

Draft Minutes  
Meeting of 5/13/09

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

**Minutes of the meeting held:**

Wednesday, May 13, 2009

at:

**The Offices of the US Fish & Wildlife Service  
104 N. Bonita, Tucson, AZ**

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

Chair Stone called the meeting to order at 1:07pm.

Committee Members Present: Sheridan Stone, Chair  
Phyllis Hughes, Vice-Chair (via telephone)  
Theresa Pinto (via telephone)  
Patty West (via telephone)  
Larry Laing  
Thomas Skinner  
Jeff Gawad  
Max Castillo, *ex-officio* (via telephone)

Committee Members Absent:

Other Individuals Present: Ray Warriner, ASP (via telephone)  
Joanne Roberts, ASP  
Ruth Shulman, ASP (via telephone)

Guests: None

**B. INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS AND STAFF**

Members and staff introduced themselves.

**C. OLD BUSINESS**

1. Approval of NAPAC Minutes for the February 26, 2009 meeting.

Ms. Hughes asked that the names for the various land management agencies be spelled out when it first appears before the abbreviation is used. Ms. Shulman and Chair Stone pointed out that the full usage appears in the heading of the minutes, prior to the text. Ms. Hughes reiterated that she would like to see the full name spelled before the short form. Ms. Shulman will make the change. Ms. Hughes also asked for clarification to be added to a quote by Mr. Sejkora on page three (“...and away...”), and noted that a verb is missing in a sentence on page 6, central paragraph in another quote from Mr. Sejkora. She also asked that a new agenda item for the next meeting be added so that Mr. Warriner can follow-up with information on the due diligence environmental survey with regard specifically to the soil around the well on the Rockin’ River Ranch property.

Chair Stone moved to approve the minutes as amended, and the motion carried with no further discussion. Note: neither Joanne nor I could discern a second to the motion, so this motion will need to be revisited.

**D. NEW BUSINESS**

**1. Official Appointment of Subcommittee Voting Members**

Following brief conversation on the form the appoints will take (Chair appointment vs motion by a member) Chair Stone formally named Ms. Hughes, Ms. West, and Mr. Don Young (former NAPAC member) to the Land Acquisition, Selection and Prioritization (LASP) subcommittee. He also asked Mr. Gawad and Mr. Skinner for their subcommittee preference. Mr. Gawad would prefer to choose a subcommittee when he has had a chance to attend at least one meeting of each. Mr. Skinner chose to join the Natural Areas Management Guidelines (NAMG) subcommittee. Chair Stone then officially appointed Mr. Laing, Ms. Pinto, and Mr. Skinner to join him on the NAMG subcommittee.

Though Ms. Hughes and Chair Stone have acted as subcommittee chairs, Ms. Shulman will add an item to each subcommittee agenda regarding election of subcommittee officers if necessary.

**2. Determine Meeting Locations for the Remainder of 2009**

The next full committee meeting is scheduled for August 20, 2009 at 1:00pm. Ms. Hughes noted that holding the meeting up north would avoid the late summer heat in central Arizona. She asked about the property available across the river from the RRR, however Ms. Roberts noted that there has been no direction from ASP Executive Staff toward any new acquisitions. She then asked if there were any properties in northern Arizona at which the LASP subcommittee could make a ‘trial run’ of the prioritization form along with the Site Evaluation Form. Further discussion of Flagstaff locations followed. Ms. West offered a space at Northern Arizona University (NAU).

Mr. Warriner noted that few properties in the Flagstaff area are available; the northernmost properties are in the vicinity of Peck’s Lake. Further discussion of available properties followed, including the Spur Cattle land near Camp Verde. Mr. Warriner notes that this property might be a good LASP trial. Ms. Roberts noted that people from the south end of the state need overnight accommodation when meeting north of Phoenix. Mr. Castillo offered the RRR for overnight stays, and the Studio on the Verde River Greenway (VRG) for the meeting. Chair Stone surveyed the members for availability to travel north; no member demurred. He noted that a site visit could be held in the morning of August 20, with the committee meeting beginning as usual at 1:00pm. A tour of the VRG area or a specific parcel could be the site visit.

Ms. Roberts noted that with the ASP facilities available at the RRR it made more sense to do an overnight stay in the Verde River area. Mr. Castillo listed the amenities available in the Studio. Further discussion of the timing of the overnight followed, with some members deciding to stay over Wednesday night, and others staying over Thursday night following the meeting. The site visit itself was scheduled to be the VRG project area, with Mr. Castillo serving as ‘guide’. Mr. Laing asked for a presentation on the watershed and the TNC CAP program could be made during the meeting; Mr. Castillo and Ms. Roberts will provide an overview presentation of the program including background and current state.

Ms. Hughes asked if the visit to the VRG project area would take the place of a site evaluation. Chair Stone said that if a site evaluation took place it would be brief in order to accommodate the VRG ‘tour’. Mr. Castillo will determine the time the tour will start. Mr. Warriner discussed carpooling arrangements from Phoenix, including those who travel to Phoenix from Tucson.

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The meeting of November 19, 2009 will be the final meeting of 2009. Chair Stone suggested Casa Grande. Discussion of the room amenities followed, including the need for a longer than usual telephone cord to facilitate teleconferencing. Ms. Shulman will handle the arrangements.

3. Sonoita Creek Ranch Overview

Mr. Roberts distributed a copy of the ASP Board meeting minutes from November, 2008 and presentation made to the ASP Board at that meeting. Chair Stone gave a brief précis of the history so far; this property was brought to the attention of the ASP Board as a potential acquisition, including the partnerships built in order to accomplish the acquisition.

The property, noted Chair Stone, is between Sonoita and Patagonia. State Route 82 runs right by the Creek, and the property is to the east of the road. The parcel is long and narrower on the east and west. The sellers are Denny Hubble and David Parson, two developers from New Mexico. Sam Hubble (brother of Denny) manages the property and is the realtor who listed the property. The property is listed at \$9 million, or nearly \$8,000/acre. There are 1,126 deeded acres that make up the property. An appraisal made in July of 2007 valued the property at \$6,400/acre, though that was not an approved Federal appraisal. Ms. Hughes asked about the difference between an approved Federal appraisal and an appraisal done by a certified Arizona appraiser. Mr. Warriner described the Federal ‘Yellow Book Standard’ which produces a more technical appraisal required by the Federal government. Mr. Warriner also noted that land values in the area had declined since the 2007 appraisal.

Chair Stone noted that an important aspect of this property is the 588 acre/feet of water rights from nearby Monkey Springs. Monkey Springs is the location of several current threatened and endangered species, including fish and snails, and perhaps amphibians. Monkey Springs is upstream from the property of interest, and the water is allocated via ditch system that empties into to manmade storage ponds on the property of interest. The large pond is a riparian aquatic habitat and the smaller is used for irrigation of agricultural land. The land near there is alluvial bottomland, with good soil.

There is also a five acre home-site with a house, well, barn, orchard and corrals which is close to the highway. As mentioned, SR82 forms the western boundary of the property; the eastern boundary is the Coronado National Forest. The environment is natural except for the agricultural land, the ponds, and the cattle fencing along the Forest boundary. Nearby is the Three Canyons development, which has a conservation easement with the Sonoran Institute. The development to the south is minimum ten acre-lots and to date six lots have been sold.

Mr. Skinner asked if the Arizona Game & Fish Department (AGFD) had acquired Monkey Springs recently. Ms. Roberts noted that Monkey Springs remains on private land, but the AGFD is interested in much of the adjacent land. AGFD is one of the partners in the Sonoita Creek Ranch acquisition. There are some nearby parcels plotted for development but they have not yet been developed. Ms. Hughes asked about the price of land in the development per acre. That information is unknown at the time, but Ms. Roberts and/or Mr. Warriner can find out and report back.

(At this point, NAPAC adjourned at 2:15 for a brief break and reconvened at 2:22pm.)

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Interested parties in the acquisition of Sonoita Creek Ranch include both public and private entities, such as The Trust for Public Land (TPL), The Nature Conservancy, ASP, AGFD, Arizona Land and Water Trust, and several others, many of which have been interested in the acquisition for some time. The partnership formed approximately a year ago around the time of the first ASP site visit. Joan Scott is the lead for AGFD; private ranchers Richard and Diane Collins of C-6 Ranch are participating. The C-6 Ranch holds current grazing leases on the Coronado National Forest adjacent to the Sonoita Creek Ranch. The number of interested partners shows the wide array of interests in the property, as well as providing some creative ideas for financing and land management. Another dimension to the mix of partners is that there are several diverse reasons for their interest in conservation, such as the unique water from Monkey Springs, to prevent loss of and water rights to development, riparian habitats, wildlife corridors and linkages as well as threatened and endangered species.

Chair Stone presented the timeline for this partnership and the probable financing. He noted that in December of 2008, ASP had \$1.3 million available. In January of 2009, the Collins family had \$600,000. AGFD applied for a section 6 Grant for \$1 million dollars from the US Fish & Wildlife Service. As of July of 2009, ASP should have another \$1.3 million available, for a total of \$4.2 million. However, the Legislature swept Heritage Fund moneys in FY09, and ASP has no Heritage Funds available for property acquisition. Ms. Roberts went on to explain the details of the Section 6 grant, for which AGFD received an actual total of \$307,000. That amount may grow, as AGFD continues to apply for further funds under Section 6. She also noted that the current \$307,000 must be spent within the next three year. Another partner meeting is planned for the near future, and one or more NAPAC could attend. As of April 27, 2009, The ASP Assistant Director Jay Ream noted that it was likely that the ASP allocation of Arizona Heritage Funds, \$10 million, could have at least 50% swept by the Legislature, and there are no guarantees for fiscal years 2010 or 2011 that ASP will actually be able to participate in the purchase.

Chair Stone said that the November 2008 meeting of the ASP Board, the Board moved unanimously to participate fully in the acquisition partnership, and to place the acquisition as a high priority. NAPAC recommended that all available Heritage funds for Natural Areas acquisition be used for the purchase through 2010. However, that was before the Legislature swept the Heritage fund. Chair Stone also gave the details of the reasons the ASP Board placed the acquisition in high priority, such as the potential to redirect the water back to instream flow for Sonoita Creek.

There are some issues that accrue with the idea of this purchase, such as the funding and land management issues. ASP cannot seem to be making an offer on the property during these investigations. Acceptable appraisals need to be acquired. Chair Stone reminded NAPAC that the Arizona Heritage Fund is funded through the sale of state lottery tickets.

Mr. Skinner noted that he had read the ASP Board minutes and noted some comments from ASP Executive Staff. He asked what other factors concerned ASP beyond the funding. Chair Stone said their issues are management, staffing, law enforcement, and other personnel issues. Many existing State Parks are experiencing staffing issues due to the current economy. Mr. Skinner also mentioned a question regarding a US Forest Service (USFS) appraisal being needed. Ms. Roberts noted that it was unclear why ASP Executive Staff brought that up. She noted that the ASP Board site visit would have already occurred, however because of the budget situation it has not. At this time, the ASP Board is not

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looking to make any acquisitions, but the partnership is still an important area for ASP to work with.

Chair Stone noted that the USFS may have been mentioned as a funding source, especially in the case of purchasing land adjacent to the Coronado Forest. Mr. Warriner noted that the USFS has \$1 million available nationwide for that purpose.

Ms. Roberts said that the site evaluation form for the Sonoita Creek Ranch is available on the electronic binder CD. Ms. Hughes noted that if the ASP Board visits the Sonoita Creek Ranch, NAPAC members should be included in that site visit. Ms. Roberts also noted that the ASP Board will be updated on the process, including an informational piece on the Section 6 grant. Further discussion followed on keeping the ASP Board informed, and also bringing the new Director up-to-date. The new Director begins her term on June 2, 2009.

**E. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

1. Natural Areas Management Guidelines (NAMG) subcommittee: Update on the status of the guidelines, next steps, and feedback.

Mr. Laing noted that at the March meeting of this subcommittee, there was a discussion on the current guidelines, and in the course of that discussion, it was recognized the scope was much broader than Natural Areas, that it should include all natural resources and guidance for all parks with significant natural resources (NR). At the moment, the existing information is being crafted into an umbrella document for all the NR within ASP, with regard to inventory, monitoring, research and other land management tasks. At today's NAMG meeting, it was clarified that a tiered approach would work best, beginning broadly and refining down to specific areas. The Guidelines should be an appendix to the policy document and subject to change over shorter periods of time. The work will proceed section by section and will utilize pieces from other agencies, and see what applies to ASP.

Chair Stone asked if the scope would address formal recognition of all NR issues on all state parks, especially regarding the management of those areas within state parks. Mr. Laing replied that the document is intended to be dynamic and there is an assumption of it being a living document with a feedback loop from park managers, which would include specific information on their parks. The Policy Outline section of the document would be in the same format as other outlines with ASP policy documents. As well, the NAMG will review models such as from the National Park Service (NPS), especially with regard to areas such as training, inventory, management and research.

Mr. Warriner asked whether the developed guidelines would be tested in parks with NAs and then expanded to the rest of the system. Chair Stone said that all parks have natural resources and have specific issues, but will not necessarily be managing for a natural areas landscape. Mr. Warriner continued that his thought was that testing the guidelines within State Natural Areas first and then rolling out the guidelines to other parks would achieve buy-in from Park Managers more easily. Chair Stone noted that this level of detail had not yet been discussed within the subcommittee but that Mr. Warriner's idea makes sense. Further discussion followed on information exchange and "beta testing" of the Guidelines document. It was suggested that Mr. Castillo would be a good manager to initiate testing with. Ms. Roberts noted that the Chief of Park Operations had already asked for resource management guidelines for the parks, and there is a good level of support from certain managers, such as Oracle. Input on the existing guidelines, however, has not been universal throughout the park system, which enforces the idea that "buy-in" will be critical.

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2. Land Acquisition, Selection and Prioritization Subcommittee (LASP): Update and report including status of the Scorecard, next steps and feedback

Ms. Hughes noted that the subcommittee had met on May 6, 2009 with all members (Ms. West, Mr. Young, Ms. Roberts and Ms. Hughes) to discuss and update the scorecard criteria in light of previous comments made. Consensus has been reached on the body of the document. Ms. Roberts is working on some introductory material and incorporating a new narrative section, which will flesh out information from the notes section and provide a summary of the document. This will allow the notes section to be concise and informative about the thought processes behind the document. She feels the draft is ready to present to the ASP Board for review and comment if they feel that is appropriate.

Ms. Roberts said that the NAMG subcommittee had discussed provide the ASP Board with informational updates at their July meeting. The update will include where the tasks are at the moment, what assumptions were used to arrive at the current form, and the future direction. Annie McVay, who has joined the NAMG subcommittee to provide additional staff input on the guidelines, is taking the lead on preparing a document in standard Board format to provide this information to the ASP Board. One NAMG decision was to have these presentations made by NAPAC rather than the subcommittees. The Chair and Vice-Chair of NAPAC should be available to make the presentation before the Board, if they elect to agendize it. Ms. Hughes asked whether July is the Board's set meeting for annual reports from the subcommittees. Ms. Shulman replied that the July meeting is normally a two-day meeting held to discuss the ASP budget. There haven't been advisory committee updates regularly scheduled before November 2008's meeting. Ms. Roberts noted that the information could be provided to the Board in their packet, in Board format provided by Ms. McVay. The LASP subcommittee could meet and follow the format to include in the informational packet.

Ms. Hughes asked if there needed to be an action taken on this today, if both subcommittees agreed this was the next step. Following a brief discussion on the documents being presented to the Board specifically as draft documents, Ms. Roberts said that the Board would have a chance to review the information and be prepare to place the discussion on the agenda. NAPAC member(s) should be prepared to attend the meeting to answer questions if necessary. Ms. Roberts expanded on the format Ms. McVay will be using for the NAMG presentation, which includes the "whats and whys". Dates and locations of future Board meetings were discussed. Ms. Shulman offered to work with the Board secretary to find out if there are updates on locations, dates and times on the Board meetings for the remainder of the year.

Ms Hughes then moved that NAPAC submit the draft documents from both subcommittees to the Arizona State Parks Board for their review and information. Ms. West seconded the motion, which carried with no further discussion. As far as writing the reports, the NAMG subcommittee report will come from Ms. McVay, and the LASP will write their own using that formation. Ms. Hughes offered to do the writing.

**F. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

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

Mr. Warriner suggested an agenda item to adopt a protocol (that works out the differences) between NAPAC and ASP Executive Staff when a presentation is made to the ASP Board. He

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feels that communication in this area could be improved. NAPAC members and staff provided suggestions on how the item could be tailored to include all possible discussion. Chair Stone asked that discussion be tabled until the next meeting when this item would be on the agenda. Chair Stone also reminded the NAPAC that quorum calls and draft agendas are intended to make meeting attendance and participation run smoothly, so it is important to reply to these communications in a timely way.

Future agenda items mentioned in earlier discussions: Mr. Warriner to discuss the outcome of the environmental assessment of the soil around the well at Rockin' River Ranch; Ms. Roberts and Mr. Castillo to make a presentation to NAPAC on the CAP process and watershed planning in the Verde Valley and environs. Ms. Roberts to contact Dan Shein regarding inviting the new ASP Director to this NAPAC meeting. Other items included a request to circulate an updated property acquisition list or potential acquisition list (AD Ream, Ray) and an updated project summary list (Joanne).

**H. TIME AND PLACE OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

August 20, 2009 1:00pm – Verde River Greenway State Natural Area. Some members may arrive Wednesday, August 19, and lodge at the Rockin' River Ranch guesthouse. A tour of the VRG Project area will be conducted the morning of August 20. The LASP Subcommittee may conduct a separate site visit to test run the proposed scorecard in conjunction with the Site Evaluation Form.

November 19, 2009, 1:00pm – Casa Grande

**I. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Stone adjourned the meeting at 4:04pm.

Prepared by Ruth Shulman on May 19, 2009, and reviewed by Joanne M. Roberts, Arizona State Parks NAPAC Coordinator on ??, 2009.

APPROVED BY A UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON

Affirmed by:

/s/ \_\_\_\_\_  
Sheridan Stone, Chair

Date: \_\_\_\_\_