

Draft Minutes
Meeting of 4/24/08

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

Minutes of the meeting held:

Thursday, April 24, 2008

at:

Arizona State Parks Basement Board Room
1300 W. Washington St., Phoenix, AZ

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

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

Committee Members Present: Trevor Hare, Chair
Sheridan Stone, Vice-Chair
Linda Kennedy (*via telephone*)
John Hays (*via telephone*)
Don Young (*via telephone*)
Jared Underwood

Committee Members Absent: Phyllis Hughes

Other Individuals Present: Max Castillo, ASP (*ex-officio, via telephone*)
Dan Shein, Chief, Resources Management, ASP
Genevieve Johnson, Open Space Coordinator, ASP
Laura Burnette, IT, ASP
Joanne Roberts, Arizona State Parks
Ray Warriner, ASP
Ruth Shulman, ASP

Guest: None

B. INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS AND STAFF

Members and Staff introduced themselves.

C. OLD BUSINESS

1. Approval of NAPAC Minutes for the February 28, 2008 meeting.

Mr. Castillo noted that the "Ailanthus" plant topic referred to in the November 29, 2007 minutes and corrected to capitalize the generic name should also have the specific name of "altissima" added, so that the entire name of *Ailanthus altissima* appears in the text. Chair Hare suggested substituting the common name of Chinese Tree-of-Heaven. He also said that because Ms. Shulman clarified that "Ailanthus" refers to the genus rather than the species, it may stand alone. (*Note to NAPAC: the November meeting minutes were approved as amended in February and further amendments cannot be made to approved minutes.*)

Dr. Kennedy said that under the Land Acquisition Selection & Prioritization Subcommittee section, there was a double negative occurring in the discussion of whether a particular parcel was developable or not. Ms. Shulman will make the correction. Dr. Kennedy then

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moved that the minutes be accepted as amended. Mr. Hays seconded the motion, which carried with no further discussion.

2. Update and Discussion on NAPAC's presentation to Assistant Director Jay Ream regarding the Kartchner Caverns Conservation Zone (KCCZ).

Ms. Roberts noted that Chair Hare was scheduled to speak with AD Ream regarding the proposed KCCZ. She also said that she had provided NAPAC members with a range of information on flora and fauna aboveground. Dr. Casavant, who is preparing the KCCZ proposal report, says that the discussion with AD Ream should not wait on his Executive Summary of the report.

Chair Hare said he had spoken to Mr. Ream who expressed an interest in seeing the presentation. Chair Hare has been considering what information to package for the ASP Board presentation so that Mr. Ream can view it. Chair Hare will meet with Mr. Shein and Ms. Roberts shortly.

Ms. Roberts asked NAPAC whether they had any input for the proposal at the moment, or whether Chair Hare would present to Mr. Ream a "framework" and then take that to NAPAC for input. Chair Hare said that he had been thinking about how to create a proposal that will make the project an "easy sell" to the ASP Board. He will put together a document to pass around to NAPAC and Staff for comment before the next NAPAC meeting.

3. Set meeting dates for both full committees and subcommittees and verify dates already set.

As part of the meeting discussion Chair Hare noted that timely response to quorum calls for full committee and subcommittee meetings is essential.

NAPAC set the following dates: May 22 for the next Natural Areas Management Guidelines (NAMG) subcommittee meeting. NAMG is close to completing the guidelines product. The Land Acquisition Selection and Prioritization (LASP) subcommittee also has a meeting scheduled for that day. Staff may not attend both meetings; any Staff on both subcommittees will need to work out possible phone attendance. Following discussion, the NAMG meeting will be held beginning at 10:00am at Kartchner Caverns SP; the LASP subcommittee will begin at 1:00pm at the ASP offices in Phoenix. If necessary, the LASP will also meeting on June 12. Further information will be provided on this as it arises.

The next NAPAC meeting is scheduled for June 26 in Tucson; this date has become problematic in terms of attendance and may have to be rescheduled. Ms. Shulman will poll the members to determine whether a quorum can be met on that date. The NAMG subcommittee is set to meet on July 24; that may be the date for the next full committee meeting if June 26 does not work out.

Further NAPAC meetings are scheduled for August 28, September 25 (for subcommittees) and October 23. Meetings for November and December will be discussed later in the year.

Chair Hare also noted that meetings and meeting preparation are essential to the work of NAPAC and the subcommittees and reminded members of their commitments to timely responses to eMails and completion of tasks.

D. NEW BUSINESS

1. Discuss Sonoita Creek Ranch Acquisition in Partnership with AGFD and TPL.

This land is available from a private party, who, following much discussion, made a tour possible on March 27, 2008. Steve Haas, manager of the Sonoita Creek State Natural Area (SCSNA) Ms. Roberts provided NAPAC with a handout discussing the ecological significance of Sonoita Creek Ranch. This is a connecting riparian area for the SCSNA. There are buildings on the property, which is currently a working ranch. There is cultivated land, and a sacaton flatland that are all being maintained through irrigation. Ms. Roberts said that there is a guaranteed 500+ acre feet of water with the ownership. The price is \$11 million, but the owner is willing to sell for \$7 million as an outright sale.

Ms. Roberts noted that the water issues have been discussed previously. At one time, the land was only offered to AGFD and TPL, however the land could only be inspected following “up-front money”. This was untenable. Ms. Roberts says that the wildlife value is there in the land and now that the chance for purchase has arisen again, the project is worth pursuing. She said that the water currently being used for irrigation could likely be returned to Sonoita Creek as an ultimate conservation item. Mr. Haas was impressed with the land, the potential connectivity to SCSNA and the possibility of protecting the land from development. The present landowner would like to retain the grazing rights to the land, which should be taken into serious consideration. Mr. Haas also noted that the management of the property, which is not feasible with current ASP staff levels. One solution may be to develop a management partnership.

Ms. Roberts noted that 75% of the water from Monkey Springs that came into the property would come with the purchase. The water would need to be monitored to make sure that the proper amount was flowing in. Ms. Roberts also noted that there is currently hunting access, which is another consideration. AD Ream said that the purchase is an interesting possibility, and NAPAC should continue to investigate the purchase.

Ms. Roberts asked that NAPAC look at the handout, come back with questions or comments, and consider a site visit.

Mr. Hays noted that the land is likely not developable considering the floodplain, and Chair Hare asked Mr. Hays to provide more information on that aspect. He also noted that buying the property in conjunction with the potential partners would help with the management issues.

Ms. Robert reiterated that NAPAC should review the materials she has already provided, and she will also send a .pdf file of the ranch plan, as well as the evaluation done by Joan Scott of AGFD. She particular asked that Dr. Young investigate the hydrological information, especially as to whether the water could flow to Sonoita Creek. NAPAC members should provide possible site visit dates. The current owner is uncomfortable with having large numbers of people touring the land at any one time. Joan Scott from AGFD will be able to facilitate a site visit, however it may be limited to LASP members. AGFD has funds available, but the partnership is necessary.

Ms. Roberts noted that the author of the handout on the ecological significance is Jeffrey Cooper.

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2. Presentation by Genevieve Johnson on ASP and Open Space Planning with Q&A.

Ms. Johnson works in ASP with Open Space Planning as part of the new Arizona initiatives in “Smart Growth” She made a PowerPoint presentation (copy available upon request) about the Open Space program in ASP and how it interfaces with other agencies.

The definitions of Open Space vary from agency to agency. Some focus on natural processes, some focus on recreation and quality-of-life benefits. ASP defines Open Space in terms of preserving/restoring unique natural features, plants and animals, and some passive recreational/educational use.

ASP also manages the Growing Smarter Grant program, which defines Open Space as any land free of usages that jeopardize the conservation values of the land. ASP also prepares the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) every five years. The most recent SCORP addresses Open Space for the first time. (Copies of the SCORP are available at www.azstateparks.gov.)

Another part of the “Smart Growth” in Arizona plan is the Office of Smart Growth, which was the Community Development Office, falling under the Department of Commerce. The Department of Commerce definition (*ADD from Ppoint here*) is the guiding definition the agencies participating in the Office of Smart Growth. The major idea is to plan for inevitable growth in ways that enhance quality-of-life while not overburdening the infrastructure. One innovation is to expand the definition of infrastructure to include open environmental spaces, recreation opportunities and natural landscapes.

The Growing Smarter Grant program had been on hiatus during a legal challenge, however in 2007 the program was reactivated and granted money to the City of Phoenix to preserve natural landscapes in the northern part of the city. The program began with Proposition 303, a voter approved initiative that provides \$20 million annually for agriculture and land preservation. The Arizona Department of Agriculture receives \$2 million of those funds, leaving \$18 million for ASP to administer through Growing Smarter grants. Ms. Johnson noted that the Growing Smarter grant program is competitive. Those who are awarded grants are those who have submitted the best applications. One criterion is that the land purchased must be State Trust Land approved for auction by the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD). The Growing Smarter funds are separate from the Heritage Fund Natural Areas Acquisition funds that NAPAC advises the ASP Board on spending.

Mr. Stone asked if the grants could be for any land available in the state, or only for State Trust Land up for auction. Ms. Johnson noted that only State Trust Land is available, and the land must be designated for conservation purposes. Another requirement is that the land be in urban or rapidly growing areas. Chair Hare asked if the lands had to be Arizona Preserve Initiative lands. Ms. Johnson said yes, and that if the grant applicant was willing to petition the ASLD for reclassification, the ASLD is willing to reclassify. However the process is lengthy.

Ms. Johnson went on to discuss other features of the grant program, such the requirement of a land appraisal. The program has a 50/50 match, which means that qualified applicants (government entities, state agencies, some non-profits) who receive grants get a total of 50% of the appraised value. At this point, \$75 million is available due to carryover, and the hiatus. Mr. Shein pointed out that the original program set up by Proposition 303 is due to expire in 2011.

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Mr. Castillo asked if ASP was a qualified applicant for these funds. Ms. Johnson noted that because ASP administers the program, we are effectively enjoined from applying. However, Ms. Roberts noted that ASP could work with another qualified applicant for projects of interest to ASP. Ms. Johnson noted that the Conservation Easement on any land purchased with a Growing Smarter grant becomes the property of ASP.

The Growing Smarter program in Arizona began with the Growing Smarter Act in 1998, supplemented by the Growing Smarter Plus Act in 2000. These Acts were land-use planning reforms requiring an open space element in any planning documents. Many of the cities and counties have complied, but there is room for improved planning with some assistance to the entities. Governor Napolitano formed the Smart Growth Cabinet in 2007, consisting of 13 state agencies including ASP. The idea is to coordinate agency efforts and streamline processes to help the public. Another reason is to give the agencies discretionary power over funding (i.e. the grant program) to communities who agree to comply with the Smart Growth processes. The Smart Growth Interagency Committee formed last year to implement the Growth Cabinet policies. Members of the Committee travel to communities to provide assistance. The Growth Cabinet Advisory Board is a group of citizens with oversight also founded by Executive Order. They have published on the Department of Commerce's website the Smart Growth Scorecard draft which keeps track of how communities are utilizing the Smart Growth processes. There is a large section on the environment.

Mr. Stone clarified the makeup of the Interagency Committee. Ms. Johnson said that the Interagency Committee is "staffed" by personnel from the 13 agencies that make up the Smart Growth Cabinet. She is a member of the Committee, and works with other members to help communities at the communities' request.

Dr. Young noted that the Verde River Greenway seems to be exactly the sort of area being encouraged by some of the Smart Growth initiatives. Mr. Castillo noted that there is State Trust Land along the river. Ms. Johnson said that if the land is classified by ASLD as suitable for conservation, the local governmental agency would be welcome to apply for a Growing Smarter grant. Further discussion on the classification process and qualified applicants followed. Chair Hare recommended that NAPAC work with Mr. Castillo and Ms. Roberts on looking into the land near the VRG. Ms. Johnson noted that Doris Pulsifer, Chief of Grants for ASP, is the grant administrator for this program and good source of information.

Mr. Stone asked whether the ASP GIS system includes an overlay on State Trust Land eligible for the grants. Ms. Burnette said that there was an overlay showing some of the land designated as suitable for conservation, however it does not include any recent reclassifications. The most recent information should be available through ASLD.

Ms. Johnson continued by outlining some of the issues to be addressed, including mapping, and a recreation inventory, to determine areas of focus for conservation purposes. The Nature Conservancy is also doing Natural Infrastructure mapping, meaning that ecosystem data is overlaid with private lands currently available for development to determine areas that could be saved. She noted other public and private agencies and non-profits that are assisting with Smart Growth. She also said that the Smart Growth philosophy is designed to focus on the landscape level and is geared to accomplishing multiple goals under the philosophy. Some of the issues are access, equitability, management and by whom,

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invasive species and many others. She went to discuss the projected growth in the state, which is beginning to impact rural areas currently thought of as open space.

Funding for open space initiatives have been approved by voters in nearly all fifty states. The US populace is insisting on “green infrastructure” meaning parks, open spaces and trails as part of a community’s development much as streets, sewers and other traditional infrastructure is planned.

Mr. Castillo asked if the Growing Smarter Grant funds were available only for acquisition, and not maintenance. Ms. Johnson and Mr. Shein replied that a very small percentage of the grant could be used for maintenance, but not enough to actually be helpful. NAPAC members were referred to the Growing Smarter Grant manual at www.azstateparks.gov.

Mr. Stone asked if there were any products being focused on regarding Smart Growth. Ms. Johnson said that the focus right now is the recreation inventory and also the areas of conservation priority.

Ms. Johnson said that she is available to NAPAC for any ideas on Smart Growth, or to answer any questions.

3. Presentation by Laura Burnette of ASP IT Regarding the GIS System and Overlays.

Ms. Burnette noted that her presentation was very visually oriented, so that the phone participants may not be getting the full benefit. However, this is a demonstration program, and not available in hardcopy or electronic copy.

The purpose of developing ASP’s GIS maps was to assist in the Smart Growth and open space planning initiatives in Arizona. ASP coordinated with agencies and organizations to produce maps showing various areas by current development, proposed development, ecologic region, and many other factors. One notable result of this was that the criteria for conservation and preservation were similar across the input community. This made it easier to map the areas under consideration.

Ms. Burnette also said that the sheer amount of data-sets used to create the information in the GIS make the maps very complicated. There is also a flow-chart available to show how the information was organized using the criteria. Using those common conservation criteria, points were given for factors such as specific environment (i.e. a riparian area) or specific features such as wildlife corridors. High point value areas were compiled into shades of blue on the map, darkest being the highest values. (The majority of Ms. Burnette’s presentation consisted of describing the various maps and their purposes. Following are the questions asked by NAPAC regarding the presentation.)

Chair Hare asked whether this set of maps would be published, particularly on Google Earth. Ms. Burnette said that data-ownership issues would probably prevent that for the entire set, however some overlays may be published in the future, such as the recreation inventory. Mr. Underwood asked if the maps showed privately owned land as well as public land in the future. Ms. Burnette said the maps include both. She also said that ASP IT is working closely with the Arizona Geographical Information Council (AGIC) to make this information easier for people to use.

Mr. Castillo and Ms. Roberts will work with Ms. Burnette to get copies of data layers that may be useful to NAPAC.

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4. Discussion of the Site Evaluation Consensus Pro and Con.

Chair Hare opened the discussion by saying that the consensus process worked very well when evaluating 13 properties in 2 days on the Verde River. Evaluations of single sites might be better served by individual evaluations.

Ms. Roberts said that the evaluations become part of the public record and the maintenance record and also go the ASP Board. Prior to the Verde River visit mentioned by Chair Hare, Ms. Roberts got the individual evaluations, synthesized the information, sent the synthesis out for review and comment by the evaluators and used the final product to help formulate the Board recommendation. The process is at best time-consuming. Mr. Warriner noted that with the consensus process Ms. Roberts could forego the review and comment step. Ms. Roberts said that was not necessarily the case; the information still goes out for review and comment even with the consensus.

Mr. Stone noted that he felt the process was more of a cumulative evaluation than a consensus evaluation, but he did feel the process worked very well. It is more efficient to come together and discuss the information from the standpoint of getting more complete information. The individual forms should probably still be completed for the record, especially when there are few evaluators on the site visit. However, the cumulative information discussion needs to be held even then. The individual inspection forms should be more detailed in the respective evaluators expertise areas. Ms. Roberts said that the individual evaluation forms are important and should be completed as fully as possible.

Chair Hare said that the consensus/cumulative process should continue and will be reviewed as time goes on.

(NAPAC adjourned for a break at 2:10pm and reconvened at 2:25pm.)

E. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

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

Chair Hare noted that the NAMG subcommittee had a telephone conference meeting in March. The guidelines document is almost complete at this time. Chair Hare is working on the section on road-building and management. He has also put together some information, and is still looking to speak with a subject matter expert at the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) for further information. Chair Hare also noted that Mr. Stone would be working on the introduction. Ms. Roberts said that she and Dr. Kennedy were working on the fire section and that will be ready shortly. The document should be ready in either June or July for NAPAC review and comment. Ms. Roberts also noted that drafts of the document have been circulated to the regional park managers and Janet Hawkes in Operations for comment all along the process.

2. Land Acquisition and Prioritization Subcommittee discusses amended Charter and reassessment of deliverables timetable, along with prioritization aids.

Ms. Roberts provided handouts for the draft version of the Charter, which has been re-titled as the Charge. The first draft of the Score Card (a prioritization tool) was also passed out, as was the first draft of a site evaluation form completion guideline by Dr. Young.

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Ms. Roberts noted that the agenda referred to having NAPAC adopt the Subcommittee Charge document at this meeting. Dr. Young addressed the few changes made to the previous document, which include re-titling, and dividing the goals into primary and secondary tiers. Legal reference to applicable portions of the Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) were also added. Ms. Roberts said that she had received some input from Ms. Hughes late last night revising some language in the Scope and Limitations section. Mr. Roberts read the revisions, which referred to the definitions of the limited scope of the ASP Board and NAPAC. Further discussion followed on the meaning of the phrase “parcels of land or water”. That language comes directly from the relevant ARS section, however, it should be kept. Ms. Roberts went on to say that the deliverable dates for the primary work of the subcommittee have been changed to June 26, 2008.

Mr. Underwood described the purpose of the draft Score Card. It is intended to help prioritize and rank the properties under consideration. The Commonwealth of Virginia uses a similar score card which served as the model for this draft document. The subcommittee took that base and added criteria relevant to Arizona’s situation. Those criteria will be assigned a weight and point value, to use to prioritize and rank the properties. NAPAC is being asked to review the document and ensure that all possible criteria are included. Additionally, NAPAC should write the criterion as it should appear in the document. Ms. Roberts said that one important thing to notice is that all the criteria on the Score Card ties back to either the relevant ARS section, the Natural Areas guidelines, the ASP Board guidelines from 1999 or other relevant documents. Ms. Hughes will be doing the update from the comments, which Ms. Roberts asks be done by Friday, May 9, 2008. Ms. Roberts will be sending a comment form to NAPAC.

Chair Hare said that the difficult part of developing this tool would be fixing a weight and point value for the criteria. Ms. Roberts noted that Ms. Hughes said that those factors would be mainly developed through keeping in mind the ARS section and how that law is intended to be applied. Mr. Underwood added that expert opinion will also inform the weight and points. The full committee will have input before anything is officially adopted.

Chair Hare said that there is a group working from the University of California Davis, which has developed a similar tool down to the individual species level, and building up from there. Chair Hare will look for the information and provide it to Staff to send to NAPAC. Ms. Roberts noted that in Ms. Burnette’s GIS presentation she mentioned using common criteria to help develop some of the overlay maps. This information might be useful for the subcommittee and/or NAPAC as a whole to use in developing this tool. Further discussion on the use of GIS information followed.

Mr. Underwood noted that this tool is intended for use following a site evaluation visit. The original Virginia document will be provided to NAPAC to compare, contrast and clarify while considering comment. The site evaluation process will provide an initial rough ranking, but the Score Card will refine the ranking to prioritize acquisitions. Further discussion followed on questions about the Score Card comment process. Ms. Roberts noted that the terminology used in the document may vary from field to field and special attention should be paid to the wording.

Dr. Young said that he had written the “field guide” to completing the site evaluation form partially as way to explain the procedure. It will also help explain to people outside of ASP (or even within ASP but outside NAPAC) how the site evaluation works and how evaluators in the field use it. He asks that NAPAC provide review and comment to Dr. Young and also

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copy Ms. Shulman on all eMail communication. There is no set deliverable date for this document.

F. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

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

Mr. Castillo noted that April is Arizona Rivers Month. Further information is available on Governor Napolitano's website.

H. TIME AND PLACE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

I. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Hare adjourned the meeting at 3:15pm.

Prepared by Ruth Shulman on ____, 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: _____
Trevor Hare, Chair