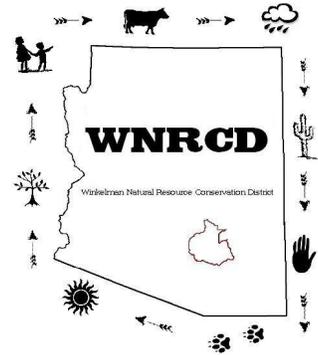


WINKELMAN NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT



Date: October 15, 2013

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: Central Arizona College, room E102

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m.

In attendance:

Scott Cole, Bill Dunn, Bob Evans, Josh T. Avey, Bob Rogers, Mick Meader, Donna Woods, Hattie Hedrick, Beverly Miller, Scott Wilbor, Stephen Williams, Francie Meyer, Peter Else, Stefanie Smallhouse, Charles Ffolliott, Anna Lands, Sharma Torrens, Diana Stirling

Significant Action Summary:

The following motions were passed during this meeting:

1. We will revisit a possible recommendation to the Fish and Wildlife Service for a locally driven and identified acquisition boundary specific to only those landowners interested in being included in a refuge designation at the appropriate time in our collaborative effort. We will also discuss related landowner protections.
2. Anna moved that we pursue the CRMP plan at the watershed level. Josh seconded the motion. Vote by show of hands to pursue CRMP plan at the watershed level. Passed unanimously.

The meeting began with a presentation by Sharma Hammond Torrens, Land & Water Program Manager, Arizona Land and Water Trust. The Trust is a nationally accredited, 501(c)(3) organization located in Tucson. Their mission is to protect southern Arizona's rural heritage of working land, and habitat, and water resources via voluntary easements, education and outreach. She presented an overview of the process and conditions involved in conservation easements. She also briefly discussed their Desert Rivers Initiative. A handbook is available at their website: www.alwt.org -->Water Rights Handbook. Sharma also described various outreach activities and

explained that they are looking for sponsors for future workshops. Following her presentation, Sharma entertained questions. She can be reached at 520-577-8564, shammond@alwt.org.

Subcommittee group results were presented. Questions were asked and comments made regarding the reports.

CRMP discussion:

Stefanie compared United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) lists on rationale/goals for their Refuge proposal with our subcommittee results and found that our group addressed all of the major requirements except the goal of USFWS to acquire lands. Based on her assessment, our CRMP would effectively address their concerns.

Peter expressed the view of the noncommercial subcommittee that there is a need to cooperate with USFWS and other federal agencies in order to protect the watershed/ground water. He believes the legal resources of the USFWS will ultimately be required to protect the habitat/water resources.

Scott expressed the view that if these cooperations are implemented as strictly voluntary, they might be successful.

Bill asked Stephen how the State Land Dept's vision for "highest and best use" could support their priorities expressed by the subcommittees. Stephen explained that the State Land Dept. is application-driven. Stephen shared correspondence from late 2012 between AzSL and USFWS regarding plans for the Refuge (please see the attached documents). Any plans involving State Trust Lands must have prior approval. Donations of State Trust Lands are not permitted, disposal must be via auction. State Trust Lands within the Refuge area may not be subjected to restrictions. USFWS understands these guidelines. The Refuge acquisition boundary only indicates the availability of services, etc. USFWS does not intend to acquire State Lands.

Peter talked about creating a culture of conservation in the area.

Bill expressed concern that if the Refuge/USFWS purchases only private lands, the adjoining lands might be more subject to development than they would be otherwise.

Concerns were voiced about federal interference regarding in-stream water rights, etc., if there is a refuge designation. Stefanie expressed that the overriding issue is the refuge designation, not a partnership with USFWS. She feels USFWS should be involved, but as a partner with our CRMP.

Stefanie suggests that we move forward on what we agree on and not continue the stalemate over the refuge, per se.

Anna mentioned the third option of people just getting conservation easements within the acquisition area.

Josh suggested we go ahead with the CRMP and involve these potential partners at appropriate times in the process. There are tools that are not being used now that we could include in the CRMP as policy features. We can work with AZ Dept of Water Resources, SRP, etc. He mentioned specific relevant cases.

Josh asked if, at the end of the process, the landowners who so desire become involved with USFWS, and if those properties were called a “refuge,” would that still be a deal breaker?

Scott said he has no desire to infringe on his neighbors' rights, but wants to be sure that his property rights are protected at the same time.

Francie's understanding from the CRMP handbook is that all stakeholders must be involved in the process, so she feels there's no reason we can't be successful with the CRMP.

Peter expressed that his main concern was the exclusion of a possible refuge. He refers to a previous motion passed by the committee that would necessitate the exclusion of the refuge.

Scott clarified that he believes that the “refuge” referred to in the motion was the currently proposed refuge with those particular acquisition boundaries. But if this CRMP process allows for individual cooperation with the refuge, at the end, it would not be an issue.

Bill proposed that we leave this an open question until we have more information.

Stefanie moved that we will revisit a possible recommendation to the Fish and Wildlife Service for a locally driven and identified acquisition boundary specific to those landowners interested in being included in a refuge designation at the appropriate time in our collaborative effort.

Scott seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Peter expressed concern that only current landholders would be involved. He suggested amending the motion such that conservation values are taken into account for any designation of an acquisition perimeter. This was a friendly amendment.

Scott disagreed and stated that if the motion doesn't satisfy Peter, he would withdraw his support for the motion.

Stefanie pointed out that whatever areas we propose to them would already be within their designated acquisition area.

Donna asked whether this motion would preclude future collaboration with USFWS. Her concern is that we make sure to address the issue later on.

Stefanie wants to get past the good/bad argument about the refuge that is holding up the process. Also, she suggests that we want to take the time to look at the issue, but to move beyond it right now.

Bob E. asked whether this means we won't discuss the refuge again until later in the process.

Stefanie clarified her view that there will be an appropriate time to discuss the issue; it won't be avoided, but right now the philosophical discussion is holding up progress. When we get to the appropriate point, USFWS will be able to see that we are being proactive and we've done our research.

Bob R: At the end of this process, we will be able to see whether USFWS involvement will enhance this process or not.

Josh expressed support for the motion.

Peter clarified that USFWS will be invited to participate in the process. It was pointed out that they were invited even today.

Francie & Stefanie pointed out that all stakeholders will be involved in the entire process.

Peter agreed to support the motion provided USFWS and other agencies are involved in the process throughout.

Scott proposed a friendly amendment, the motion to read:

We will revisit a possible recommendation to the Fish and Wildlife Service for a locally driven and identified acquisition boundary specific to only those landowners

interested in being included in a refuge designation at the appropriate time in our collaborative effort. We will also discuss related landowner protections.

Stefanie accepted the friendly amendment. Scott agreed.

Charles called for the question.

Passed unanimously.

CRMP Discussion:

Anna moved that we pursue the CRMP plan at the watershed level. Josh seconded the motion.

Vote by show of hands to pursue CRMP plan at the watershed level. Passed unanimously.

We've already begun the process, for example we have identified goals. Stephen suggested that we try to get some guidance from someone who has already done this; he may have a contact in Utah.

All stakeholders must be involved from the outset.

Scott asked: who votes, who makes decisions? All the stakeholders? Stefanie says that for a ranch-level plan, the rancher has the final say. By comparison, she says the watershed CRMP would be the plan of our two NRCs. Someone has to own the plan; we'll be the owners. Motivation to negotiate is built into the process, however.

Stephen will research who might provide guidance. Francie proposed that we invite the guide(s) to our next meeting and take the process step-by-step.

Should towns and counties be involved? Yes. Start by casting a wide net and see who actually shows up to participate. We should encourage all stakeholders to participate and sign off at the end of the process. That will lend the final document strength.

Stefanie said we need to be clear with partners about our fundamental precepts from the start. We have done a lot of the foundation work already. A significant discussion took place as to maintaining the fundamental precepts of our work as the foundation of the CRMP process.

Josh suggested that if any stakeholder presented an alteration of those precepts, this group could consider that alteration but would have the final say.

A proposal was made that the concerns of the subcommittees be presented as a matrix for the next meeting.

Bill will send a list of members to be considered CRMP Core Committee to everyone via email . Feedback will be solicited and the final recommendation will be made to the boards of RNRCD and WNRCD.

Scott and Stefanie believe that the committee reached consensus that the work to date would be incorporated into the CRMP and that voting members of our committee will retain control of and voting powers during the CRMP process.

Next meeting: Monday, November 18, 10:00, CAC.

Francie moved to adjourn. Bob E. seconded. Meeting adjourned at 12:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Diana Stirling, Clerk
WNRCD

Approved _____
Date Name