

Pima County Conservation Bond Advisory Committee

**Public Works Building, Conference Room C
Monday, September 29, 2003
6:00 p.m.**

SUMMARY OF MEETING

Note: The following is a summary of what transpired at the September 29, 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
Rob Marshall
Tom Sheridan
Steve Alexander
Jenny Neeley

Members Absent

Pat King
Chuck Pettis

Others Present

Beryl Baker
Chris Vail
Sarah Craighead
Ellen Kurtz
Albert Elias
Julia Fonseca, Flood Control District
Linda Mayro, Pima County Cultural Resources Manager
Roger Anyon, Cultural Resources
David Cushman, Cultural Resources
Steve Anderson, Pima County Natural Resources, Parks, and Recreation
Christine Curtis, Pima County Real Property
Nicole Fyffe, County Administrator's Office

2. Approval of September 22nd meeting summary

The spelling of Rob Marshall's name needs to be corrected in Sept 22nd and 25th summaries. Summary was approved as amended.

3. Assessment of remaining subareas

A. Tucson Basin

Rob Marshall began by presenting the Habitat Protection Priorities for the Tucson Basin sub area. This sub area includes 83 private parcels, 33 identified as priority 1, and 50 identified as priority 2. The priorities in this area focus around Sabino Creek, Agua Caliente, Tanque Verde, and the Pantano Wash, which contain prime riparian forested habitat. Mr. Marshall stated that conservation easements may be appropriate for this sub area, since several of the parcels already contain one house.

State land parcels adjacent to and within Saguaro National Park West are identified as Habitat Protection Priorities. Sarah Craighead, Superintendent for Saguaro National Park, was present at the meeting and clarified that the Park would like to acquire the state land parcel within the Park boundaries, but as not able to bid over the appraised value, and is working with the state land department to create other options. As for the parcels outside the Park boundary, the boundary would have to first be expanded to purchase these.

It was noted that both the Agua Caliente parcels and 146 acres of the Sabino Creek parcels included in the 1997 bond are identified as Habitat Protection Priorities. In addition, 1,322 acres of the 6,355 acre Rincon Valley State Land acquisition proposal are also identified. Neither of the Tanque Verde parcels were identified. The Sabino Creek proposal was removed Cultural Resources proposal package because it was thought that the parcels would be covered by the open space recommendations. However, there are 3 parcels that have cultural resource values, but are not identified as Habitat Protection Priorities.

A motion was made to adopt these Habitat Protection Priorities for the Tucson Basin sub area and also include the 3 cultural resource parcels from the 1997 bond in the 25 percent allocation. After discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

B. San Pedro

Rob Marshall began by presenting the Habitat Protection Priorities for this sub area. This San Pedro sub area has experienced less development pressure than the other sub areas, and contains live water, sonoran riparian and cottonwood-willow forests. For these reasons, it is in this sub area that the County has the best opportunity to protect these resources at a cost lower than in most other sub areas. Existing reserves in this area include the Ballota Ranch, the County's Bingham-Cienega Preserve, and various conservation easements held by the Nature Conservancy and Pima County. In this sub area, 103 private parcels were identified as Habitat Protection Priorities, 14 of which were in tier 1.

Linda Mayro explained that this is a highly sensitive area for cultural and archeological resources, however people tended to live outside of the flood plain in the terraces, and these terraces may not be included as biologically sensitive lands. Rob Marshall stated that these Habitat Protection Priorities do include the first terrace. It was clarified that by adopting the Habitat Protection Priorities map, that this include the first and second priorities, not just the first. Gayle Hartmann remarked that in the past, owners in this area have not been open to selling their property to the County or selling conservation

easements. Tom Sheridan explained that the Ranch Technical Advisory Team for the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan suggested that the County commit resources to a conservation easements program in which someone could go out and talk one on one with ranchers about conservation easements. Mr. Sheridan asked that the County make this commitment.

A motion was made to adopt the Habitat Protection Priorities for the San Pedro sub area. This passed unanimously.

The Committee agreed to hear from Ellen Kurtz, a Santa Cruz County resident. Ms. Kurtz explained that Santa Cruz County is currently updating their comprehensive plan, and that the owners of the Sopori Ranch are trying to get a comprehensive plan amendment passed in preparation for rezoning the area for development. Developers are interested in this area, but it is a critically important riparian area and also contains many archaeological and historical resources. Jenny Neeley noted that this is in fact a corridor for the jaguar and should be protected, and that Defenders of Wildlife has been acquiring land in Mexico because that is where the jaguar breeding areas are located. Ms. Kurtz noted that a Tumacacori Wilderness Area has been proposed, as well as a group in Tubac that may be interested in purchasing the ranch for preservation. She also provided facts about the Sopori Ranch and a development plan to the Committee. The Committee told Ms. Kurtz that they had recommended the acquisition of the Sopori within their jurisdiction as high priority.

Albert Elias was also present at this meeting. Mr. Elias explained that he would be the City of Tucson's representative on the County Bond Advisory Committee and was attending this meeting to prepare for those proceedings. He noted that the City would be assembling a package of proposals to put forth to the County Bond Advisory Committee.

4. Cultural Resource proposal update

Linda Mayro, Cultural Resources Manager for Pima County, provided an updated package to the Committee. This included dropping the Sabino Creek proposal because of overlap with the open space proposals, refining cost estimates, and expanding the Anza Trail proposal. The updated packaged is estimated to cost \$18.8 million. Ms. Mayro also provided a list of the criteria used to develop these proposals. The first step included the identification of 229 priority sites by the Cultural Resources Technical Advisory Team, and an archaeological and historical team of experts. For the 2004 bond package, these 229 sites were further prioritized down to these 14 proposals, based in maximizing earlier investments, vulnerability to loss, threat of development, integrity of property, cultural value or significance to the community, diversity and representation of type of sites, and likelihood of being funded. Seven of these projects are in unincorporated Pima County, and 9 are in other jurisdictions.

Ms. Mayro also mentioned that she and her staff are working on getting a congressionally designated status through the National Park Service, which would make \$10 million available in incentives for stakeholders to use to preserve or educate the public about both cultural and natural resources. The fund cannot be used for acquisition.

A motion was made to adopt the Cultural Resources package of proposals including the 3 Sabino Creek parcels to be added, and calculate the amount for the proposals separate from the 75 percent/25 percent split, but within the \$250 million. This motion passed unanimously. Staff was asked to add the Sabino Creek parcels that were dropped from the Cultural Resources package and are not identified as Habitat Protection Priorities, back into the Cultural Resource package and update the cost of the package.

There was much discussion during this motion. A friendly amendment was offered to adopt the Cultural Resource package in addition to the \$250 million. This was not accepted. A concern was raised that if this Committee's recommendations do get reduced from \$250 million, then there should be some mechanism to insure cuts are equitable and/or protect the biologically sensitive lands.

5. Guidelines and criteria for the open space bond

Staff passed on a suggestion from Jim Barry, County Administrator's office, that the \$250 million amount could be recommended over a 10 year period, with \$120 million for the first 5 years. There were many questions about how this would work, and staff was asked to get clarification from Mr. Barry.

Paula Chronister presented a Non-Habitat Protection Priorities Draft Priorities List of acquisitions for consideration. In essence, this is a prioritized list of proposals heard by the Committee, which are not identified as Habitat Protection Priorities. This proposed package is estimated to cost \$47 million, less than 25 percent of \$230 million. Ms. Chronister explained that these priorities were arrived at by using the criteria on the second criteria list proposed by Gayle Hartmann, which included biological value, view sheds, etc. It was clarified that these are not in any order, and "The Habitat" refers to the proposal at 36th and Kino.

The handout also included a list of parcels within the Habitat Protection Priorities map. It was suggested that this all be adopted. Several members disagreed with specifying the list of Habitat Protection Priority parcels. Rob Marshall noted that he felt the Committee should give the County as much flexibility as possible in implementing the Habitat Protection Priorities. The County is applying for a Section 10 Permit from US Fish and Wildlife Service, and will need flexibility to meet whatever requirements US Fish and Wildlife sets. Chris McVie agreed but added that some type of parcels or goals need to be identified for each sub area in order to market the bond plan to the public and to have a successful election. Mr. Marshall agreed to provide the introductions that he presented to the Committee for each sub area, which described the unique ecological features and flagship properties in each sub area. The Committee could then adopt those or build upon them. Christine Curtis, Real Property, said that she feels more comfortable working at a target area level instead of a parcel level.

A motion was made to adopt the Non-Habitat Protection Priorities Draft Priority List, not including the portion that lists Habitat Protection Priority parcels. The motion passed

unanimously.

It was requested that Sherry Barrett, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Maeveen Behan, County Administrator's Office, attend the next meeting to give the Committee feedback on their recommendations and to determine if any of the parcels on the Non-Habitat Protection Priorities List would be appropriate to be considered as part of the County's application for a Section 10 Permit.

6. Format and Content of Final Report

Staff stated that the background part of the report would be worked on this week. Tom Sheridan explained why it will be very important to frame these bond recommendations as part of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan and the County's application for a Section 10 Permit, since these are the reasons this bond election was requested in the first place. It was suggested that staff and members could begin drafting sections and these could be circulated through email. It was noted that if any cuts are made to the \$250 recommended amount, the recommendations must still advance the goals of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.

Christine Curtis added that Linda Closs, Director of Real Property thought it was possible to acquire \$50 million worth of land a year, with the County's continued use of outside consultants.

7. Agenda Items for Next Meeting

The following will be included on the agenda for October 2:

- Maeveen Behan, Sherry Barrett with regard to the Committees recommendations and the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan
- Update of addition of Sabino parcels to Cultural Resources package
- Guidelines/criteria for the open space program
- Content and format of final report

Standing agenda items:

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

8. Call to the public

No one spoke at this time.

9. Adjournment

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.