LANDOWNER-LESSEE/SPORTSMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes of Regular Meeting
Friday, July 26, 2019
We-Ko-Pa Convention Center - Fountain Hills

Committee Members Present
Dan Rodriguez, Livestock Grower
Jack Mann, Livestock Grower
Sanford Cohen, OHV-Sportsmen Representative
Jim Lawrence, Sportsmen Representative
Darcy Ely, Livestock Grower
Steve Rusiecki, Arizona State Land Department
Jody Weil, Bureau of Land Management
Don Larsen, Habitat Enhancement and Landowner Relations Program Manager, AGFD

Committee Members Absent
Doug Beach, Sportsmen Representative
Steve Carmickle, Sportsmen Representative
Joe King, Livestock Grower
Kurt Bahti, Sportsmen Representative
Jim O'Haco, Livestock Grower
Joseph Winfield, Coronado National Forest

Others Present
Bill Brake, Arizona Game and Fish Commission
James Zieler, Arizona Game and Fish Commission
Craig McMullen, Assistant Director Field Ops Division, AGFD
Jim deVos, Assistant Director Wildlife Management Division, AGFD
Josh Avey, Terrestrial Wildlife Branch Chief, AGFD
Kent Komadina, Special Assistant to the Director, AGFD
Troy Christensen, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD
Dan Sturla, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD
J.D. Eddy, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD
Steve Cassady, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD
Kirby Bristow, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD
Marla Kostuk, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD
Andrew Cavalcant, AGFD
Megan McWard, Partner Biologist
Jake Jaeger, Partner Biologist
Lisa Atkins, Arizona State Land Commissioner
Chris Lowman, Arizona State Land Department
Jeff Baker, Arizona State Land Department
Cody Hatfield, Arizona State Land Department
Mario Preciado, Arizona State Land Department

William Mack, Bureau of Land Management
Karen Kelleher, Bureau of Land Management
Patrick Putnam, Bureau of Land Management
Mark Wimmer, Bureau of Land Management
Chelsea McGuire, Arizona Farm Bureau
Alisha Phipps, NRCS
Al Eiden, Quail Forever
Chris Camillo, USDA Wildlife Services
Andrew Breeling, National Forest Foundation
Al Sue, Sportsmen Group
Glen and Betty Dickens, Sportsmen Group
Catherine Mann, Livestock Grower
Cory Thompson, Livestock Grower
Shane and Casey Perkins, Livestock Growers
Jesse Davis, Livestock Grower
Ron Dungan, Sportsman Group
Rick Bader, Livestock Grower
Bruce Koger, Livestock Grower
Mike Hemovich, Livestock Grower
Hank Scutoski, Sportsmen Group
Dustin and Becki Ross, Livestock Growers
Steve Clark, Sportsmen Group
Bill Conway, Livestock Grower
Mike Gross, Livestock Growers
Don and Harriett Hedrick, Livestock Growers
Sarah King, Livestock Grower
Tice Suplie, Sportsmen Group
Matt Klump, Livestock Grower
Cassie Lyman, Livestock Grower
Jimmy LaBaume
Fred Breedlove
Ed Monzingo, Livestock Grower

Meeting Notes

The Landowner-Lessee/Sportsman Relations Committee (Committee or LLSRC) meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. A large number of people sat in on this meeting due to the fact that it was held in conjunction with the Arizona Cattle Growers' Association (ACGA) convention.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Brake gave a welcome and thanked the committee members and the audience for attending. The Commissioner said these meetings are important for building and maintaining good relationships between the agricultural community, sportsmen/recreationists, the land management agencies, and the Arizona Game and Fish

Department (Department). Due to our many common goals, the commissioner stressed that it is important for us all to be allies.

Updates from Land Management Agencies

Due to mandatory training, no representative from the United States Forest Service (USFS) was present.

Steve Rusiecki provided an update from the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD). He informed the Committee that their cultural resources manager recently obtained his AAA permit which will help clear up some of the backlog of applications that were waiting to be processed. He said the state land recreational use permit is available online through the ASLD website https://land.az.gov/recreational-permit-portal and that this makes it easy for recreationists to obtain a permit. He explained to the audience that people, who are not actively hunting, need to have the permit in possession while recreating on STL. An OHV decal allows riders to cross state trust land, however they are required to have the state land recreational use permit if they stage from or do any other recreation on trust land. Lisa Atkins added that ASLD worked with AGFD to develop a long-overdue protocol to address gates on trust lands which are locked without authorization from either agency.

Jody Weil provided an update from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). BLM is doing work regarding access to public lands, in support of Secretary's Order 3347, 3356, and 3366: The agency has been working to improve their internal GIS data sets in order to identify and prioritize improving recreational access to public lands, especially for hunting, fishing, shooting sports, and other recreational activities. BLM is currently gathering data and doing analysis on existing routes, locked gates, easements, and rights-of-ways. BLM has met with the Department and representatives from the onX mapping app to gather external data on access issues related to locked gates or other issues. In cooperation with the AGFD, the BLM is working on a pilot project to create 4 new shooting microsites to more actively manage recreational shooting on public lands around the rapidly growing metropolitan areas. BLM is also working on creating maps for the areas which have completed travel management plans.

Landowner Relations Program Updates/Current Issues

Don Larsen gave an update on the Habitat Enhancement and Landowner Relations Program (LRP). He provided a brief overview of the LRP for the audience, then he listed some successes from the last year. He told the Committee that 48 Adopt-A-Ranch projects had been completed during the last fiscal year, with over 880 volunteers providing nearly 7,600 hour of labor. There were 70 cooperative stewardship agreements executed, totaling $3.2 million; this included 40 Habitat Partnership Committee (HPC) agreements. Additionally, 21 access agreements were completed, which ensured public access to over 34,000 acres - this increased the total of access made available through access agreements to over 4.5 million acres. Mr. Larsen informed the group that LRP is contributing monthly articles, which highlight successful partnerships, to the ACGA's *Arizona Cattlelog*. Jim Lawrence commended the Department on the impressive number

of completed agreements/projects and suggested that this would be good information to share with the various sportsmen groups. Mr. Lawrence praised Adopt-A-Ranch as a great tool for building good working relationships between ranchers and sportsmen.

Identification of Current Issues and Possible Solutions

Sanford Cohen talked about a couple specific high-use OHV areas where signing, education, and enforcement efforts had brought about a noticeable improvement. He asked about OHV compliance statewide. Craig McMullen told about the AGFD's organized efforts to address OHV issues with training, education, focus messaging, and seven full-time officers dedicated solely to OHV enforcement. He said the efforts were making a difference in reducing problems, but he admitted that habitat damage and violations still occur.

Due to the many ranchers present, Jack Mann brought up the Landowner Respect Program, which provides regulatory and informational signs at no cost to help address issues. Darcy Ely offered the suggestion of adding U.S. flag stickers to the signs to reduce the likelihood of vandalism. A rancher from Cochise County stated that the signs on his ranch are often vandalized and he suspected that it was due to the fact that the signs were provided by the government. Sanford Cohen suggested that it might help if non-government logos were included on the signs; he said maybe local sportsmen or OHV groups could sponsor some signs. Some sportsmen group representatives expressed a willingness to support this idea, if it was decided to try it. Mike Hemovich told the group that he had noticed some improvement when he added a few signs with personal messages, such as 'the Bar X Ranch thanks you'. Steve Rusiecki told the group about some new large signs the ASLD is trying which include the specific ranch name, relevant rules, and information regarding reporting violations; he suggested that any State Land lessees who want to try the signs contact their regional resource area manager. Darcy Ely mentioned to the sportsmen in the audience the importance of reporting any vandalism they observe to the Department's 1-800-VANDALS hotline. Jesse Davis asked for the number of calls the hotline receives and its effectiveness. Although he didn't know the statistics, Craig McMullen offered to follow up with Mr. Davis; he added that the reports from the public are useful and effective. Commissioner Brake stated that, since it's impossible for enforcement officers to cover all areas, it is important for recreationists to provide peer pressure and report any violations they observe. Ed Monzingo said it might be helpful if violators were reported in local newspapers or social media.

Commissioner Brake informed the group of a series of Department videos which feature ranchers and farmers giving their own perspectives on hunting, land management, wildlife conservation, and issues regarding impacts from recreational uses on private, state, and federal lands. The intent of these videos is to highlight how the efforts of ranchers and farmers benefit wildlife through improvements made to private, state, and federal lands and to spread the message of how respect and proper etiquette helps keep public access open. The Department is using these videos in hunter education and

various other outreach. Commissioner Brake said the messages need to get out even more; he welcomed everyone to share and promote the videos.

Glen Dickens expressed his gratitude to all the ranchers who partner with the various conservation groups on habitat improvement projects. Betty Dickens suggested that, at the beginning of any volunteer projects, the Department relay some of this information to the gathered group. Dan Rodriguez suggested that the county cattle grower association could be contacted regarding having a rancher attend and talk to the volunteers.

Dan Rodriguez said that he thought the AGFD should revisit the possibility of offering bonus points for volunteer service. Various ranchers thought it might improve things if hunter education was made mandatory. Craig McMullen said that hunter education is required for youths and explained that many factors are involved in the Department's decision to not make it mandatory for all. There was discussion about how to make the education more available; Alisha Phipps wondered if we could offer some kind of incentive to gun dealers to get them involved in providing the education.

Darcy Ely invited those in the audience, who cared about these kinds of issues, to step up and serve on the LLSRC. Craig McMullen added that, although the working relationship with the ranching community is probably better than it has ever been, it is important to keep working together to improve communication and collaboration.

Next Meeting

The next LLSRC meeting will be held in conjunction with the "Meet the AGF Commission Event" on January 25, 2020. It will be at the Game and Fish Department headquarters in Phoenix. Committee members will be informed of the time and exact location of the meeting once it has been determined.

Action Items:

1. Solicit ranchers and sportsmen regarding serving on LLSRC, present nominations to the Commission prior to next meeting (LRP staff)
2. Distribute meeting minutes (LRP staff)
3. Follow up with Jesse Davis (AGFD staff)

End of Document