themselves. Chair John noted that the purpose of the meeting was to serve as the advisory committee to the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) for motorized and non-motorized project eligibility and funding considerations.

C. OLD BUSINESS**1. Approval of Minutes from the May 2, 2008 Meeting**

Mr. Taylor moved to accept the minutes as presented. Mr. Biegel seconded the motion, which carried with no further discussion.

D. NEW BUSINESS**1. Presentation of Arizona State Parks Administered Trail Funds**

Mr. Baldwin gave a presentation outlining the various funds available to Arizona State Parks to administer and manage programs, and distribute competitive grant awards. Mr. Baldwin administers grants for the Trails Heritage Fund, for non-motorized trails. This fund provides grants to trails within the State Trails System (STS) for land acquisition, trails construction and renovation. Annually the fund received approximately \$475,000, which is distributed through a competitive grant program. Applications are received by the end of February; awards made by the ASP Board at the end of September. STS nomination forms are due July 1st, with appointments made in November.

Mr. Baldwin also administers the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) program with three components: the first component is motorized trails with a competitive grants process with applications due at the end of March, and awards granted by the ASP Board at the end of September. These Federal funds are not affected by the state's budget issues. The second component is the Trails Maintenance Program, which will be discussed further below. The third component is educational projects for both motorized and non-motorized trails users.

Ms. Racki currently administers the OHV Recreation Fund. There are now two funding sources for this program. The original source is the gas tax fund, which traditionally generates \$2.1 million annually divided between ASP and the Arizona Game & Fish Department. The new OHV decal program also generates funds. There are a variety of programs these funds are used for, such as the OHV Ambassador program, route evaluations, and small projects.

Mr. Baldwin distributed a list of current Trails Heritage Fund projects. The list contains a description of trails projects along with a completion percentage (which does not reflect the actual money spent). There are fourteen projects. Ms. Bradley asked if anyone was "hurt" by the grants suspension. Mr. Baldwin said he had not heard of anyone. The suspension process allowed for projects near completion to be completed and reimbursed before March 1, 2009. Expenses incurred since March 1 would be the responsibility of the grantee. Another handout identifies the motorized trail projects funded, which are not affected by the state budget issues.

Ms. McVay noted that ASP receives from the Arizona General Fund moneys for the Arizona Trail. For the past two years, ASP has received \$125,000 each year.

Approximately 40 miles of trail remains to be built, and the money is spent for the most part on trail construction.

2. Discuss the Arizona State Parks Budget and Impacts of Trails Related Funds

Mr. Baldwin continued by presenting the ASP budget issues. Problems with the ASP began in 2003 with the partial sweep of the Capital Funds (maintenance and improvement moneys) and over \$600,000 in OHV funds were also diverted. Since that time, these funds were never returned to ASP. Additionally, daily operating funds were cut and not returned. The current budget included a little over \$21 million in operating fund, and approximately \$39 million in pass-through funds, meaning the grant program funds. The majority of the \$39 million resides with the Growing Smarter program (\$20 million annually, to be used for purchasing conservation land). Other pass-through funds come from State Lake Improvement Fund (SLIF) and the Law Enforcement Boating Safety Fund (LEBSF), and the OHV Recreation Fund.

The 2009 budget, beginning on July 1, 2008, totaled approximately \$68.5 million. Beginning in January 2009 the Legislature took back \$34.6 million including the pass-through funds and other operating funds. Some of the Heritage Funds, that accrue from month to month as they are earned, have been swept before they accumulate at ASP. The \$34 million swept includes approximately \$5 million in Heritage Funds, of the \$10 million received annually if the Fund is fully funded. Heritage Funds are derived from the sale of state lottery tickets. The Trails Heritage Fund receives \$500,000, of which 5% goes to ASP. Last September \$739,000 was available, and the ASP Board approved seven projects for approximately \$734,000, leaving \$5,000 in carryover funds.

As of February 2009 the Board authorized the Director to use any and all means of cost-cutting, including suspending and/or canceling grants, temporary park closures, moving moneys between accounts, personnel transfers and furloughs, reductions-in-force and layoffs, as well as returning hard assets and canceling contracts. Some personnel were put on Leave Without Pay, including seasonals and returning retirees. New hires on original probation period were let go. The staff at the Phoenix office is down 20% of capacity. Parks are down 21% of capacity. Purchasing, and travel reimbursements were stopped, and many other measures. The three closed parks were Tonto Natural Bridge, Jerome State Historic Park, and McFarland State Historic Park. These parks contained buildings in need of serious repair; closing them would help accomplish the repairs. Tonto Natural Bridge will reopen weekends only beginning Memorial Day.

On April 3, 2009 the ASP Board authorized the cancellation of Heritage Fund Grants that were 0% complete, meaning that the grants awarded last year were cancelled. This included one trails project awarded in 2007, which had not gotten underway. Projects from 1% to 90% complete were suspended. These projects can be completed without ASP reimbursement if the grantee so chooses. Chair John asked if the cancelled projects would have to reapply. Mr. Baldwin said most likely they will need to reapply, however no final decision has been made in that regard. It is also likely that there will be no grant cycles for the next couple of years. When Heritage Funds again become available, there will not be money for a new grant cycle, considering the suspended grants.

Projects from 91% to 99% complete were given the opportunity to be completed if possible within 45 days, and bill for reimbursement. If that did not occur, their grants were likewise suspended. Five grants were completed and closed for an expenditure of \$83,000. There were eight grants in the cancelled “set” for \$791,000. Ten grants were suspended for \$561,000.

Other components of the Heritage Fund, such as Historic Preservation and Local, Regional and State Parks (LRSP) were also affected by the sweep.

The OHV Recreation Fund has also been affected by sweeps; for three years since approximately 2007, the Legislature has taken a little over \$3 million. The funds are appropriated by the Legislature, as they accumulate, and cannot be spent until the money is appropriate either for its original intended purpose, or another purpose of the Legislature’s. From 2006 to 2008, there were approximately 69 projects through the OHV Recreation Fund for \$1.4 million dollars. FY2010, beginning on July 1, 2009, will begin the gas tax accumulation for that year. Ms. Racki said that in March 2009 there were 19 agreements suspended for a total \$253,000. Those agreements will be taken out of suspension.

Mr. Biegel asked whether the OHV decal fund could be swept by the Legislature. He is under the impression the funds are protected. Mr. Baldwin said that the funds could be swept since they are part of the same OHV Recreation Fund as the gas tax funds. Discussion of how protected funds work followed. Ms. Racki said that the “raids” have not gone beyond the gas tax income. Ms. Thornburg clarified the allocation of funds by the Legislature as regards ASP.

Mr. Baldwin went on to explain that in the same way OHV funds have been “hammered” in the past, and the upcoming FY2010 budget looks to be more of the same. Ms. McVay said that at the moment, the funds for the Arizona Trail look okay. However, it is likely that the RTP will not be renewed. This provides a segue to the topic below.

3. Discuss the Federal Recreation Trails Program

Ms. McVay noted that the legislation that authorizes the RTP expires in October 2009. All indications show that the legislation will not be renewed. However, the program could continue, along with the rest of the legislation, under a continuing resolution. The continuing resolution will not renew the legislation, but will continue it until further action is taken by Congress. Apportionments will continue until that action is taken. The public should feel free to comment to their Congressional representatives that the program has been successful and is needed.

Over the years, ASP has received approximately \$14 million in RTP funds divided among the three components. Mr. Baldwin discussed the handout showing how the funds have been spent.

Mr. Baldwin then asked if the programs should continue as is if the RTP funds continue to come in. Ms. McVay said that the upcoming year could look drastically different depending. Ms. Bradley asked if any of the funding could be spent on promotion/ education. She feels that promoting the value of the program could possibly

have helped the program to be renewed. She does not have any specific ideas as to what sort of promotion. Ms. McVay said that promotion in the sense Ms. Bradley seems to mean would likely not be allowed under the RTP program, however there are promotional ideas that would cost little or nothing to implement.

Chair John said that the program as it occurs now works well. He asked Ms. Bradley if she meant to discuss promotion in the sense of advising legislators, both state and national, of the importance of the RTP program. Ms. Bradley said that Arizona is doing a good job of coming up with creative solutions to trails maintenance and building.

Mr. Baldwin said that there is some recognition at the national level of the importance of trails as represented by the nomination of the Arizona State Trail as a National Scenic Trail. The trails maintenance program is among the best in the country.

Ms. McVay said that the Coalition for Recreational Trails, or the American Trails organization, through their website are asking the public to sign a letter to renew the legislation. Chair John said he will happily discuss the matter with his Congressional representatives.

Ms. McVay has also developed trails training programs using some of the education funding available. She noted that the non-motorized side of the RTP program seems to be quite happy to continue the program as it is. Several positive comments were made. Mr. Taylor noted that trails users continually identify maintenance and upkeep as a necessary item, so the RTP maintenance program is crucial. The motorized side, represented by Bob Biegel, said that using RTP funds is good to open trails for OHV use. Mr. Biegel then asked if the Arizona Trails is motorized or non-motorized (or both). Ms. McVay said that the AZ Trail is non-motorized. The Great Western Trail is motorized. Mr. Savino would like to see more ride-parks open to keep renegade riders off non-motorized trails. Chair John said that the OHV decal fund may be able to be used for ride-park construction. Ms. Racki noted that the competitive grant priorities are based on how important types of projects are rated in the Trails Plan(s).

4. Update on the Trails 2010 Plan

Ms. Thornburg said that members had received a copy of the Executive Summary of the plan. New plans are written every five years, and this plan for 2010 began its planning in late 2007. Arizona State University (ASU) designed several polls, for the general public, trails users and land managers that were taken during 2008. The data is either in the appendix or in the text. These responses formed the basis of the priorities in the plan.

The public comment period began April 1, 2009 and will continue until the end of June. Members of ASCOT and OHVAG are encouraged to comment on the plan, and can do via the ASP website or by writing a letter. The highlights of the plan, including some of the differences from earlier plans, include motorized and non-motorized trails in separate chapters with combined data in the appendices. New chapters include planning for trails and trails recreation, regional trail planning, issues around the border with Mexico, and grants and funding. The relevant statutes regarding trails in Arizona are in the appendix. Ms. Thornburg mentioned several other sections that will be in final copy of the plan.

The public comments will be incorporated into the final document. The plan will be brought before ASCOT, OHVAG and the Arizona Outdoor Recreation Coordinating Commission (AORCC) for recommendation to go the ASP Board. The Board will review the plan in September or November, hopefully approve it, and then it will be finalized. During that time frame, Bob Baldwin will be working with a taskforce of OHVAG and ASCOT members to develop grant criteria for the various programs based on the priorities listed in the plan.

Ms. Thornburg noted that the priorities, listed by motorized and non-motorized in charts, are in the Executive Summary. The priorities are similar between programs, focusing on maintenance and upkeep. The priorities are listed in tiers, by first, second and third tiers. The first tier represents the top priorities to focus on in the next five years with the limited funds available.

A question was asked about the wildlife corridors, and Ms. Thornburg noted that the information would be forthcoming from the AGFD, including information on mitigation. Mr. Moore noted that he is both a non-motorized and motorized trails user as he hunts from his ATV. He feels that numbers are somewhat skewed, as non-motorized trails users often use motorized vehicles to reach their recreation spot. Ms. Thornburg noted that the Trails Plan 2010 is designed to identify the core users, even though it breaks the usage down into the two major categories. Some questions in the polls were designed to capture information on people who are both motorized and non-motorized users (as self-identified).

Chair John said that the plan was very well done. He noted that the new OHV law and funding source will make a difference in the Trails Plan for 2015. Ms. Thornburg pointed out that there is a GIS-based recreation inventory in Chapter 5. At the moment, there are more non-motorized trails listed, however the finished database should contain as many motorized trails as possible. The information needs to come from the planning committees at the county-city-town level. Chair John noted that the BLM project to inventory their roads and trails; the next important step in that project is to designate routes as motorized.

Mr. Applegate asked for more clarification on the various tiers of priorities, especially whether the priorities were from the public. What did the public find most important. Ms. Thornburg said that the information was from the public. The tiers were formed by tracking the highest "scoring" items in the public polls. Several people mentioned the low-priority of volunteerism, however Ms. Racki pointed out that a second tier priority, "more on the ground management" could be an opportunity for volunteers.

5. Discuss the Recent Activities of ASCOT and OHVAG

Mr. Horton noted that one major accomplishment of ASCOT during the past year was having the ASP Board approve a decrease in the matching funds amount for Trails Heritage Fund grants. The decrease was approved in 2008, and lowered the match amount to 25% from 50% for all applicants except the Federal government. For this year, ASCOT has decided to focus on promoting the 728 trails in the State Trails System. The idea is to get that information and knowledge out to the public.

Chair John noted that OHVAG finally saw the passage of the OHV Legislation, on which the members had worked as a committee and individually. There are still areas that could be improved; the legislation can be amended as necessary. The best part of the legislation is that it creates a new source of funding, and will also create new riding areas. The current budget problem means that there are some issues in the funding area, however.

The OHVAG website has been updated and improved to cover all of the new information around OHV recreation in Arizona.

Last November, the committee took a field trip to Sipe Ranch Wildlife Area in the White Mountains with ASLD staff.

The OHV Ambassador program is continuing to grow, with up to 20 instructors being trained to spread the program and allow it to grow. It's a successful program for providing education and awareness. Mr. Biegel noted that the new laws have created opportunities for the Ambassadors, especially in spreading awareness to the riding public. Ms. Racki noted that she had joined several OHV Ambassadors recently to stabilize the historic Martinez Cabin. Another important item on the calendar is that ASP and AGFD will partner to produce a guide to OHV recreation in Arizona.

Several comments were made on the importance of the motorized and non-motorized groups to continue to work together as there is a lot of common ground for both types of recreationists.

E. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Bill Gibson of the BLM noted first that the Arizona Trail is a non-motorized trail by law, which should be kept in mind. He also said that the Trails Plan 2010 was a great job, and highlighted the need to preserve access to trails. The National Forest Service continues to work on their travel management rules, so contact the forest near you with input. The BLM also continues travel management work, which should be completed by 2012. Comments to the BLM can be sent through their website at BLM.gov/Arizona. He said that a good use of RTP funds might be to purchase state trust land easements, which will be necessary to preserve access.

Ms. McVay noted that this meeting had earned ASP \$1.6 million in RTP funds. On another positive note, the Arizona Trails Association spent \$70,000 in two months on maintenance and building new trails.

F. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Biegel moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Pfeifer seconded the motion, which carried with no further discussion. Chair John adjourned the meeting at 11:55am.