

**ARIZONA STATE PARKS
NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(NAPAC)**

Minutes of the meeting held:

Thursday, March 22, 2007

At:

Oracle State Park
3820 Wildlife Drive
Oracle, Arizona

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Vice-Chair Stone called the meeting to order at 12:28pm. The following people were present, and the Committee achieved a quorum.

Committee Members Present: Trevor Hare, Chair (arrived 1:15pm)
Sheridan Stone, Vice-Chair
Linda Kennedy
Ken Kingsley
Phyllis Hughes
Don W. Young
Max Castillo, *ex officio*, via telephone

Committee Members Absent: John Hays

Other Individuals Present: Ray Warriner, Arizona State Parks (ASP)
Jerry Ravert, Manager, Oracle State Park
Bob Casavant, ASP
Ruth Shulman, ASP

Guests: Joshua Taiz, US Forest Service (USFS)

B. INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS AND STAFF

Members and Staff introduced themselves.

C. OLD BUSINESS

1. Approval of NAPAC Minutes for the February 22, 2007 meeting.

Chair Hare noted two minor corrections on page ten; one is the spelling of Dr. Kingsley's name and one to remove a superfluous word in the following paragraph. Dr. Young had submitted changes electronically prior to the meeting.

Dr. Kingsley moved to accept the minutes as amended. Dr. Young seconded the motion, which carried with no further discussion.

2. Discussion of proposed Natural Areas acquisitions of COD Ranch and site visit.

Mr. Warriner noted that the price of this property had been discussed at the February 22, 2007 meeting. He has been in contact with the COD Ranch owner, who is aware that NAPAC will be touring the property today. The owner mentioned that he has had previous offers to buy the property, but that there is no offer on the table currently. It was decided to finish with the remainder of Committee business before going on the site visit. No further business of the Committee was discussed during the visit.

3. Update and discussion on Huggett properties purchase price and appraisal and results of ASP Board Board discussion.

Dr. Young said that he attended the ASP Board meeting and the Board approved the allotment of \$20,000 for the purchase of the Huggett properties. Ms. Hughes asked about the outcome of the research into exactly how much the back taxes are, and whether there would be a formal appraisal.

Ms. Hughes additionally asked about the Conservation Easements on the Huggett properties, and how ASP could both purchase the properties and honor the requirements of the easements.

Mr. Warriner said that the amount of the back taxes on the Huggett properties would be closer to \$10,000 than the originally estimated \$20,000.

Chair Hare noted that as far as the Conservation Easements on the properties, Arizona Open Land Trust (AzOLT) has said that they want to have the easements extinguished because they do not want to be in charge of them anymore. Once Parks owns the property the easements are automatically extinguished. Mr. Warriner said that he felt AzOLT would keep the easements if Parks made the request. However, if they are adamant about extinguishing the easements, there is a provision that puts the easement enforcement on The Nature Conservancy (TNC). It may be possible to transfer the easements altogether to TNC. Ms. Hughes asked for a copy of the easements, and arrangements were made for Mr. Warriner to provide those copies either by eMail or regular mail.

Chair Hare said that he did not see why the easements were necessary, as the properties were becoming a part of the Natural Areas program. Ms. Hughes say that the easements are an extra encumbrance. Chair Hare agreed that they may cause unnecessary burdens on the operation of the properties as a Natural Area. Mr. Warriner recalls that the easements were fairly restrictive, so they might not be reserved. Dr. Kennedy asked what protocols or conditions were in place if ASP decides to divest itself of this (or any other) property. Ms. Hughes said that she believes there is something in the ASP Board's charge or in the 1999 criteria document. Dr. Kennedy said that the easements may need to be intact if the ASP Board decides to sell the property if that is ever deemed necessary. Mr. Warriner said

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that he felt that the ASP Board could attach an easement if the property were sold. Ms. Hughes said that it is extremely rare for ASP Board to sell properties in any case. (There have been three instances in the history of ASP.) Further discussion followed on the easements. Ms. Hughes noted that easements add a burden if the land is being protected by the mandate of the Natural Areas program anyway. Chair Hare mentioned that TNC is selling Pima County all the conservation easements pertaining to Buehman Canyon after lengthy negotiations regarding extinguishing the easements. Chair Hare offered to provide the details to NAPAC if they desire.

Vice-Chair Stone suggested that the “cleanest” course would be to review the easements and translate appropriate conservation actions into the management plan for Oracle SP, which would cover the Huggett properties.

Chair Hare asked Mr. Warriner about the timeline for acquisition. Mr. Warriner noted that a request for an appraisal quote is underway, as is a Phase 1 environmental assessment report. A purchase contract and the beginning of escrow will begin shortly as the ASP Board has approved the purchase. Ms. Hughes confirmed that purchase would be contingent on the finding of the Phase 1 environmental report.

Chair Hare asked what action should be taken next regarding the easements. Ms. Hughes said that the first step would be to read and review the easements and discover exactly where enforcement rights lay once the property transfers. If the AzOLT or TNC retain the enforcement rights, then the next steps would not be the same steps as if the easements extinguish upon ASP purchase. Making this determination will part of the due diligence. Mr. Warriner noted that the appraisal would take 45 days itself. This topic will remain on the agenda.

4. Update and further discussion regarding McGrew Springs as a Natural Area within Kartchner Caverns State Park (KCSP) vs. KCSP *in toto* as a Natural Area.

Dr. Young noted that the McGrew Springs item had not been placed on the ASP Board agenda at the request of Jay Ream, Assistant Director for Park Operations, which he discussed with Mr. Ream at the ASP Board meeting. Mr. Ream had originally wanted to be at the NAPAC meeting to discuss this item, however he was unable to attend. Ms. Shulman also mentioned a conversation she had had with Mr. Ream regarding how this agenda was structured for discussion. The NAPAC membership agreed that further information on Mr. Ream’s intent would be necessary. Dr. Casavant reminded NAPAC that the extent of the cave system itself is still being determined at this time.

Vice-Chair Stone noted that he is concerned that the recommendation originally made to the ASP Board was removed from the Board’s agenda. Further discussion was held on how agenda items either go forward to the Board or are “killed” before the Board can make a consideration. Chair Hare asked that the process itself be made an agenda topic, with input from Ms. Hernbrode as legal counsel. Vice-Chair Stone said that the Committee had discussed at length the difference between designating McGrew Springs alone as a Natural Area, and designating the entire Park. Ms.

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Shulman outlined what steps are taken between NAPAC making a motion to recommend an item to the Board. Mr. Warriner expanded on the conversation, saying that he believes “controversial” items are discussed in Executive Staff meetings.

Chair Hare said that some clarification would be needed on Mr. Ream’s intent, because NAPAC had discussed surface and subsurface features to be protected. NAPAC feels that the discussion had been fairly inclusive. This item to be tabled until further information from Mr. Ream is available. Vice-Chair Stone also asked that NAPAC be notified when NAPAC business is either removed from a Board agenda, or not promoted to the agenda in the first place, especially since a NAPAC member will be attending Board meetings. Dr. Kennedy suggested that a report from the NAPAC member attending the Board be added to the NAPAC agenda when appropriate.

5. Report and update on ASP Board discussion regarding the San Rafael State Natural Area (SRSNA).

Ms. Shulman noted that the draft minutes of the ASP Board item on San Rafael State had been forwarded to the Committee prior to this meeting. The membership reviewed the minutes, and decided that more clarification and background would be needed. Chair Hare noted that his first concern in the event of fire at SRSNA would be protecting the historic structures, and happy that fire hydrants and a barrier are in place around them. Further discussion of what fire-fighting apparatus is in the SRSNA.

Chair Hare would like to see what the USFS fire assessment, because of the amount of rain encouraging the growth of grass. He says that periodic fires are beneficial to grasslands and possibly to riparian areas as well according to recent research. Dr. Kennedy said that the big, old cottonwoods could be at danger. Chair Hare said that the cottonwoods on the SRSNA are not in a “gallery”. Mr. Castillo noted that along the Verde River Greenway that is a fire danger to the cottonwoods, which has been discussed in the past.

Dr. Kennedy wondered how much debris has built up along the Santa Cruz River. Dr. Kingsley said that that information would be an important consideration of the SRSNA Management Plan, which is under development. Chair Hare said that it would be a good idea to assess the potential impacts to the cottonwood forest such as it is. He also noted that there would be problems if a fire began on ASP land and spread to the USFS or private land. Dr. Kennedy noted that work is being done in the area to promote cross-boundary fire strategies.

Chair Hare noted that the fire plan(s) should perhaps be made a priority, especially in terms of developing cross-boundary strategies. He also said that Dr. Kennedy has a good perspective on fires as there had been large fire recently in her area. Dr. Kennedy noted that, solely from a Natural Areas standpoint, the major problem with fire is that it promotes the spread of Lehman’s Lovegrass. Ideally there should be a

plan in place to monitor the Lehman's before and after a burn. There should also be an ecological burn plan in place. The USFS timeline would be important to find out. She noted that the Ranch wants to wait on holding any controlled burns, if that is an option. The more land managers in the area that are involved in the plan, the better.

Chair Hare said that both Ms. Roberts and Dr. Casavant should be involved in area plans, and reprioritize the SRSNA fire plan. He also said that "keeping an eye" on the Lehman's already in the area, and taking a look at the potential consequences of a fire in the riparian would be a good idea. Dr. Young noted that Bob Sejkora of ASP is in the area frequently to reset his monitoring instruments.

Dr. Young also mentioned that the area is subject to numerous illegal border crossings, which present a danger to both SRSNA visitors and staff. The Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Border Patrol have a presence in the area, and are working with SRSNA manager Lee Eseman.

Chair Hare then reiterated that he would like to see some further information from Ms. Roberts about the fire potential in the riparian area, and how much debris needs to be removed, as well as how the removal work would be accomplished if necessary.

D. NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion of USFS Fire Management planning and presentation.

Joshua Taiz of the USFS Fire Management Service made a presentation on the early planning of the Oracle Ridge Ecosystem Restoration Project. This represents approximately 11,000 acres on the northern end of the Santa Catalina Ranger District. The area had been previously affected by the both the Aspen fire in 2003 and the Oracle Hill fire in 2002. This plan also includes portion of an earlier project referred to as the Oracle Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Project. Under a new federal law, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA,) requires collaboration between all interested and affected areas in these fire zones. The idea is to apply various treatments to the project areas over the next ten years, to meet three objectives. The objectives are: watershed maintenance, especially in those areas already affected by the fires mentioned above, wildlife habitat improvement, and community protection, especially for the Town of Oracle.

Mr. Taiz showed NAPAC a large multicolored map that showed the project areas, which are "potentially controllable blocks" of land. Part of the challenge of this project is that private and public lands checkboard each other. If the USFS and ASP have mutually acceptable management plans for their segments of public land, it will help to form the collaboration in fire prevention with the private landowners.

Mr. Taiz noted that the south end of the map showed Brice Peak and lands adjacent to the border of the Coronado Forest. Mr. Taiz pointed out the map areas that had been

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affected by the Aspen and Oracle Hill fires. The vegetative communities represented on these lands are primarily desert grasslands, chaparral, and Madrean oak woodlands, along with various mixed vegetation areas.

Dr. Kennedy asked about the historic return interval in these systems. Mr. Taiz did not have a specific answer for the particular area, but did say that the typical return interval for ponderosa pine was approximately 7-10 years. The specific lands to which he referred would have a bit faster return interval; perhaps between the ponderosa pine return interval and the typical lowland area return interval. This is based on oak woodlands on midslopes, such as what is being discussed in this plan. One aspect of the plan is to create "habitat mosaics" which will vary the effect of fires.

Dr. Kingsley asked about the boundaries on the map. Most of the map boundaries are related to mountain ridgelines, drainage or roads. Mr. Taiz responded that the multicolored spaces reflect the "potentially controllable blocks" with areas that need treatments, outside of those affected by the Aspen and Oracle Hill fires. Those areas are being allowed to recover naturally, and are doing well. The specific objective for any one mapped area depends on the location. Areas nearer human habitation will have an overriding objective of community protection. Areas around Brice Peak have an overriding objective of wildlife habitat improvement. Mr. Taiz further discussed various fire control methods used in the past in these areas.

The HFRA requires collaboration and partnerships between all affected parties in fire management. This process should be viewed as a variation on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), using a proactive approach that allows affected parties to meet and address any problems before actual decisions on fire plans are made. As with NEPA, the appeals process remains however. Because ASP is an affected party, this presentation represents the initial meeting between ASP and USFS. Mr. Taiz then referred to a draft Scoping Report written by the USFS, but not yet publicly available. This document has a discussion of the objectives and some of the association actions, like growth maintenance, fire breaks and providing fuel wood to the public. There are many places where standing and fallen dead trees and shrubs create a dangerous situation near human habitation. The fuel wood cleared from those areas would be made available for sale to the public. However, the Oracle area in particular has a sluggish fuel wood market, so this idea will be reviewed during the collaborative process meetings.

Dr. Young asked whether the idea was to use methods and plans that would effectively obscure the boundaries between land management agencies, such as ASP and the USFS. Mr. Taiz replied that that would be the ideal, but a great deal depends on the land management plans of ASP. USFS and ASP plans would need to be highly compatible in order to "erase" the boundaries. He is in discussion with Ms. Roberts on this subject. Dr. Young said that ASP is generally in agreement that the land should be managed for the benefit of the environment. There are some restrictions about how to go about that goal on Oracle State Parks, but it is perhaps possible to work within the restrictions. Dr. Young asked how the USFS and ASP would interface. Mr. Taiz said

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that, for example, if a controlled burn was prescribed along the border of USFS and ASP, then the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) would be called in to approve and implement the burn plan and the treatment plan along with USFS and ASP. (ASLD is the state's "fire wing".)

Dr. Kingsley asked Mr. Taiz if he was familiar with the deed restrictions on Oracle State Park. Mr. Taiz was not familiar, and Dr. Kingsley advised that a familiarity with those restrictions would be advisable. The restrictions are somewhat complex and could affect any plans being formulated in the future. During further discussion of this topic, it was suggested that perhaps the Defenders of Wildlife, who wrote the deed restrictions, could be brought into the meetings regarding the fire plan. Mr. Taiz said that the collaborative process is extremely important under the HFRA. Dr. Kennedy said that people who hold conservation easements and preservation deed restrictions should also be considered partners for purposes of the fire plan. Mr. Taiz noted that the USFS spends a great deal of money for fire-defense of State assets, or even private assets. These collaborations should help mitigate some of that expense.

Vice-Chair Stone asked whether USFS assets could be used for the purposes mentioned above. Mr. Taiz said that was the case if there was an agreement between the parties. He also mentioned that the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) in Tucson had set aside \$20,000 in state "special tags" funds to help achieve the objectives of the fire plan. Mr. Taiz said that the first treatment is planned for either October or November of 2007. The HFRA should speed up and streamline the process, since the Act is a variation of NEPA. Further discussion on NEPA process followed and why it does not pertain to projects developed under the HFRA.

Vice-Chair Stone asked about the historic components of the vegetation in the Oracle area, which he has been told consisted of grasslands, but is now invaded by woody shrub. Mr. Taiz said that he believes it's always been Madrean oak, with a savannah-like aspect to it. At the most, the land is basically closed-canopy oak. His feeling is that the oak trees burn down to the root-crown and sprout back, so that most of the trees ("clones") probably have an age of over 1,000 years. One major consideration is the climate regime for managing the land. Grasses are becoming more numerous. Vice-Chair Stone said that there are native grasses in the parcel that ASP is purchasing.

Dr. Kingsley asked whether monitoring was built-in to the plan, and if so, what kind. Mr. Taiz said that grass and forb monitoring is built into every grazing allotment plan, so that information is available. The main concern is for monitoring species diversity. There are also "fuels transects" which monitors how much fire fuel is accumulating. Dr. Kingsley asked if there is any monitoring program locked in and guaranteed to happen. Mr. Taiz said no, and that agencies typically have difficulty maintaining monitoring plans. Further discussion of monitoring plans and techniques followed, Mr. Taiz asked whether monitoring issues should be part of the collaborative discussions. Student assistance in performing the actual monitoring should be available from the University of Arizona. This led to a discussion of training monitors in the preferred

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techniques and protocols and other items to take into account when “hiring” monitors. Vice-Chair Stone asked if the areas designated Oracle 1-5 were part of the current fire plan monitoring. Mr. Taiz said that at the moment, they did not meet the minimum objectives for fuel reduction to be part of a prescribed burn. The draft plan outlines the parameters for the various objectives.

Vice-Chair Stone asked about the herbaceous plant response in previously burned areas. Mr. Taiz said that there has been an observable response. The shrubs are barely coming up, and the grasses are re-establishing themselves well.

Dr. Casavant asked whether the USFS was a member of the Southwest Desert Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (DSCESU). Mr. Taiz said he did not believe so. Dr. Casavant said that the members of the CESU are looking for large projects that involve multi-agency collaborations. The fire plan project should fit their requirements and perhaps be presented to the DSCESU as a pilot project.

Dr. Kennedy asked whether there were concerns over invasive species addressed in this plan. Mr. Taiz said that there was little to no concern on “this side of the mountain” but that on the other side there were many concerns. Dr. Kennedy asked whether the concerns were over Buffle Grass, Fountain Grass and Lehman’s Lovegrass. Dr. Kennedy said that the Lehman’s Lovegrass is of particular concern because of the way it spreads after a fire.

Dr. Kingsley asked if any microphytic soil had been observed. Mr. Taiz said that so far, no one had come across any, even in the historical monitoring data available.

Vice-Chair Stone asked whether any Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ASP and the USFS regarding this plan would also cover the ASLD’s involvement. These agreements may already exist as far as the ASLD. Mr. Taiz said that he would look into agreements between ASLD and USFS and report back. He asked whether someone could research the agreements, if any, between ASP and ASLD, especially in terms of fuel reduction agreements. NAPAC thought that Joanne Roberts would likely have this information, or know how to find it.

Mr. Taiz discussed the various agreements between local fire districts and the USFS using convict labor to do fuel clean-up. Mr. Ravert said that these convict crews have also been working in the Oracle area.

Dr. Kingsley asked what actions NAPAC should take at this point. Mr. Taiz said that at this point, there are no actions required of NAPAC. His next steps would involve further discussions with Ms. Roberts about the fire plan.

Mr. Castillo asked if there were fire-fighting units available at Oracle. Mr. Ravert said that the Oracle Fire Department has been asked to help out, as there is little fire-fighting equipment in the Park itself.

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Dr. Casavant said that as Natural Areas management plans are being developed, ASP is taking into account with whom it shares borders, and what agreements can be put into place for mutual aid in management. Management plans and monitoring plans should not create boundaries. Vice-Chair Stone said that management plans should be developed in accordance with other land management agencies in order to develop some consistent objectives and language.

(Chair Hare arrived at this point in the discussion and Mr. Taiz provided him with a brief overview of the plan.)

Vice-Chair Stone asked if there were any sensitive species involved in any of plan areas. Mr. Taiz said there are not a lot of sensitive species, especially those from the Federal list. At the moment, the only sensitive item to take into consideration is foraging habitat for Lesser Longnose Bats. Spotted Owl critical habitat is considered to be a part of the ranger district, however it seldom occurs. Leopard Frogs may occur, but have not been documented.

Dr. Kingsley asked if there is any permanent water in the plan area. Mr. Taiz said that at this point, because of the extensive Aspen and Oracle Hill fires, he is not ready to say that there is permanent water anywhere.

NAPAC thanked Mr. Taiz for his presentation.

2. Report and discussion of the proposed acquisition of Chief Capitan Chiquito property near Aravaipa.

Mr. Warriner provided the Committee with new copies of the documents he had provided at the previous meeting. The property is 160 acres (4 40-acre parcels) along Aravaipa Creek, which would represent a foothold in the Aravaipa area for ASP Natural Areas.

Chair Hare asked if these parcels were above or below the Fish Barrier on Aravaipa Creek. Mr. Warriner was unsure, but will find out. Dr. Kingsley noted that the three maps provided differ from one another in the placement of the parcels. Because the Fish Barrier is extremely important, the precise placement of the parcel is critical. Dr. Kingsley pointed out to Mr. Warriner where the differences on the map occur.

Ms. Hughes asked if the land had been surveyed, especially in light of the "patent" mentioned in the description. Mr. Warriner noted that there was a legal description of the property to use to pinpoint the location. Chair Hare noted that a site evaluation visit should be set up to view the property and determine the location of the road, the rights-of-way, and the Fish Barrier. Mr. Warriner offered to construct a better map.

Chair Hare noted that he knows the current president of the neighborhood association in the area. It might be a good idea to alert them and the neighborhood association about this possible purchase.

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Ms. Hughes asked for clarification on the location of the property in relation to the Aravaipa Wilderness. Various maps were used to show the locations.

Chair Hare asked about a potential price of the land. Mr. Warriner said that he had only been provided with a copy of a 1999 appraisal showing the value to be \$1250/acre. Mr. Warriner feels that there may not have been much increase in the value since then. Dr. Kingsley asked whether the location of the road and the Fish Barrier would affect the property's eligibility as a Natural Area. Another item to take into consideration is that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) probably has an access right-of-way to the Fish Barrier.

Ms. Hughes asked about the "fee patent" mentioned in the document, especially in light of the difficulties of both selling and buying Indian Trust Lands. Mr. Warriner noted that the land under discussion here is not held in trust for the entire Tribe, so that the "fee patent", as he understands it, is available upon application.

Mr. Warriner noted that he will arrange for a site inspection visit for a date to be determined by the Committee. (In further discussion, the Committee suggested that this visit be held on April 16, 2007 at 10:30am.) He will be speaking with the person arranging the sale during the coming week. There may be other lands for sale, though it is doubtful that any are for sale or will be in the near future. The parcel located around the parcels under discussion may be reservation land.

Vice-Chair Stone asked whether there would need to be four fee patent applications as there are four parcels for sale. Mr. Warriner said there may only need to be a single fee patent application. Ms. Hughes said that, with the large number of sellers involved, there could be difficulty in determining whether a "quiet title action" might be necessary to ensure that all "unknown" owners are notified. (This is necessary when there might be heirs of owners involved that are not listed in the current owner's list.) Mr. Warriner had asked the representative (a Mr. Hartman) how it is that all the owners have agreed to sell. The representative said that the sale required only that a majority of the owners agree. Mr. Warriner said that he will get some clarification as to whether this means a simple majority, a super majority, or some other sort of majority. Chair Hare suggested that Ms. Hernbrode be consulted on this transaction as well. Further discussion on this matter followed.

Dr. Kennedy asked about the management implications and who would do the management. Mr. Warriner said that perhaps the land managers of the Aravaipa Wilderness area might assist. He noted that, as far as he believes, this land would be slightly different than the general Natural Area and development into a "State Park" Natural Area may not be necessary. He referred to the "Plan 6/2000" as the guiding document for acquisition of Natural Areas. Mr. Warriner distributed copies of the most pertinent parts of the document. The age of this document led to some discussion, and Ms. Hughes noted that in 1999 the ASP Board Natural Area Criteria document was developed and should supercede the 6/2000 document. However, Mr.

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Warriner suggested that the 6/2000 document has some good guidance, and that members read this at their leisure.

(The Committee chose the date for the site visit after discussion of their calendars. See above notation for the date.) Mr. Warriner also said that he would obtain more information about the location of the Fish Barrier, the precise legal boundaries of the parcels, and whether there has been a survey done.

Vice-Chair Stone asked about the rights that would come with purchase of the property, such as water, grazing, mineral rights. Mr. Warriner said that information about water was contained on one of the maps in the packet he had distributed. The map shows some wells recorded on the property. Additionally it shows some "statements of claims" meaning rights that have not yet been adjudicated and do not pertain only to water, as well as surface water, meaning appropriable public water probably out of the Aravaipa Creek itself. There are also pre-1919 water rights claims shown by symbol on the map. Some discussion followed on how wells are plotted on maps.

Vice-Chair Stone asked if the property was fenced, and Mr. Warriner answered that he fairly certain it is not fenced. Chair Hare asked about a house on the property, and the appraisal mentions a home-site. Mr. Warriner says that this most likely refers to a stone building, perhaps a ruin.

Chair Hare asked Mr. Warriner to talk to TNC about helping with managing or even simply "keeping an eye" on the property for ASP if it were purchased. This would be in addition or perhaps in lieu of any BLM assistance.

3. Report and discussion of possible acquisition of Phelps-Dodge/Rickett's Mine property near McGrew Springs.

Chair Hare noted that Phelps-Dodge (PD) and Freeport had recently merged. The property had been offered to ASP in the past. Dr. Casavant had been "walking the ground" in this area and found it highly fractured, which means any rainwater leaves the surface immediately. The mine itself is a liability in one sense, however from the hydrological standpoint there would be value because it affects the cave system.

Mr. Warriner said that when it was offered five or so years ago, NAPAC declined to make the area a Natural Area because the land was so heavily impacted. He spoke at the time to a PD property manager who said that if ASP did not purchase the land, it would probably not be sold. Subsequent to that Mr. Warriner spoke with a Mr. Graves who said he had approached PD to purchase the mine, with the idea of perhaps building a tourist destination. Dr. Casavant said that he could speak to PD about their plans if the Committee wished.

Ms. Hughes asked if PD might still consider the sale at a bargain price because it has no value in the mining business. Dr. Young made some comments regarding how

developers manipulate property prices in the Arizona market. Further comments along this line followed.

Vice-Chair Stone asked about the acreage of the mine property. Mr. Warriner said that he estimates the size at 80 acres, which is surrounded by USFS land. It was a silica mine, which has been dead since the 1960s. Dr. Casavant said that there is no further mineral value, and it looks like a hole in the fault line at the current time.

Chair Hare said that the next step would be for Mr. Warriner and Dr. Casavant to quietly ask their PD contacts about the property. However, because of the merger, this may become a more complicated issue than earlier. Mr. Warriner also mentioned that PD would be more likely to discuss the property with an entity who is relatively definite about whether they will make the purchase. Further discussion followed, including how the McGrew Springs purchase came about. It was noted that the best reason to purchase Rickett's Mine was to protect the water source for Kartchner Caverns.

Dr. Young and Dr. Casavant will complete evaluation forms on the mine property and provide those to Ms. Roberts. Mr. Warriner and Dr. Casavant will approach their contacts at PD to get some idea whether the property is available. Dr. Young will join Mr. Warriner in his discussion.

E. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

(Chair Hare dispensed with subcommittee reports from the first three groups.)

1. Natural Areas Management Guidelines (NAMG) committee: Update and report on progress.

2. Update on the interim San Rafael State Natural Area (SRSNA) Management Plan materials, report and discussion if necessary.

3. Update on Verde River Greenway – Report on the next steps in CAP Planning process.

4. Update from Land Acquisition subcommittee, Acquisition Process Working Group, including discussion.

Dr. Young said that the subcommittee had met on March 13, and the meeting was largely spent in “getting up to speed”. The subcommittee broke the task of acquisition down into two parts; one part being the process itself, and the other being the relationship between park management and the Natural Area concept. The second area has not yet been discussed. The group did some flowcharts of the current process of acquisition, and some flowcharts of where changes might be made. This will be discussed with the whole Committee in the future.

Ms. Hughes said that at this point the subcommittee is looking to develop the “macro” picture. There exists a great deal of information in the form of guidelines, criteria, and plans. This information along with its underlying authority needs to mesh together in a more comprehensive way. One goal is provide a cohesive plan for the future. Any plan, however, must be approved and “bought into” by the ASP Board.

Vice-Chair Stone noted that he feels the process falls into six “phases”. Those would be 1) identification of process, 2) eligibility, 3) evaluating process, 4) scoring, ranking and prioritizing and 5) recommendation and management planning, and 6) tracking possible acquisition properties over time. None of these six areas would have to be accomplished sequentially.

Ms. Hughes said that copies of the subcommittee work would be distributed to Committee members. Further discussion on property acquisition discussions held in other subcommittee meetings. Ms. Hughes noted that the subcommittee had requested Staff to find the Auditor General’s reports over the years, as well as documents the Auditor General had used to formulate that report. Vice-Chair Stone noted that the authority for doing any acquisition should be noted up-front in any process.

The Land Acquisition subcommittee will possibly meet on April 19, as the April 16 meeting date was co-opted for the Aravaipa site visit.

Chair Hare noted that an SRSNA subcommittee should be held shortly to discuss, among other issues, the fire plan as noted above.

Ms. Hughes asked who serves on which subcommittee, and further comment followed on this topic. Subcommittee membership will be agendized more aggressively in the future. Dr. Casavant asked whether non-members of NAPAC would be eligible for subcommittee membership. NAPAC feels that membership should be limited to NAPAC members, however input and participation from anyone is welcomed. Dr. Casavant has been forming relationships with various groups at the universities in Arizona and those relationships could add value within the subcommittee framework. Membership in the Verde River Greenway subcommittee will also be agendized.

F. PUBLIC COMMENT

Oracle State Park manager Jerry Ravert spoke briefly on how the park works with the Oracle Fire District and private property owners on fire safety. Defensible space around the park and some private properties is being created using convict crews, and crews will be around during the coming summer.

G. BOARD COMMENTS, REQUESTS, AND ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Dr. Kingsley announced that he would be living part time in Nevada while his wife works a short-term assignment there. He would like to maintain his membership in NAPAC, and asked for Ms. Shulman to speak with Ms. Hernbrode about what is permissible in this arena. Ms. Shulman will get back to him separately.

Future agenda items: Information on the MOUs with the ASLD regarding fire plans; Lone Mountain Ranch update; subcommittee membership; Phelps-Dodge/Rickett's Mine update; Aravaipa property update; SRSNA fire plan update; McGrew Springs update including possible discussion of Board agenda process; Huggett property easement discussion.

H. TIME AND PLACE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

April 26, 2007, Phoenix, 12:00pm.
May 24, 2007 12:00pm – no location chosen

I. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Hare declared the meeting adjourned at 3:40pm, when the membership left to visit the COD Ranch site. No further business of the Committee was discussed during the visit.

Prepared by Ruth Shulman on March 27, 2007, and reviewed by Joanne M. Roberts, Arizona State Parks NAPAC Coordinator, on _____.

APPROVED BY A VOTE OF ___ OF THE NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ____.

Affirmed by:

_____ Date: _____

Draft Minutes
Meeting of 3/22/07

Trevor Hare, Chair