

**Pima County Conservation Bond Advisory Committee**

**County Administration Building  
130 W. Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Monday August 25, 2003  
6:00 p.m.**

**SUMMARY OF MEETING**

Note: The following is a summary of what transpired at the August 25, 2003 meeting. Audio tapes of the meeting are available upon request.

1. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order with a quorum at 6:07 p.m.

Members Present

Pat King  
Tom Sheridan  
Steve Alexander  
Paula Chronister  
Chris McVie  
Gayle Hartmann

Members Absent

Chuck Pettis  
Rob Marshall  
Jenny Neeley

Others Present

Beryl Baker  
Bob Smith  
Debbie Hecht  
Chris Limberis  
Suzanne Shields, Pima County Flood Control District Deputy Director  
Julia Fonseca, Pima County Flood Control District  
Linda Mayro, Pima County Cultural Resources Manager  
David Cushman, Pima County Cultural Resources  
Roger Anyon, Pima County Cultural Resources  
John Bernal, Deputy County Administrator - Public Works  
Rafael Payan, Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Director  
Steve Anderson, Pima County Natural Resources, Parks, and Recreation  
Christine Curtis, Pima County Real Property  
Bill Staples, Pima County Real Property  
Jim Barry, County Administrator's Office

2. Approval of Summary of the August 18, 2003 Meeting

On page 3, field trips to areas in the northwest was discussed. It was requested that the sentence read, "It was requested that the Committee take field trips to areas that members are not familiar with."

Summary was approved as revised.

3. Tucson Mountain Association/University of Arizona Desert Station

Debbie Hecht, President of Tucson Mountain Association and Co-Chair of the Sweetwater Preserve Committee, proposed that this Committee consider recommending the acquisition of 615 acres to become the Sweetwater Preserve. Ms. Hecht stated that the area is already used by the community for recreation and could be connected to existing reserves (Tucson Mountain Park, Saguaro National Park West, and the University of Arizona's Desert Station) through conservation easements, which the Tucson Mountain Association has been working on getting donated. Ms. Hecht also discussed the history of this potential acquisition. An option to purchase has already been purchased under the direction of the County Administrator's Office and then Supervisor Raul Grijalva, and numerous letters of support have been received. The Trust for Public Land assisted in developing a report for this project, and negotiating a sales price. Due to a confidentiality clause, the exact sales price is unknown, but is thought to be in the range of \$10-\$11 million, or \$15,000 to \$17,000 an acre. The option to purchase expires in December, but it is expected that it can be extended for the 2004 bond election. Ms. Hecht emphasized that there's high community support for the preservation of this property, but development pressures are growing as it is highly desirable for development. Historic resources and trails exist on the property.

Dr. Bob Smith, University of Arizona's Desert Station, discussed the biological and geological values of the Desert Station, as well as the proposed Sweetwater Preserve. Mr. Smith emphasized that the 400 acre Desert Station is not open to the public, and therefore the Sweetwater Preserve is important to protect as an area that can be accessed by the public. Mr. Smith stated that the size and location of the proposed Preserve are it's major qualities. It is the largest privately held parcel east of the Tucson Mountains. He listed numerous species found in the area, as well noting that this area falls within designated critical habitat for the pygmy owl.

It was noted that the 181 acres, listed as #8 on the map included in the report, is owned by the same owner as the 615 acre property, but this is not under the option to buy due to the expense of the parcels.

4. Pima County Flood Control District

Suzanne Shields, Deputy Director of the Flood Control District, presented the history of the Floodprone Land Acquisition Program (FLAP) and prioritized target areas for acquisition. A map showing the target areas, as well as description of the program was handed out to the Committee. Ms. Shields explained that the FLAP is funded through the sale of general obligation bonds (1984 and 1986) and through a Flood Control District tax levy. Approximately \$3 million a year is dedicated to the FLAP and 11,456 acres have been acquired through the FLAP. Some are joint acquisitions, such as Canoa Ranch where the flood prone area was acquired through the FLAP, and other areas were acquired by Parks and Cultural Resources. Ms. Shields stated that the Canada del Oro Wash area is a high priority target area because it is a high flood hazard area. Some parcels have already been purchased by Flood Control in this area, but the District would like to more actively pursue acquisitions

in this area. Ms. Shields noted that Flood Control is active in the Black Wash area. Active was defined as contacting owners of flood prone property to tell them about this voluntary program.

It was clarified that the Flood Control District would have a separate question on the bond election ballot, with several line items in the corresponding bond improvement plan. The Flood Control District has presented \$60 million of requests for the bond election, to the County Administrator, \$10 million of which would be for the FLAP. The Committee requested a copy of these, and asked for more specificity on how this Committee can assist Flood Control in these target acquisition areas. It was noted that the Flood Control District does try to acquire water rights with properties, when possible.

#### 5. Cultural Resources

Linda Mayro, Pima County's Cultural Resources Manager, presented a report of Cultural Resource's priority acquisitions for the 2004 bond election. The report includes a summary of the 1997 cultural resource bond projects, as well as a 2 page description of each 2004 proposed project. Ms. Mayro explained that the 1997 bond election was the first opportunity for Pima County to identify cultural resource projects and move forward on those. \$6.4 million was approved by the voters, 50 percent of which has been expended to date. By 2005, all the 1997 projects will be completed. Over \$1 million in grants has also been leveraged with this bond money. Ms. Mayro attributed the 70% voter approval of the combined open space/cultural resources question to overlapping constituents.

Ms. Mayro proposed 15 priority acquisitions at \$20 million total, for the 2004 bond election. Several are in other jurisdictions. These were narrowed down from 229 priority cultural resources identified through the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan process. Six projects are later phases of 1997 projects. Ms. Mayro noted that some projects overlap priorities identified by other departments (for example, Sabino and Bear Canyon) and that staff would look into these areas, and come back to the Committee with refined information.

It was noted that to reduce the workload for the Committee, Committee members may want to divide up areas and serve as a point person for that area. It was also noted that the Committee may want to formally make a motion to include cultural resource projects in the open space ballot question.

#### 6. Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation

Steve Anderson, Natural Resources Parks and Recreation Department, presented a list of open space priorities. Priorities were identified in 6 target areas: Tortolita Mountains and surrounding areas, Tucson Mountain Park vicinity, Agua Caliente Canyon Properties, Cienega Creek/Colossal Cave Mountain Park/Santa Rita Mountain Foothills region, Bingham Cienega/San Pedro Corridor, and Altar Valley properties. Two corridors were included: Canoa east linkage to Coronado National Forest (Madera Corridor), and Northern Tucson Mountains linkage to Tortolita Mountains. Alternate acquisition strategies, such as conservation easements/purchase of development rights, were also included.

Mr. Anderson mentioned the need for alternative methods of acquiring state land for

conservation purposes due to the rising prices of state land, and noted that a new state lands program is currently being developed. It was requested that Andy Laurenzi, Sonoran Institute, present to this Committee on September 4<sup>th</sup> about the progress of Arizona State Land reform. It was also requested that staff identify areas that meet the Arizona Preserve Initiative criteria and that staff identify a linkage on the west side of Canoa.

7. Agenda Items for Next Meeting

The Committee placed the following on the agenda for August 25:

- Andy Laurenzi, Sonoran Institute, Arizona State Land reform
- Staff summary of proposals to the Committee to date
- Staff presentation on willing seller/condemnation issue
- Staff presentation on conservation easements/purchase of development rights

Standing agenda items:

- Update on City of Tucson's concerns with 2004 bond election
- Target areas for acquisition, criteria for selecting, and specificity of areas?
- How to address cost estimates?
- Inclusion of acquisition of conservation easements and development rights?
- Work only with willing sellers?
- How should acquisitions be divided between ecologically sensitive lands versus the expansion of natural resource parks in or near urban areas?

9. Call to the Public

No members of the public spoke at this time.

10. Adjournment

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.