



**Town of Marana Habitat Conservation Plan
Stakeholder Working Group
Thursday, November 13, 2008, 1-3 pm
Marana Operations Center, 5100 W. Ina Rd.**

MEETING MINUTES

1. Attendees

Paul Green, Tucson Audubon; David Godlewski, SAHBA; Mike Steele and Mike Murray, Tierra ROW for AZ State Land; Larry Kreis, Red Point Development; Colby Henley and Lori Woods, Recon (for the Town of Marana); Joan Scott, AGFD; Matt Clark, Defenders of Wildlife; Christine McVie, Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection; Scott Richardson and Sherry Barrett, FWS; Paul Popelka, Jennifer Christelman, and Janine Spencer, Town of Marana.

Unable to Attend

Locana de Souza, Kent Taylor

2. Approval of August, 2008 Minutes

Members are asked to review the August 28, 2009, meeting minutes and send any comments to Janine by email.

3. Updates

Meeting with City of Tucson and USFWS re. Collaboration on Conservation Measures

Marana, the City of Tucson, Tucson Water, and the Fish & Wildlife Service have been meeting to determine how to collaborate on conservation measures for HCP credit, with Tucson Water supplying the land, Marana providing some management measures, and both Tucson and Marana getting credit from the USFWS for our HCP mitigation. The species being considered are the burrowing owl, Tucson shovel-nosed snake, and the ground snake, but we expect other species not covered by the HCPs to benefit as well. We are taking a field trip with species experts to the site on Dec. 9th. Tucson has indicated an interest in cooperating with Marana on some lands near Simpson Farm that are not being used for mitigation currently. The lands Tucson is willing to consider allowing Marana to participate on are not shovel-nosed snake habitat, but may have the potential to be restored.

If the area near Simpson Farm is used for cooperative conservation measures, Marana would like to work with the Tucson Audubon Society to ensure that our work is complementary to theirs.

Meeting with Phil Rosen and Scott Richardson

Connectivity between Tucson shovel-nosed snake habitat will be an important component of the mitigation measures for this snake. Phil said the best alternative would be for Marana to buy land around Florence or Red Rock but the budget precludes this option for now. There is a problem with the western banded sand snake out-competing the shovel-nosed snake and some risk of predation. Large retention basins planted with some mesquite could provide ground snake habitat if there are areas of high ground for the snakes to get above the water when the basin fills. Phil also said that there is potential ground snake habitat in the semi-desert grassland in the Tortolita Mts., along a narrow elevational band.

Meeting with AZ State Land Department

Several Town staff met with AZ State Land Department staff and Scott Richardson on October 22nd. State Land's position at the meeting was that Marana should buy the open space lands identified in the HCP. Equitable treatment of the beneficiaries was another area of discussion. We will continue to meet with State Land to work towards an agreeable solution.

Schedule for Public Drafts of HCP and EIS

Scott recently informed the Town that the Incidental Take Permit (ITP) application must be submitted along with the public draft EIS and HCP and the Federal Register notice, before they can be released for public review. In order to meet our May 31st deadline for the IGA with AZ Game & Fish, Marana will submit the draft EIS, HCP and ITP application around December 15th. Then the local USFWS office will review the documents and send them to Albuquerque for their review and their solicitor's review. Scott estimates the package should be sent to the Washington DC office for review around mid-January. The Federal Register notice should take about three weeks in Washington and be published around Feb. 6, 2009 and the draft EIS and HCP will be available to the public at that time. Two open houses are planned in early March 2009. Comments will be summarized by May 20 at the latest hopefully, and the final HCP and EIS will be submitted to AGFD by May 31, 2009.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management

Colby gave an update on the development of the monitoring and adaptive management sections of the HCP. There will be two years to collect baseline data. The TBT will be asked to review the data and establish thresholds for when adaptive management should be implemented.

Christine brought up a question regarding preconstruction surveys and whether they will provide enough information upon which to base species and habitat management. These surveys will be completed for species in appropriate habitat and the information will be incorporated into the database. Pygmy-owl surveys will be completed on 29 miles of transects laid out by Scott. The lesser long-nosed bat-hummingbird feeder study will also be continued by the Town, with AGFD and the USFWS. A new roost was located this year due to a bat that was captured and followed through telemetry by AGFD from a bat-hummingbird feeder study participant's house. Scott stated that it "is not up to Marana to identify all species problems; the Town is responsible for maintaining a balance sheet of mitigation measures to offset impacts." Chris also felt that climate change should be addressed through adaptive management.

Mike wondered for a species like the shovel-nosed snake that is not known to occur in the Town now, and is not found in the future, how does adaptive management come into play? Scott said that there is a potential for the snake to be reintroduced to restored lands and then adaptive management may be appropriate. Adaptive management could be related to collecting information on whether the ordinances and other measures are being effective in preserving open space.

Buffelgrass

The Town hosted another buffelgrass pull on Nov. 2nd along the path that parallels the Santa Cruz River, near the eastern end of Twin Peaks Rd. The Town's Operations and Maintenance crew also spray and pull buffelgrass. Christine said there is buffelgrass in the Continental Ranch Drainages and she also thought that sand and gravel companies could help control it. Larry suggested that property management companies should be apprised of the buffelgrass problem. Marana has been looking into providing information in HOA newsletters and making presentations to HOAs. David said he is willing to be contacted by someone from the Regional Buffelgrass Group, to set up a presentation at a SAHBA meeting. Chris also said that non-profits could include information on buffelgrass volunteer pulls in their newsletters. Audubon has been awarded a "Together Green" grant from the Toyota Company, and this could be a resource for buffelgrass work.

4. Schedule for Future Meetings

There will be no December or January meetings. Meetings will resume on February 26, March 26, and April 30, 2009.

Thank you to Larry Kreis, Red Point Development, for providing a delicious lunch!