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**MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING
of
NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(NAPAC)
of
THE ARIZONA STATE PARKS BOARD**

NAPAC held a meeting open to the public on **Thursday, February 5, 2015** beginning at **10:00 a.m.** at **Arizona State Parks**, in the Board Room located in the basement of **1300 West Washington, Phoenix, Arizona 85007.**

AGENDA

(The Chair reserves the right to set the order of the agenda.)

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL – 10:11

Rebecca Davidson
Thomas Skinner
Larry Laing
Linda Stizer
Bobe Pape
David Weedman
Robert Casavant
Max Castillo

Not Present:
Santiago Garcia

B. INTRODUCTION AND RECOGNITION OF MEMBERS

Kent Ennis – Deputy Director
Heidi Locksted – Park Ranger at Kartchner Caverns
Dawn Collins – Chief of Resources and Public Programs
Colt Alford – Patagonia Lake Park Manager
Eddie Slay – Attorney Generals office
Max Castillo – Verde River Greenway
Bob Casavant – Natural Resources Research and Science Manager

C. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Allyson Armstrong – Friends of Sonoita Creek President

D. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- 1. NAPAC Will Discuss Recommendations for Long-Term Grazing RFP/Contract**

Dawn explains that there is a short term grazing lease that is signed that currently allows grazing on SRSNA and that there is intentions to consider longer term grazing. Since the current permitted user's special options for 10-year grazing has expired, due to the fact that he failed to produce certified documentation, Attorney General Paul Katz suggested that this a Request for Proposal process take place in order to make the process fair and open to the public.

Since it is a confidential process, members were asked to sign an Annual Procurement Disclosure Statement.

Members and staff discuss the elements of obtaining an HCP and what it means for the land owner/user. AG Slay confirms that during the September meeting with AZ Fish and Wildlife Services that it is acceptable to have the permitted user on the designated property to conduct the HCP. That HCP would be as valid as the property owner having an HCP in their name.

ASP has decided that if they are going to go through the lengthy process of conducting an HCP that they would want to do one that included multiple land use activities rather than an HCP with just grazing indicated.

Rebecca summarizes her understanding of what is wanted from NAPAC. She states that ASP wants NAPAC to help provide recommendations for language that would be on the long-term grazing lease and the RFP. Obviously, included in that would be the requirement that the permitted has an HCP in place and that State Parks reviews it. Or if the permitted user needed to obtain an HCP, ASP will be a participant in the process.

In addition, NAPAC is being asked to make recommendations on the kind of specific information that would help make management inferences about the potential impacts of the activity that is occurring on the land. This will ensure easy implementation of the decision tool in the Management Framework Plan, which will help NAPAC distinguish what mitigation measures, will be appropriate.

It was previously understood at a former NAPAC meeting that the short-term special use lease was not detailed enough. Chair proposed to use a short-term lease in order to discover the kind of information they will need to understand the land use conditions. NAPAC will use that information to construct language for the long-term grazing lease they are being asked to help with. Constructing a monitoring process would then come after.

NAPAC recommends:

- A hold on an RFP knowing that there is a lengthy time involved in conducting an HCP. An HCP is highly recommended to be in place prior to any decisions on long term grazing.

- ASP conduct their own HCP for all of the current and future land use activities that will occur on the land OR move forward with the temporary HCP that continues grazing but have ASP be the managing entity conducting the HCP rather than being contingent upon someone else to get that in place.

2. Update and Next Steps – San Rafael State Natural Area Habitat Conservation Plan

- Dawn to coordinate with ASP Executive Staff to see what their understanding is of the September, Fish and Wildlife meeting. NAPAC members want to receive, in writing, Fish and Wildlife's recommendation that the lessee can uphold HCP.
- Dawn communicates with Executive Staff the complexity of HCP timing including a NEPA process, an EA, and a biological assessment that is conducted by Fish and Wildlife.
- Set up a meeting with new ASP Executive Director to brief her on the current situation and get further direction.
- NAPAC Members, staff, and Fish and Wildlife service hold a meeting to clarify who can conduct/receive an HCP.
- Move forward in drafting language for RFP and grazing permit if the decision to move forward on this situation is confirmed by Director.

E. REPORTS – Committee and Staff Reports May be Verbal.

1. Impacts on the Verde River Greenway State Natural Area (SNA) in the Verde River Valley

Verde River Greenway State Natural Area (VRGSNA) is a 36-mile river that touches the Town of Clarksdale, Town of Camp Verde, City of Cottonwood, in Yavapai County. There are many public and private partnerships with many various interests focused around the river. Verde Front Planning started in 2008 and went stagnate as the economy slowed but is now starting back up again with the Forest Service taking lead.

Management and planning for VRGSNA is challenging because of all of these various stakeholders and interests. Some development along the river has been opposed. Opponents are worried about the damage being done by the 300 kayakers utilizing the river, yet other stakeholders praise the economic benefits the surrounding areas will receive.

Max indicated that there is much need for planning in this area because of the strong interest to develop.

Dave mentions that NAPAC was previously an advisory committee giving advice to the Parks Board and now it seems like NAPAC is an engineer to planning.

Dawn indicates that the roles of NAPAC has changed since the cuts to the Resource Department but that they can define what these roles are all together.

Chair summarizes that these government agencies, organizations, private entities all have interests with their own agenda that is river focused. With the Verde Front effort coming back into action, it will essentially focus on bringing together the various parties who own property on VRG and streamline a cohesive recreation process. Everyone needs to be aware of what is being planned, interest, limitations, etc. A strategy needs to be created for where to allow people and where to minimize people. I recommend that we have another meeting with Max to talk strategically about what NAPAC's role is. In the meantime, ASP needs to define what they want NAPAC to prioritize so we can have solid goals for 2015.

2. Sonoita Creek State Natural Area (SCSNA)

Allyson Armstrong expresses concern from her group Friends of Sonoita Creek. The friends group has 60 members. Concern amongst these members' lies on the private investor who has been building/reconstructing fencing on the SNA and the lack of presence in the area.

Dave Weedman updates committee on recent concerns with the status of the yellow-billed cuckoo. August 15, 2014 Sonoita Creek was listed as a proposed critical habitat area for the yellow-billed cuckoo. This area is 48% of State land.

Chair proposes that discovering NAPAC's next step in assisting State Parks in this issue should be on the future agenda.

Discussion with committee members and land manager of Sonoita State Park, Colt Alford, continue. They conclude that for over a year there have been and continue to be 300-400 head of cattle grazing on SNA.

Chair proposes this as a future agenda item along with a request to receive a briefing on fencing laws by an AG.

Allyson Armstrong volunteers to research how various states are dealing with this issue.

F. MEMBER'S SUMMARY OF CURRENT EVENTS –

Heidi mentions a Riparian Survey along Sonoita Creek. The major observation concluded from the assessment was that there was a heavy impact from grazing and that overtime the channel has taken away topsoil sediment. This topsoil was necessary to preserve water from previous years and therefore the trees did not have the water reserve they needed. The tops of trees were dying.

For the past two years the Verde River Watershed Base Fisheries Management Plan

was being worked on. The plan is almost ready to be available for partners to review and provide input. Will make sure NAPAC and ASP knows when that happens. Next watershed they will be working on is the Santa Cruz watershed.

G. PROPOSED 2015 NAPAC MEETING SCHEDULE AND CALL FOR FUTURE

Meeting in mid- March. Doodle poll started. At next meeting plan on planning a meeting to go out into the field.

H. ADJOURNMENT – 1:08pm
