

**Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Summary**  
**September 30, 2004 1:00 – 4:00 pm**  
**Randolph Golf Course Clubhouse, Copper Room**

Attendees: Trevor Hare, Rich Glinski, Guy McPherson, Marit Alanen, Ralph Marra, Ann Phillips, Linwood Smith, Bruce Prior, Harold Maxwell (Tucson Water), Michael Wyneken (City of Tucson – Planning), Melissa Antol (City of Tucson – Planning), Leslie Liberti (SWCA), Ken Kingsley (SWCA), Nina Chambers (SAC member), Eileen Finnerty Rae (SAHBA)

**1. Southlands Trip Summary/Questions**

Leslie summarized the trip to the Southlands and asked the TAC for their impressions of this area. She noted that the trip had been organized to show the basic level of degradation across the planning area, due in part to grazing and ORV use. The stops were intended to give a closer look at some of the best looking riparian areas in the Southlands. Leslie emphasized that almost all of the riparian areas that are visible on the orthophoto were created by man-made features (spreaders, wells, dirt tanks) or were impacted by human activities (roads, utilities).

Rich pointed out that landscape restoration in the Southlands was not possible given the enormous amount of effort and money that would be required to create habitat on a large scale. Ann noted, however, that the plant diversity was there, that many areas just needed water to achieve a more riparian nature. She did feel that some areas might need to be seeded for grasses.

Trevor felt that roads were going to be one of the most significant issues in the planning area. Ann suggested that roads be designed around the wash system. Michael noted that there was a regional study currently underway on the roadway capacity needs. He said that the City was strongly supporting the concept that the roads not follow a grid system. Another City goal was to have fewer roads, but roads with a larger capacity. Trevor asked if the Southlands was going to be planned along the lines of New Urbanism. Michael replied that the Southlands would be planned according this village concept. Leslie suggested having a presentation at the next meeting on the Houghton Area Master Plan (HAMP) and the types of design considerations that the City is already integrating into plans for the southeast area.

Guy asked if, in addition to better data, the group should consider the use of better models to map potential species habitat. Leslie said that this would be considered when the group started to look at the individual habitat models in greater detail. Trevor said that he thought Mima was involved in developing the Pima pineapple cactus model. Linwood replied that he and Mima and others only got the model once it had been developed. They were asked to revise the scores, if needed, but none of the PPC experts wanted to touch the model because the data were not available at that time to create an effective model. He did note that if you compared the county-wide map of PPC habitat with the map of HDMS locations, they corresponded very well. Trevor thought that using the SSURGO soils data could help refine the model so that it was more useful at a smaller scale. Linwood asked about the relationship that was seen between PPC density and oxidized soils and whether this could be captured in a model. Leslie replied that she wasn't sure if this information was included in the SSURGO data. Another option was to use the surficial geology maps from U.S. Geologic Survey, but Leslie didn't know whether this information was available for the Southlands. She also suggested using the orthophotos to identify the oxidized soils and Marit and Linwood thought that the imagery might be at a sufficient resolution that this would be possible. Ken noted that PPC can grow in a wide variety of conditions, although they prefer certain soil types. Based on the conversation with Mima, what she would like to see is a differentiation between highly suitable

habitat and less suitable habitat. Linwood said that there was a new PCA (priority conservation area) map for the PPC. It had not been released yet, but Mima seemed to feel that it did a better job of capturing high-density PPC areas.

Trevor said that, with respect to Tumamoc Globeberry, there would be some recommendations from the Arizona Rare Plant Committee, which is meeting at this time. Ken responded that Mima would be getting these and other recommendations at the meeting she was attending today (September 30<sup>th</sup>), and she would bring any recommendations back to the TAC.

Rich felt that plants, in general, were a bigger issue in this planning process and, since they have a different status under the ESA, he would like a presentation on regulatory issues for plants and mitigation actions appropriate for the plant species being considered in the City planning process. Leslie agreed that this would be useful, but asked if it could be put off until a later meeting (November or later) when Mima could lead the discussion.

## **2. Conservation Targets**

Leslie explained the two handouts that had been given to the group. The first, titled “Summary of TAC Recommended Changes to Target Species List,” was a summary of all of the comments that had been submitted by the team at and since the last TAC meeting. Only those species from the initial target species list that one or more people had commented on were included in this summary table.

The second handout was a revision of the “Listing Status Recommendations” spreadsheet that had been handed out at the last TAC meeting. This document includes all of the new species that had been suggested by TAC members since the last meeting; however, for most of the new species, evidence relating to each of the 5 USFWS listing criteria was not explicitly included. If there were species that the team wants more detailed information on, Leslie said that she and Ken would provide additional information at the next meeting.

### Species Occurring or with Potential to Occur in Planning Area and Listed or Likely to be Listed

- *Cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl*

Leslie noted that at the last meeting, the recommendation was made to consider the CFPO occurrence in the Southlands planning area as “potential pending augmentation.” Dennis was also going to think about whether CFPO should be considered “potential” or “present” in the Avra Valley holdings. Leslie said that she would talk to Dennis prior to the next meeting to see how he felt about the Avra Valley lands. Scott Wilbor (through Ann) had recommended that the Santa Cruz River be considered potential habitat for the CFPO. Leslie said that this was consistent with the designation of proposed critical habitat for the owl along some portions of the Santa Cruz River. The CFPO will be considered as potentially occurring in Avra Valley and the Santa Cruz River and potential, pending augmentation, in the Southlands.

- *Yellow-billed cuckoo*

Ann had said at the last meeting that YBC is present in northern Avra Valley and suggested that they should be considered ‘potential’ for the Santa Cruz River. According to Linwood, the YBC is present along the Santa Cruz River. The recommendation was then for the YBC to be shown as present in both Avra Valley and the Santa Cruz River portions of the planning area.

- *Pale Townsend's big-eared bat*

Linwood felt the PTBB had potential to occur along the Santa Cruz River in Tucson as well as the Avra Valley and Southlands planning areas.

Leslie noted that none of the changes resulted in a change in category for any of these species. She asked if the group was satisfied with the changes to these 3 species and the resulting categorization. Several members indicated that the changes were appropriate and no one expressed concerns.

Trevor did ask that Mexican garter snakes be considered in this category if the planning area included land near Cienega Creek Preserve. Leslie noted that this list of target species was being developed based on the current planning areas only, and that if the planning area was expanded, the list would need to be revisited.

#### Species Occurring or with Potential to Occur in Planning Area and Not Likely to be Listed

- *Needle-spined pineapple cactus*

Leslie explained that she and Ken had met with Mima on Tuesday of that week (September 28) to discuss the plants on the target list since Mima would not be able to make the meeting. During that discussion, Mima had indicated that she felt the NSPC was likely to be listed in the next 5 to 10 years. The rationale that she provided was that development north of I-10 may be affecting known populations so the populations in the Southlands planning area, if they exist, may need to be protected to maintain a viable population. Mima's recommendation was that the cactus be reclassified as "Present/with Potential to Occur and Listed/Likely to be Listed" and considered as a potential species for coverage under an HCP.

Linwood asked what was known about the NSPC population south of I-10. Ken replied that there was at least one known population along a dirt road east of the Sonoita Highway on the bajada of the Empire Mountains.

- *Pima Indian mallow*

Mima felt that the mallow was not present within the planning area and was therefore comfortable with reclassifying this species as "absent."

The TAC indicated that they were comfortable with Mima's recommendations with respect to both the NSPC and the mallow.

- *Great plains narrow-mouthed toad*

Rich had recommended through email that this species should be considered for a SHA/CCAA. Leslie pointed out that this recommendation implies that the species is likely to be listed. If that were the case, since the species is likely to be present currently within the planning area, it would be more appropriate as an HCP target.

Trevor said that he felt the toad was fairly secure through most of its range. He also noted that it is found along the Santa Cruz River. The toad would also still be considered as "potential" for

the Avra Valley lands, pending input from Phil Rosen. Based on input from the TAC, this species would not be reclassified.

- *Red-backed whiptail*

Linwood felt that the whiptail was absent from the planning area, the nearest populations being found in the Coyote and Sand Tank Mountains. The TAC agreed that this species would be reclassified as "absent."

- *Tropical kingbird*

Linwood also felt that the tropical kingbird was absent from the planning area. Ann noted that Scott Wilbor had indicated that it had been seen at the Marana pecan grove north of the planning area, but the bird was considered an accidental. Since species that are absent from and accidental to the planning area are put into the same category, the kingbird would be reclassified as "absent." No one voiced concerns with the change in category.

- *Peregrine falcon*

Ann noted that, based on Scott Wilbor's broader definition of "present," the falcon should be considered present in the Avra Valley and Santa Cruz River planning areas. Ann read Scott's definitions, which are:

- Present: A species should be considered "Present" at a site, if it occurs regularly in suitable habitat at the site, i.e., in habitat which provides necessary food/nutrients, water, cover able to sustain the species, during its annual breeding, post-breeding, migration, or non-breeding (over-wintering) time periods.
- Potential: A species should be considered "Potential" at a site if recognized suitable habitat, as described in the literature, exists or could be restored/enhanced, the species occurs regionally, but the species currently is not occupying the habitat at present at the site because one or more of a number of limiting factors is currently precluding its occupancy. Habitat restoration/enhancement (with reasonable success potential) is one management action that may alleviate the limiting factor or factors allowing the species to occupy the site in question, and thus should be a factor considered when judging a species potential to occur at the site.
- Probable: The species is known to occur in the region in suitable habitat during its annual period of use, and it has a high probability for occurrence at the site based on the availability of recognized suitable habitat at the site, but no formal surveys have been completed.
- Unknown: Species site occupancy information is unknown.
- No occurrence/unsuitable habitat: Species is not "present", habitat is recognized as unsuitable for the species, and reasonable potential for a change in habitat suitability for the species does not exist.

Marit pointed out that she had seen peregrines while doing burrowing owl surveys in and near Marana. Ken said that they do nest at Picacho Peak and Linwood noted that they are regularly seen along River Road. Ken has seen them at various locations within the City.

Leslie said that since the falcon had been delisted in 1999 and was, therefore, not likely to be listed in the next 5 to 10 years, changing the occurrence status from "potential" to "present"

would not result in a change in category and that this was consistent with Linwood's suggestion that including the species in an HCP would be of little benefit to the bird or the City.

- *Greater western mastiff bat*

Linwood recommended that the mastiff bat be reclassified as "absent" based on the understanding that the species' presence is occasional at best and then only for foraging.

Leslie noted that since the bat was considered not likely to be listed, it would not be included as a potential HCP target anyway. The TAC indicated that they were comfortable with the change and no concerns were expressed.

- *Desert tortoise*

Linwood pointed out that the Sonoran populations of the tortoise were not in trouble. Trevor noted that there was some potential for problems near urban areas, for example the spread of disease. Leslie asked if everyone was comfortable with the species being considered "not likely to be listed" and no one on the TAC expressed concerns with this categorization.

- *Desert box turtle*

Linwood said that there was no truly suitable habitat for this species within the planning area. Trevor agreed but noted that the species is present at Cienega Creek Preserve and that if the planning area were expanded it would need to be reconsidered.

Leslie said that the turtle would be categorized as "absent" unless the planning area was expanded. No one on the TAC voiced concerns with this re-categorization.

- *Swainson's hawk*

Ann reported at the last meeting that Scott Wilbor had documented reports of Swainson's hawks sporadically occurring in the Avra Valley. Ann added that a pair of hawks had unsuccessfully attempted to nest in northern Avra Valley. Linwood also pointed out that they had been seen occasionally at Corona de Tucson, in the Southlands area, and Rich agreed.

The hawk does not change categories, however. It will not be considered as present in both the Avra Valley and Southlands planning areas, because it is not present under the above definition.

- *Western yellow bat and western red bat*

Linwood pointed out that both bats forage in riparian areas, so the foraging potential for these bats within the planning area is very slim. He recommended that the bats both be considered "absent" from the planning area. This recommendation was accepted by the TAC.

- *Southwest willow flycatcher*

Based on Scott Wilbor's expanded definitions for species occurrence, he would consider this species as "probable" for the planning area. Linwood disagreed based on the lack of a broad floodplain with a cottonwood-willow gallery forest. He felt that there was the potential for the bird to show up if the river was restored. Leslie asked if, based on Linwood's comments, everyone was comfortable with the species remaining in the "potential to recolonize by natural process if habitat is created/restored" category. No one expressed concerns with this recommendation.

- *Yuma clapper rail*

Linwood explained that the proposed restoration projects would result in a cienega type of habitat and not the marshlands that this species prefers. As a result, he felt that it was not likely that there would ever be suitable habitat for this species in the planning area.

Ken asked about the created wetlands that the City may have planned as part of potential recharge or tertiary treatment facilities, such as Sweetwater. Linwood replied that none of these areas would be large enough to draw the rail.

Leslie summarized by saying that the rail would be moved to the "absent/no potential for restoration" category. No one objected to this reclassification.

- *Gila topminnow*

Rich had suggested in his email that this species be considered for a Safe Harbor Agreement. Leslie clarified that putting the species in this category meant that it was considered likely to recolonize the planning area naturally if the river was restored. Ken noted that since a state-wide SHA was in the works, it was likely that this species could be fairly widespread before long.

Leslie asked if the group was suggesting that the species should be moved from the "potential to be restored if introduced" to the "potential to recolonize naturally" category. The consensus of the TAC was that this change was appropriate.

- *Huachuca water umbel*

Mima had noted, when she met with Ken and Leslie on Tuesday (September 28) that Pima County had previously discussed with USFWS the idea of reintroducing the water umbel. Mima said that there were no actual plans to do so, but these conversations indicated that it was possible that the species could be reintroduced within the City's permit period and should therefore be considered for an SHA.

The TAC supported moving the water umbel from the "potential to be restored if introduced" to the "potential to recolonize naturally" category.

- *Loach minnow and spikedace*

For both of these species, Linwood stated that it was not likely that there would ever be suitable habitat and therefore they should be considered "absent/no restoration potential." No one disagreed with the proposed change.

- *Chiricahua leopard frog*

Linwood pointed out that there are no historic occurrences of this species in the planning area

and it is not likely that there will ever be suitable habitat available within the planning area. Trevor added that these species are only found above 5,000 feet elevation. Ken clarified that they can be found at lower elevations; there are a few individuals at Cienega Creek preserve at about 4,000 feet elevation, but more than 10 miles upstream from the Planning Area.

The recommendation was then to reclassify the frog as “absent” from the planning area. There was no disagreement voiced by anyone on the TAC.

- *Gila chub*

Linwood noted that it is not likely that there will ever be suitable habitat available within the planning area and therefore the species should be reclassified as “absent.” Trevor said that he would defer to Ken on this and asked if there were any chubs at Cienega Creek Preserve. Ken replied that there were chubs at the Preserve and that they had moved downstream. Leslie suggested that this species be considered absent currently, but it would be revisited if the planning area were expanded in the southeast. The TAC members indicated that this was acceptable and no objections were voiced.

- *Sonora sucker*

Linwood stated that it is not likely that there will ever be suitable habitat available within the planning area and therefore the species should be reclassified as “absent.” No one expressed disagreement with this recommendation.

- *Lowland leopard frog and Mexican garter snake*

Rich suggested that both of these species be considered for a Safe Harbor Agreement. Leslie again pointed out that putting a species in this category meant that it was considered likely to naturally recolonize the planning area if the river was restored. Ken noted that there are plans to remove bullfrogs from the Santa Cruz River and, with restoration of the river, these two species might show up naturally.

Leslie asked if the group was comfortable moving these species from the “potential to be restored if introduced” to the “potential to recolonize naturally” category. The TAC supported this change and no concerns were noted.

- *Merriam’s mouse*

Linwood had suggested that this species, like many others, was not likely to ever have suitable habitat within the planning area, even with restoration of the Santa Cruz River. He stated that the former habitat for this species had been entirely eliminated some 50 years ago. Ken, however, felt that it might be possible that some isolated population nodes may continue to exist in areas of dense mesquite. Given the emphasis in some of the proposed restoration projects on creation of mesquite habitat, the mouse, if it continues to be present anywhere in the area, might actually spread into restoration areas if they become suitable. He also noted that Pima County has received a Heritage Grant and has contracted with SWCA to conduct a status survey for Merriam’s mouse. The consensus was to reclassify the species as “potential to recolonize naturally” pending the results of the Pima County study.

- *American bittern*

This species has similar habitat preferences to the Yuma clapper rail so it also is unlikely to ever show up in the planning area other than the occasional bird passing through. Linwood recommended that this species also be considered absent from the planning area.

- *Black-bellied whistling duck*

Ann pointed out that she has seen this species in the Avra Valley and, based on Scott Wilbor's input, she felt that the species should be considered "potential." Linwood felt the ducks would only be seen in the planning area occasionally but could recolonize if portions of the river were restored.

Leslie noted that since the duck was not likely to be listed, it did not qualify as either an HCP or SHA/CCAA candidate based on the City's criteria. It was agreed that the duck would remain as a "restoration potential" species in the list.

- *Northern gray hawk*

Ann noted that, according to Scott Wilbor, there was no suitable habitat for the hawk in the planning area and therefore it should be reclassified as "absent." Linwood felt that the hawk could recolonize areas along the river if habitat was created or restored. Although the species does not currently have suitable habitat, based on the possibility of restoration projects creating habitat, the species will remain categorized as "restoration potential."

- *Longfin dace*

Linwood recommended that this species be reclassified as "absent/no restoration potential" as it is not likely that there will ever be suitable habitat available within the planning area. Linwood noted that none of the restoration projects were likely to recreate flowing water conditions, such as at Cienega Creek, so the appropriate habitat would not be found in the Santa Cruz River.

- *Desert sucker*

Linwood also recommended that the sucker be reclassified as "absent/no restoration potential." Rich thought that if the restoration projects were implemented, the species could live in any flowing water that was created. Leslie explained that it was unlikely that flowing water would be maintained in the river. Ralph noted that the safest assumption was that there would be less water in the river in the future than there is now. Leslie pointed out that the only water earmarked for restoration purposes was the 10,000 acre-foot conservation pool. Ralph said that all of this water might not be available along the Santa Cruz River and, in any case, this amount of water under normal circumstances would only create about 5 miles of wetted channel.

Given the low likelihood of flowing water in the river, the group agreed that there was no restoration potential for this species.

- *Nichols turk's head cactus*

Marit found a record of this cactus within 2 miles of the planning area in the HDMS database.

Initial discussion indicated that this might be a reliable report, however, Mima had said that she had met with the person who made the report. This woman could not find the cactus again and Mima said the area that where the woman was looking was not suitable habitat for the cactus.

Mima's recommendation was the species continue to be considered "absent" in the planning area.

- *Desert night-blooming cereus, Thornber fishhook cactus, and magenta-flowered hedgehog cactus (aka pinkflower hedgehog cactus)*

Marit found records for all three of these plants on or within 2 miles of the planning area. Mima felt that none of these species were likely to be listed in the next 5 to 10 years.

- *Bats*

Tim Snow, a bat expert and nongame biologist for AGFD, gave Marit a list of 12 bat species that he thought were present or had potential habitat within the planning area. These species are: silver-haired bat, hoary bat, California myotis, big brown bat, Mexican (Brazilian) free-tailed bat, Yuma myotis, western small-footed myotis, western pipistrelle, spotted bat, pallid bat, big free-tailed bat, and pocket free-tailed bat.

Ken's initial assessment of these bats was that none were likely to be listed in the next 5 to 10 years. Trevor asked about the 4 species (Yuma myotis, western small-footed myotis, spotted bat, and big free-tailed bat) that were considered "Species of Concern" by USFWS. Ken would gather more detailed information on the listing potential for these 4 bats to present at the next TAC meeting.

- *Banded sand snake and western blind snake*

Ann said that Phil Rosen had reported these snakes at or near the Simpson Farms parcel in Avra Valley. Based on available information, Ken had concluded that neither snake was likely to be listed in the next 5 to 10 years. The TAC supported this categorization.

- *Desert iguana*

According to Ann, this species has been found along the Santa Cruz River. Ken also felt that this species was not likely to be listed in the next 5 to 10 years and the TAC agreed.

- *Cassin's sparrow and Botteri's sparrow*

Linwood suggested that these 2 sparrows, which are similar to the rufous-winged sparrow, be considered. Given current understanding of the species, Ken concluded that neither is likely to be listed in the next 5 to 10 years. This categorization was supported by the TAC.

### **3. Annexation**

Michael told the group that the City was still trying to sort out the cost and resources required if the planning area was expanded to include potential annexation areas.

#### **4. Field Trip**

Three more TAC meetings and 2 fieldtrips were scheduled. On October 28 there will be a morning (8am to noon-ish) trip to the Santa Cruz River planning area and an afternoon (1-4pm) TAC meeting. A combined fieldtrip/meeting will also be held on November 22, with a trip to the Avra Valley holdings at 8am and a meeting from 1 to 4 pm. A third TAC meeting was scheduled for December 16 from 1 to 4pm. The meeting locations will be determined later, but the Arizona Game and Fish Department conference room was suggested. Marit said that she would check on room availability.

#### **5. Other Issues**

Trevor noted that one critical landscape connection that had been identified by Pima County was Brawley Wash and he wanted to make sure that the City was aware of this designation. Leslie suggested that the connection of the planning area to Brawley Wash could be explored at the Avra Valley and/or Santa Cruz River fieldtrips.