

**Pima County Conservation Bond Advisory Committee**

**County Administration Building  
130 W. Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Monday, September 22, 2003  
6:00 p.m.**

**SUMMARY OF MEETING**

Note: The following is a summary of what transpired at the September 22, 2003 meeting. Audio tapes of the meeting are available upon request.

1. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order with a quorum at 6:15 p.m.

Members Present

Paula Chronister  
Chris McVie  
Gayle Hartmann  
Chuck Pettis  
Rob Marshall  
Tom Sheridan  
Steve Alexander

Members Absent

Pat King  
Jenny Neeley

Others Present

Beryl Baker  
Linda Mayo, Pima County Cultural Resources Manager  
Steve Anderson, Pima County Natural Resources, Parks, and Recreation  
Bill Staples, Pima County Real Property  
Nicole Fyffe, County Administrator's Office

2. Update on summary of proposals to the Committee and other target areas or properties

A list of the Committee's motions to date was handed out. Staff stated that additional cost estimates for proposals will be sent to the Committee the following day. Summary sheets on the Sopori area and the Caesar parcels will be available by the next meeting.

Chris McVie presented a critical landscape connections map developed by the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan's Science and Technical Advisory Team. Rob Marshall noted that parcels within these critical landscape connections are included in the Habitat Protection Priorities, but do not encompass as broad an area as is shown on this map.

Gayle Hartmann read a statement from the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan's Steering Committee report to the Board of Supervisors (July, 2003). In this statement, the Steering

Committee recommended placing highest priority on acquiring lands necessary for the County's Section 10 Permit, while recognizing that additional lands meeting the broader goals of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan will also have to be acquired for a successful bond election.

### 3. West of the Santa Ritas and East of Altar Valley

Rob Marshall began by presenting the Habitat Protection Priorities for this area (referred to as the Santa Cruz Valley subarea). This area includes 152 private parcels for a total of 24,000 acres, and 171 state parcels for a total of 115,000 acres. The Sopori and Caesar proposals are the only proposals that overlap in this subarea with Habitat Protection Priorities. Mr. Marshall explained to the Committee why certain areas were or were not included as priorities.

Linda Mayro, Cultural Resources Manager for Pima County, provided the following information on the Sopori area. What is referred to as the Sopori Ranch is actually 2 ranches, the KX Ranch in Pima County and Inscription Ranch in Santa Cruz County, approximately 12,000 fee acres in total. Those 12,000 acres are for sale right now at an asking price of \$23 million. Approximately, 4,000 acres are in Pima County. Based on those figures, the asking price for the Pima County portion may be approximately \$7.7 million. There was a discussion about the fact that a portion of the Sopori Wash is in Santa Cruz County. Several members emphasized the importance of protecting the Santa Cruz part of the Sopori Wash from also being developed, in order to maintain this critical corridor. It was clarified that Pima County can purchase land in other counties.

A motion was made to apply the Habitat Protection Priorities to this subarea with special emphasis on the Sopori and Caesar properties because they are key to attaining the habitat protection goals in this area. This motion passed unanimously.

The Committee then discussed the proposed Canoa commercial parcels as a possible inclusion in the 25 percent category, since these did not overlap with the Habitat Protection Priorities. It was noted that these could be important for protecting the gateway into Canoa Ranch. They also have high archaeological sensitivity. The County has first right of refusal on the equestrian parcel. It was reiterated that parcels falling into the 25 percent category could include those that don't have the biological value to be included as Habitat Protection Priorities, but have other values to the community such as urban parks or gateways to the Tucson Mountains, etc. Rob Marshall clarified why the Tortolita Arizona Preserve Initiatives were not included as Habitat Protection Priorities.

There was a motion made to adopt the southern three proposed Canoa parcels as a working proposal for the 25 percent category. This motion passed 6 to 0, with 1 member abstaining.

### 4. Altar Valley

Rob Marshall began by presenting the Habitat Protection Priorities for this area. This area

includes 244 private parcels for a total of 26,000 acres. The Baffert and 98 Ranch proposals are the only proposals that overlap in this subarea with Habitat Protection Priorities. The Winter Haven Ranch is not identified as a priority. Bill Staples, Real Property, clarified that the most southern Baffert parcel is not for sale, the middle parcel is currently being purchased by Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, and the northern parcel is in escrow. Linda Mayro noted that the Cultural Resource proposals include acquisition of Hayhook Ranch.

On the subject of conservation easements, it was noted that for most of Altar Valley development pressures are currently low and therefore the value of the conservation easement would be low to nonexistent. In 5 to 10 years these pressures will likely exist. That said, conservation easements may currently be appropriate for the northern areas of Altar Valley. Calculating the cost of easements in the Sabino and San Rafael areas was discussed.

A motion was made to (1) adopt the Habitat Protection Priorities for Altar Valley, (2) specify the 98 Ranch as 1<sup>st</sup> priority and ask staff to keep tabs on the northern Baffert parcels, and (3) ask staff to use whatever acquisition tools are appropriate, including conservation easements, to attain the priority goals in this area. This motion passed unanimously.

The Winter Haven Ranch was then discussed. It was noted that the Ranch is adjacent to 2<sup>nd</sup> priority state land and to the County's proposed Sierrita Mountain Park. It includes land in the biological core. It was added that the property has currently no legal access. A second motion was then made to place the Winter Haven Ranch into the working 25 percent category. The motion passed unanimously.

After this motion, there was a discussion as to benefit of providing the County with this prioritized parcel data. It was stated that when this sub area assessment is complete, it would be preferable to leave the pot of proposed bond funds as a whole, instead of dividing the funds up by sub area or watershed.

#### 5. Tucson Mountains/Avra Valley

Rob Marshall noted that he was unable to assemble the Habitat Protection Priorities parcel data for this sub area (referred to as the Ironwood Sahuaro subarea) for tonight, but would have all the data for the remaining sub areas on Thursday. Chris McVie recommended continuing the sub area analysis by using the overall Habitat Protection Priorities map as a reference. The sub area boundaries are north of Ajo Highway, south of the Pima/Pinal line, west of Interstate 10, and east of the Tohono O'odham Nation. Mr. Marshall noted that this area has the least priorities identified based on it's size and was difficult because of the mosaic development pattern. Very few state land parcels were identified as priorities, and the main objective in this area was to create a corridor along the Avra Valley/Brawley Wash.

Chris McVie described the area west of Sandario Road in detail. It was emphasized that the development pressures along the Brawley Wash corridor, south and north of the Garcia

Strip, are very high at this time. A motion was made to (1) adopt the Habitat Protection Priorities for Ironwood Sahuaro subarea, west of Sandario Road, (2) include 2 sections of state land north of the Garcia strip, (3) examine areas where there are gaps in the Central Arizona Project (CAP) canal, and (4) place priority on the high priority private identified north and south of the Garcia strip. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Agenda Items for Next Meeting

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

- Continue assessment of subareas.

Standing agenda items:

- State Trust Land
- Update on City of Tucson's concerns with 2004 bond election
- Field trips

For Monday, September 29, the following items will be on the agenda:

- Guidelines for the Habitat Protection Priorities and/or other proposals
- Format of final report

6. Adjournment

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:00p.m.