

Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting Summary
January 27, 2004 1:00 – 4:00 pm
Arizona Game and Fish Department conference room

Attendees: Sherry Barrett, Greg Hess, Larry Marshall, Nancy Zierenberg, Lori Lustig, Karen LaMartina, Gerry Perry, Marit Alanen (alternate for Arizona Game and Fish Department), Susan Shobe (alternate for Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection), Chad Kolodisner (alternate for Diamond Ventures), Ken Kingsley (SWCA), Leslie Liberti (SWCA), Michael Wyneken (City of Tucson, Planning)

1. Introductions

Michael opened the meeting and asked, since there are 3 new members on the SAC and two alternates attending, that everyone introduce himself or herself and tell which agencies or organizations they represent.

2. Charter

Leslie noted that Melissa had emailed drafts of the meeting minutes from the August and October SAC meetings and the SAC charter out to the group prior to the Christmas holiday. Melissa had gotten comments back from Sherry on the charter and one set of meeting minutes. No one else had provided comments, however, so the two sets of meeting minutes had been finalized and put on the City's HCP website. A copy of the revised charter and a new list of SAC members, including the 3 new members, were handed out to the SAC.

Sherry's comments on the charter had been incorporated and a revised charter had been sent out at the end of the day on Wednesday (January 26). There had been problems with the transmission of the email, however, so some people did not get the information until late Wednesday night or Thursday morning, and some people might not have gotten the email at all. Michael responded that he would get someone to look into the problems of sending emails via the listserv. Sherry said that she had sent out comments on the revised charter earlier today and also had trouble getting the email to go through to everyone on the listserv.

Karen said that she and Dennis Rule were apparently not on the listserv and Leslie noted that Ken had been left off as well. In addition to fixing any transmission issues, the City will make sure that everyone, including the 3 new members and appropriate alternate members, such as Susan and Chris, are added to the listserv.

Lori said that she did not recall getting an email with the meeting minutes. Michael said that he would resend them to make sure that everyone has a chance to provide comments.

Leslie summarized the comments that Sherry had made on the SAC charter. The revisions to the charter included a change in the introductory section from "Purpose Statement" to "Purpose Statement, Goals, and Objectives," the addition of specific goals for the SAC in terms of recommendations that the City would like this group to provide regarding the HCP, and a change in the wording of the second SAC objective (formerly called "Goals") to clarify the intent.

Sherry's suggestion was that the goals for the SAC be to provide recommendations to the City regarding:

- a. A conservation reserve system, based on alternatives developed by the TAC, that will

- provide long-term protection for multiple species and key natural communities (conservation targets);
- b. The manner in which the HCP can/should be implemented, including funding sources for habitat acquisition, monitoring, and management;
 - c. A framework for managing and monitoring conservation lands and for protection of these lands in perpetuity;
 - d. Changes in City ordinances to implement HCP components; and
 - e. Opportunities for coordinated, multi-jurisdictional conservation measures.

Leslie asked if Sherry's thoughts regarding the SAC recommendations had been accurately captured in the revised charter. Sherry replied that they had been accurately captured.

Leslie said that she had also reworded the second objective (Provide for regional economic objectives...) to try and clarify what was meant. She asked Sherry if the new wording helped or did not help address Sherry's concerns. Sherry said that she thought that a few changes were needed to this section and had sent an email out to the SAC earlier today with additional edits. Among the changes that Sherry thought would be appropriate were moving the first objective (Facilitate compliance with the ESA...) into the purpose statement and adding a new objective in place of it. The new objective would be for the SAC to "Provide for the long term protection of conservation targets." Sherry also thought that, in the second objective, the word "by" should be removed. The revised sentence would then read: "Provide for regional economic objectives, including the orderly and efficient development of certain private and State Trust lands, recognizing property rights..."

Susan also stated concerns regarding the language in the second objective. She felt that the wording "planning for conservation in a manner that is consistent with the growth area designation in the City of Tucson General Plan and the Pima County Comprehensive Plan" was too restrictive because it implied that the SAC was unable to make recommendations that were counter to the current land use designation in those plans, when in fact the most appropriate approach for conserving species and natural resources in the planning area might be through changes in these land use designations. Susan's suggestion was to change the wording to say: "planning for conservation in a manner that promotes consistency between the HCP and the City of Tucson General Plan and the Pima County Comprehensive Plan".

Michael also suggested that the wording in objective (d) be expanded to include changes in the City General Plan and other plans and policies.

Susan suggested a clarification in the TAC charter as well. She thought that the wording in the fourth objective be changed from "adaptive management guidelines" to "conservation guidelines, including adaptive management, monitoring, avoidance, minimization, and mitigation,..." Lori asked whether the TAC members had been involved in developing the TAC charter and had approved it. Michael replied that they had. Leslie added that the TAC was given the same opportunity on this regard as the SAC had, but that the TAC had not made revisions to the TAC charter. Lori noted that it would not be appropriate to make changes to the TAC charter then without the approval of the TAC. Leslie agreed and said that the suggestion would be taken to the TAC for the group to decide whether they were comfortable with the change.

Susan also had significant concerns regarding the timeline in the SAC charter. Leslie agreed that the timeline was not very realistic, but that the City was attempting to try to adhere to the terms of the IGA between Tucson and the Game and Fish Department, which says that the City

will complete a draft HCP by the end of June 2005 in exchange for Section 6 grant monies from the USFWS. The practice was to provide Section 6 funds on an annual basis and so the deliverables in the IGA were tied to that year-long funding cycle. Leslie noted that other jurisdictions had found it impossible to complete a draft HCP within one year and have had to request extensions for their IGAs, but this is not a simple or easy process. Marit noted that due to the length of time it took to develop the IGA and get all of the necessary paperwork dealt with, the IGA with the City included an extension right off the bat. Leslie explained that the City is in the process of requesting an extension to the IGA deadline, but that this would not be approved for some time and thus everyone had to operate under the assumption that the June 30, 2005 deadline will still stand.

Gerry, Sherry, and Marit confirmed the difficulty of making changes to the IGA given that the approvals are made out of the Phoenix Game and Fish office and the Regional USFWS office and the number of documents involved that need to be revised to reflect any amendments to the IGA.

Michael cautioned that even with the ability to extend the IGA deadline, the planning process could not be prolonged beyond the end of the year and, in fact, needed to be completed as close to the original deadline as possible. The City does not have an environmental department, so all of the work is being done by staff members that have other broader responsibilities. Additional projects continue to come into the department and the City Council has expectations for products from the Planning Department. These other commitments will require that the Planning staff be completed with the draft HCP and ready to shift to other projects after the end of June. By the end of the year, these other responsibilities will prevent staff from being able to continue the HCP planning process.

Leslie asked if the SAC members had additional comments or concerns regarding the charter. There were no other comments.

Leslie said that she would take Sherry's new edits to the charter, including the hand-drawn changes to the flowchart, and incorporate all of the changes recommended during this meeting. This new revised charter will be sent out to the SAC over the next few days for review and comment. Leslie said that she hoped the SAC could finalize the language in the charter within the next couple of weeks. In addition to the revised charter, the City will also resend the previous meeting minutes to ensure that everyone has a copy and the opportunity to provide comments. The SAC agreed with this plan.

3. HCP Conservation Targets

Leslie explained that a preliminary draft list of conservation targets had been provided to the SAC at the October meeting, but at that time, the TAC had not given final approval to the list. As of the November TAC meeting, the conservation target list was finalized and is now up on the City's HCP website.

As a reference and so the group does not have to go weed through the larger documents for information, Leslie passed out a summary sheet to the SAC that listed the 9 HCP target species according to type and also listed which species occurred or had the potential to occur in each of the planning areas.

Greg asked if the list could also include an indication of which species were currently listed or

had some other federal status. Leslie said that she would add this information and send the sheet back out to the group.

For the interim, the species with federal status were identified as:

- Cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl – endangered
- Yellow-billed cuckoo – candidate
- Lesser long-nosed bat – endangered
- Pima pineapple cactus – endangered
- Tucson shovel-nosed snake – petitioned

Lori asked why the burrowing owl was included in the list of conservation targets since it is apparently doing well in the Tucson area and SAHBA has been working to construct artificial burrows in the area and bring in displaced owls from Maricopa County.

Leslie explained that if the burrowing owl were listed, it would likely be a nation-wide listing and not just a listing of owls in Arizona or the southwest. Even though the owl seems to be doing well in southeastern Arizona, nation-wide there appears to be a trend toward reduced numbers and a reduced range for the species. Sherry added that a possible petition for the listing of the burrowing owl has come up several times. She noted that by including the owl in the City HCP, even though it is not currently listed, if at some point during the HCP permit period the owl does become listed, the City would be covered. Leslie also pointed out that, even if the burrowing owl is doing well in Tucson, if it were listed federally, that status and the relevant Endangered Species Act protections would apply here the same as everywhere else.

Lori thought that the TAC should hear about what SAHBA was doing to help protect the burrowing owl. Leslie said that SAHBA's efforts had been discussed several times and the TAC had been out to the Simpson Farm to look at the artificial burrows installed there.

Lori was concerned that having the burrowing owl in the City's HCP target list made it look like SAHBA's efforts were not meaningful. Leslie assured Lori that everyone on the TAC was supportive of what SAHBA was doing, and that including the burrowing owl on the list in no way implied that SAHBA's efforts were not worthwhile. She added that the Marana HCP technical advisory team had struggled with how to address the burrowing owl in that planning effort. This group ended up developing a burrowing owl strategy that was based on the type of conservation efforts that SAHBA is doing, and that strategy is being viewed as a very sound way of supporting this species in southeast Arizona. Susan pointed out that HCPs allow people to get credit for what they are already doing to protect species and the work that SAHBA is doing will be something that the City will be able to incorporate into the HCP.

Larry asked Lori to provide more detail on what SAHBA is doing with respect to the burrowing owls. Lori explained that SAHBA was working with wildlife agencies and rescue organizations to build artificial burrows for burrowing owls and bring in owls that had been displaced by urban growth in Maricopa County. She also noted that SAHBA also works with the Tucson Succulent Society to salvage plants on parcels that are going to be graded.

Ken pointed out that SAHBA's work with burrowing owls puts them on the leading edge of burrowing owl conservation and that, if an owl listing is proposed in the future, SAHBA's work may help inform USFWS's evaluation of that listing petition.

Gerry noted that the Tucson shovel-nosed snake was included in the planning process even

though it was not listed and now, a few months later, a petition has been made to list this species. He said that this illustrates why it is so valuable to consider species that are not currently listed.

4. Habitat Models

Leslie explained that most of the work that had been occurring over the past few months with the TAC involved refining or replacing the habitat models for the HCP target species. She explained that the SDCP models, which were developed at a coarse scale to inform that countywide planning process, did not work well at the smaller scale of the Tucson or Marana HCPs. The Marana HCP technical advisory group had created new habitat models for the HCP target species in that plan, and the TAC was now doing the same thing for the City's HCP targets.

Planning's GIS staff person had a conflict and could not be at the meeting, so Leslie said she would just describe the approach that was being taken to revising each model, the people that are involved, and what has been accomplished so far with respect to each model. Once maps have been developed and reviewed and approved by the TAC, copies would be made available to the SAC members and the maps would be available on the City's HCP website.

Pygmy-Owl

The first species on the list is the pygmy-owl. Leslie explained that a group of experts from Arizona Game and Fish, USFWS, and the University of Arizona had been gathered to review aerial photos of the HCP planning area and identify potential breeding/overwintering habitat and dispersal habitat. This group included Scott Richardson (USFWS), Mike Ingraldi (AGFD), Marit Alanen (AGFD), and Bill Mannan (U of A).

The consensus of the group is that there is not anything that qualifies as breeding habitat within the planning area. Pygmy-owls will use the planning areas for dispersal, with the exception of occasional short-term or over-winter stops in some of the better quality areas. There are a couple of washes in the southwest corner of the Southlands and several areas scattered throughout the Avra Valley holdings that have stands of vegetation of sufficient size and vegetative quality (density, composition) to serve as stop-over locations for dispersing owls. A preliminary map has been developed but still needs to be reviewed by the expert team and the TAC.

Burrowing Owl

Leslie said that the approach to modeling habitat for the burrowing owl had been suggested by the same group of experts that were involved in identifying pygmy-owl habitat in the City's HCP planning area.

In the Marana HCP, potential burrowing owl habitat had been selected by Game and Fish researchers using aerial photography and site visits, and was based on their understanding of the owl's habitat preferences. Given the number of acres of potential habitat within the City's HCP planning area, it was determined that this approach would be too time consuming.

One of the difficulties in identifying potential habitat was to differentiate between areas where the owl is only dispersing from areas that represent potential nesting habitat. The owl is capable of dispersing through a wide variety of habitat types and conditions. The owl does not dig its own burrow but rather uses existing burrows, and in particular ground squirrel burrows, and

other features such as holes in canal banks and drainage tiles. In order to capture areas with the highest potential for burrows, the group recommended matching known locations of burrowing owls with the soils data to determine in which soil types the owls are finding burrows. The location and area of potential burrowing owl nesting habitat would be further refined by identifying and removing areas that have too dense of vegetation to be suitable. Preliminary results for this combined soils and vegetation density model are not yet complete.

Pima Pineapple Cactus

As with the burrowing owl, the original PPC habitat modeling approach relied on matching known locations with soil type. Due to the wide range of soil types on which the cactus is found, the result of this analysis was that all of the Southlands, except for the major washes, showed up as potential PPC habitat.

Earlier this week (January 25), Leslie, Ken, Mima Falk, Marc Baker, Linwood Smith and a graduate student at the University of Arizona (Chris McDonald) toured potential PPC habitat in the Southlands. The purpose was to come up with an approach to refine the habitat model for this species in this portion of the City's HCP planning area. Two alternative approaches have been identified and will be presented at the next TAC meeting.

Needle-Spined Pineapple Cactus

Leslie noted that Mima was comfortable with the SDCP habitat model for this species, so there would be no revisions to the model for the City's HCP planning process.

Tucson Shovel-Nosed Snake

Leslie explained that Dr. Phil Rosen had developed a revised habitat model for this snake for the Marana HCP. This revised shovel-nosed snake habitat model was used in the listing petition that was recently filed for this species with the USFWS. The model used in the petition was slightly modified from that which was used in the Marana HCP, but the changes involved a reduced value for some areas based on soil type and thus the new model was slightly less inclusive than the Marana HCP model.

Phil felt that the model developed for the Marana HCP was still appropriate for the City's HCP planning area. Phil looked at preliminary maps and was comfortable that the model captured snake habitat as accurately outside of Marana as it had for areas within the Town.

Ground Snake

The same habitat modeling process was used for this snake as for the Tucson shovel-nosed snake. Phil was also comfortable that the results from his revised model accurately captured potential habitat within the City's HCP planning area.

Yellow-Billed Cuckoo

Leslie reported that there had been a bit of discussion over how to capture habitat for the cuckoo, particularly since the species' habitat is a dynamic system of patches of cottonwood-willow that spring up and then disappear along the Santa Cruz River channel. The TAC was concerned that with a permit length of approximately 25 years, if the cuckoo habitat was only mapped as areas of existing cottonwood-willow it would not adequately capture the potential of this species to occur or the potential impacts to the species throughout the full permit period. Cottonwood and willow can show up in a fairly short period of time and the areas of habitat that exist today are likely to be very different from what will exist in 10 or 20 years. The TAC felt that

the best way to capture the full potential for this species to occur in the planning area was to model, not only areas that currently have cottonwood-willow, but also area that could have cottonwood-willow in the future. The TAC chose the Santa Cruz River floodway as the best indicator of potential cuckoo habitat. A preliminary map of cuckoo habitat, based on the floodway, will be reviewed at the next TAC meeting.

Lesser Long-Nosed Bat

In previous meetings, TAC members had indicated that the lesser long-nosed bat was probably only foraging on agave while in the vicinity of the Tucson HCP planning area. Trips to the Southlands had resulted in no agave detections and the suggestion was made earlier this week by a sub-group of the TAC that, as a result, there is actually no foraging habitat for the lesser long-nosed bat within the Southlands.

Sherry asked whether the lesser long-nosed bat wouldn't also forage on saguaros in the Tucson area. Leslie replied that Mima felt that the bat was foraging only on agave, but in any case, very few saguaros existed in the Southlands. Greg asked is this meant that the bat was going to be dropped from the HCP target list. Leslie said that the full TAC had not had an opportunity to discuss the notion that there was no foraging potential for the bat within the Southlands, so she could not say what would be the final recommendation of the TAC. Marit asked whether there was potential for foraging in Avra Valley. Ken said that there are very few saguaros on City lands in Avra Valley, so he didn't think there was really any foraging habitat there as well. Ken also suggested that, since the bats were foraging primarily at hummingbird feeders in the Tucson area, that the City might want to address the species through a Safe Harbor Agreement.

Greg asked why the City would want to include the bat in their HCP if there was no potential foraging habitat inside the HCP planning area. Leslie responded that the City could not cover the bat if there was no potential habitat because an HCP is intended to address impacts to listed species and, therefore, if there were no impacts (because there was no habitat), then there would not be a basis for including the lesser long-nosed bat in the City's HCP.

Greg asked what were the threats to the species. Leslie said that disturbance to roosts was the major threat and there was not a real shortage of foraging opportunities. The City, regardless of whether or not there is foraging habitat within the HCP planning area, does not have potential roost sites in these areas. Sherry added that the threat to mines is the primary concern in Arizona, but in Mexico, beyond the threat of roost disturbance, all bats are treated as if they were vampire bats and so the lesser long-nosed bats are often gassed and killed.

Larry asked about the potential for lesser long-nosed bat habitat to be created through the Army Corps river restoration projects. Ken said such was not part of the current concepts for the projects, but that the TAC and SAC were welcome to make voluntary recommendations that could be forwarded to the Army Corps or the appropriate local jurisdictions. Leslie noted that potential conflicts between the Army Corps restoration projects and the HCPs had been identified and discussions were ongoing regarding how to make the plans consistent. She also pointed out that Greg and the environmental planning staff at PAG are sponsoring a regional symposium on the Army Corps projects and HCPs and Sherry is spearheading an effort to create a dialogue between the HCP planning teams and planning staff at the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Forest Service.

Susan said that she was uncomfortable, however, with the idea of the SAC making biological recommendations. Ken noted that the conversation regarding SAHBA's work to create artificial

burrows for burrowing owls and the potential to integrate this work into the City's HCP is an example of the types of recommendations that would be valuable from the SAC. Leslie added that any recommendations that were outside the scope of the HCP would be valuable as well. The TAC had requested that future meetings have a "parking lot" – a sheet of paper hung up on the wall on which we can write down ideas as they come up, whether or not they are appropriate topics of an HCP. At the end of the planning process, these recommendations can be summarized and forwarded to the appropriate agency, organization, or jurisdiction.

Pale Townsend's Big-Eared Bat

Leslie said that the pale Townsend's big-eared bat habitat model was currently under discussion by the TAC. The group chose to defer to Linwood's expertise in the matter and a preliminary model had been developed that was based entirely on the presence of Arizona upland vegetation. The TAC has not had an opportunity to review the resulting map and as a result it is unknown at this time whether the vegetation information will be sufficient or whether additional data will be needed to refine the results.

5. Field Trips

Leslie explained that, since the last SAC meeting, the TAC had gone on two more field trips to the planning area, specifically the Santa Cruz River area and the Avra Valley holdings. She noted that the TAC was given an opportunity to discuss the trips at the following meeting and to identify anything that interested them, raise issues or concerns, and ask questions regarding the planning areas. In reviewing the minutes for the TAC meetings, Leslie said that there were some interesting themes that were identified. She wanted to share these observations with the SAC because it related to the direction that the TAC is leaning in how they visualize conservation strategies.

With respect to the Southlands, the TAC had noted that there were opportunities for effective resource conservation by planning for urban development in a manner that protects and enhances areas of existing natural resource value. For example, large areas of the Southlands are subject to sheet flow. This unconstrained stormwater flow would make it difficult to develop portions of the Southlands. At the same time, water is clearly a limiting resource in this area. One of the concepts that had come out of TAC discussion was to capture some or all of this stormwater runoff and divert it into existing riparian areas or use it to enhance xeroriparian areas in order to provide additional wildlife habitat.

In a similar discussion, the TAC talked about potential water development projects in Avra Valley in terms of providing opportunities for wildlife enhancement. The projects that could potentially be implemented in Avra Valley include recharge basins, evaporations ponds, and wastewater treatment facilities. These projects do have impacts, but they also produce positive effects such as basin slopes surrounded by open areas that could be suitable as burrowing owl nesting habitat, brine streams from evaporation ponds that could be used to enhance riparian areas, and restoration and revegetation of areas that are heavily degraded due to past agricultural use.

Leslie summarized by saying it had been exciting to see the TAC's creativity in looking for opportunities to make urban and water resource planning work for the City's conservation effort.

Greg asked if the TAC had or was going to make recommendations regarding how to design stormwater basins or other stormwater harvesting features adequately so that the capacity of

washes was not exceeded. Leslie replied that the TAC would not be developing engineering recommendations. Engineering of on-site drainage is something that would have to happen at the project stage, but the TAC would probably develop general guidelines that could be used to inform the engineering process and would result in a more comprehensive approach to stormwater management. Michael noted that the Le Moore watershed basin study, which was just initiated, was a good vehicle to implement any recommendations of the TAC with respect to drainage issues. The timing of this watershed study was very good because the TAC's recommendations could be easily integrated into the Le Moore basin management plan and implemented in that context. Marit also pointed out that the TAC had visit the Tucson Audubon Society's restoration area on the Simpson Farm and had gotten a good overview of the low water, low cost, low effort restoration methods that the group is implementing. These methods likely could be easily implemented in areas such as the Southlands with excellent results.

Greg asked if the SAC could then recommend a stormwater harvesting ordinance. Leslie responded that this could be an appropriate mechanism for the implementation of the HCP conservation program and would therefore be a good topic for the SAC to consider.

Nancy asked about how the City was addressing invasive species in the HCP. Leslie noted that Tucson Water and Tucson Audubon Society are both currently taking steps to manage invasive species on City-owned properties in Avra Valley. She then explained that the TAC had not gotten to the point where they were considering specific threats to the conservation target species. Impacts of invasives is a big concern, especially for species like the Pima pineapple cactus, and therefore the effects of invasive species would need to be considered in the planning process.

Susan asked what had been the overall purpose of the TAC field trips to the planning areas. She was concerned that, if the trips were for the purpose of generating habitat models for the target species, then other experts, such as a hydrologist, should have been involved. Leslie explained that the trips were simply for the purpose of acquainting the TAC with the planning areas. It was felt that the TAC could not easily make recommendations for the conservation of natural resources in areas that they had never seen and thus for which they did not have a mental picture. She also noted that the TAC did have two hydrologists – Ralph and Dennis, both from Tucson Water – and that technical experts would be invited to participate in the discussions at any time that additional information or input was needed by the TAC. For example, Marc Baker would be attending the next TAC meeting to speak on Pima pineapple cactus habitat in the Southlands.

6. Next Meeting

Due to lack of time, the discussion of covered activities will be moved to a later time. Sherry suggested that the SAC meet prior to the receiving any conservation recommendations from the TAC in order to brainstorm possible implementation options. Leslie noted that there had been discussion at previous TAC meetings of City ordinances, plans and policies that affected the HCP planning areas. The SAC indicated that this would be a good place to start the discussion of implementation approaches.

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, March 2, 2005 from 3 to 5pm at the Arizona Game and Fish Department conference room.