



## Supervisors and Personnel:

**Chairman:** Bill Dunn

**Supervisor:** Gary Vinson

**Supervisor:** Peter Else

**Supervisor:** Diana Manning

**Supervisor:** Gale Manning

**District Clerk:** Vicki France

520-292-2999 x 111

With Assistance from:

*USDA Natural Resources  
Conservation Service*

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## From the Frog Pond .....

Well, the Draft EIS for the SunZia Transmission Line Project came out and as expected, it comes through the San Pedro Valley. Instead of going down the west side of the Valley it crosses at Benson and goes down the east side, leaves the river just north of Redington and runs west between San Manuel and Oracle, goes to just north of Marana then heads north west toward Florence until it gets due east of Eleven Mile Corner then turns west to there. This is a completely new route and not one that we had analyzed for impacts. Interestingly, the project developer sent the first comments against the route. They want it to go along the Aravaipa route.

The two districts, Redington and Winkelman, hired a consulting firm, Hallock/Gross, to write comments for us. The BLM has so far ignored their coordination duties under FLMPA and ignored our petition and appeal of their erroneous Purposes and Needs Statement. The joint committees will meet soon to decide what we do next.

Stefanie and I were on a conference call with several of the New Mexico, Arizona and Washington BLM people on October 15<sup>th</sup> to discuss coordination. None of them except the lady that is their local government liaison at Washington could understand why we don't want to be a cooperator on this project. Then one reads the US Fish and Wildlife comments on the project and one of their comments is how they were basically ignored as a cooperating agency in the process. On the call they all agreed we should from now on direct all of our communications to the Arizona BLM office. Then we received a letter from the New Mexico office saying there wouldn't be anything coming from BLM to us until the FEIS comes out.

The Fish and Wildlife Services has finished their pre-scoping meetings and comment period for their proposal to create a refuge in the same San Pedro Valley. Upon conversation with Steve Spangle, head of the Arizona office, we find out the proposal is coming from the southwest regional office, with a maximum private land purchase of 45,000 acres for the refuge. Also, he said that if the two districts were to form their own Comprehensive Coordinated Initiative type of thing for the Valley, they might back off. The objectives of this CCI type deal should have a local vision for the Valley with a plan for protecting the flyway for all the birds that use the Valley to migrate from Central and South America to North America and to protect the listed fishes that are in the Valley. We have formed yet another committee to see what we can come up with. If you have not helped out on one of these committees and you are affected by any of the things the District is working on in your behalf, perhaps you could volunteer to help out.

Walt and Francie Meyer and Katie Cline have been working on a system to

## From the Frog Pond *continued from page 1*

identify tortoise densities for the district. This is important work as the tortoise is one of the critters the Fish and Wildlife Service agreed to make a listing decision on by 2015. If we can come up with a valid system and use it to estimate the tortoise population in its entire range in Arizona, we have a shot at getting the Arizona population declared a distinct population segment, as allowed in the ESA, from the population in Mexico, where there are little or no protections, thereby keeping our population out of a likely listing.

It's time to ask for your annual contributions to the District. We have pretty much depleted our reserves since we hired the consulting firm and Lat Celmins from Celmins/Margrave law firm to help us devise a legal strategy on the SunZia project. If you haven't yet please renew your membership and add a little for the kitty to help with some of the bills we have. The form is enclosed with the newsletter.

As a result of the AzNRCD effort to update the Endangered Species Act, Stefanie and I have been presenting to various producer groups around the state to get them to adopt the documents; we have had the opportunity to introduce the Districts to a whole new audience that hasn't heard of what we are.

*till next time...* **BILL**

### **Pinal Open Space Report**

Another project the District Supervisors and cooperatos have been in volved in is the formation of the Pinal County Open Space Plan. The Pinal Open Space Committee Summary Report is a culmination of ideas, issues and concerns gathered during monthly regional meeting across the County during 2012. The most distinctive information learned from this discussion process is how diverse the issues are regarding open space, recreation and natural resource conservation across the County. For example and very briefly, the Western regional issues are around recreation uses in the Palo Verde mountains (proposed Regional Park #4) and Vekol Wash (proposed Open Space #7) and connectivity of trails to and among the communities of Maricopa, Casa Grande, and Stanfield. Those discussions were very productive, educational and informative. The Northern regional issues focused more on the need to protect the watershed and drainage corridors and washes, and to increase awareness of the Open Space plan and the issues through hosting open space clean up issues with other community partners.

Those have been very successful. The Eastern regional group meetings have served more as an information clearing house on larger scale conservation and landscape issues and projects that would affect and impact sensitive areas and the San Pedro River. The information exchange has been critical to help interested parties voice their concerns and hear the view points of others. They have decided to continue to stay involved on the larger conservation issues to better share information and express concerns to County decision makers. Some other key areas of concern brought to light through the meetings process are the need for a County Parks Department or Advisory Board, the value of open space as a key component of economic development in the County, and the value of partnerships within the County, as well as with regional and national interested parties.

The Pinal Open Space Committee Summary Report will soon be posted on the Pinal Partnership website [www.pinalpartnership.com](http://www.pinalpartnership.com) Click on "Parks, Trails, Open Space and Public Land" for review.

## **GUIDE TO RANGELAND MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT**

### ***Basic Concepts for Collecting, Interpreting and Use of Rangeland Data for Management Planning and Decisions***

This book will be a valuable reference for anyone who manages or is interested in rangelands. Please contact AZNRCD for more information on how to get copies. Call 520-850-8250 or Vicki at 520-292-2999 x 111. The cost is \$5. Fragmented land ownership in Arizona, and most western states, creates a problem because different land managers use different monitoring and assessment approaches, techniques, and terminology. This complicates coordinate management across ownership lines because one management unit (for example a ranch) could have up to 4 sets of procedures in use.

In 2005 the Arizona Grazing Lands Conservation Association (AGLCA) was formed and its' initial goal was to develop a set of coordinated monitoring and assessment principles based Arizona specifically, using the latest most reliable science. The members of AGLCA are Arizona Cattlegrower's Association, Arizona Section of Society for Range Management, and the Arizona Association of Conservation Districts (AACD). The University of Arizona, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Arizona State Land Department are affiliated members. The first project was a paper describing principles and concepts of measuring and interpreting utilization on rangelands, with authors from all the participating agencies and published by the University of Arizona.

AGLCA then began work on a guidebook on important basic concepts and approaches to collecting and interpreting inventory and mentoring data. The book is not intended to be a "how to" manual, since there are a number of good references that outline the details of various monitoring procedures. Rather, this guidebook is aimed at building a better understanding of how to make decisions about why monitoring is done, what to monitor, where to monitor, and when to monitor. It also emphasizes the value and limitations of different kinds of monitoring data and techniques that affect the interpretation of results for management situations, and often are the cause of disagreement and conflict. The guidebook emphasizes routine monitoring of rangeland for common land management objectives. It does not specifically address procedures for research or very narrowly oriented studies. Most of the concepts presented are applicable to riparian as well as upland situations.

This guidebook will be a valuable reference for anyone who has an interest in management of rangelands, including ranchers, small landowners, environmental groups, range consultants, and employees of government land management agencies. Those with range ecology training will find an up to date review of basic concepts; those without such training will find a valuable source of needed information. The book is organized to allow the reader to access the information without reading the entire book, and is extensively cross-referenced and documented. The authors are all range professionals with long experience in monitoring and managing southwestern rangelands and represent a variety of agencies and organizations.

The development and publication of this book is highly dependent upon donations from interested stakeholders. If you wish to donate to this effort please send checks for non-profit tax deductible donations to: ACIREF

Arizona Cattle Industry Research and Education Foundation  
1401 24th Street, Suite 4  
Phoenix, AZ 85008

Authors: Dr. Lamar Smith (Uof A retired); Dr. George Ruyle (U of A); Dr. Walt Meyer (Rancher); Judith Dyess (Forest Service); Steve Barker (NRCS); Dan Bell (Rancher); Doc Lane (Arizona Cattlegrower's); Jim Maynard (Range Consultant); Steve Cassidy (NRCS); Dave Stewart (Forest Service); Bill Coulloudon (BLM); Stephen Williams (Az Land Dept)

## Fall Meeting Minutes \* October 18, 2012\* Florence, AZ

### Attendees:

**Supervisors and District Personnel Present:** Chairman, Bill Dunn, Gary Vinson, Peter Else, Gale and Diana Manning; Vicki France, District Clerk.

**Members, Cooperators and Guests Present:** Don and Hattie Hedrick, Becky Dunn, Pat Reed, Miriam Reed, Joe Goff, Patrick Granillo, Jeff Lark (TNC), Celeste Andresen (TNC), Beverly Miller, Jan Wilson, Anna Lands, Fran Evans, Sky Sharp, David Rychener, and Steve Turcotte

**Agency Personnel Present:** Kristen Egen and Katie Cline, USDA-NRCS; Brian Messing, Pinal County Sherriff's Office

**Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, Welcome and Introductions:** Bill Dunn called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. After the Pledge, cooperators and guests introduced themselves.

**Consent Agenda:** Peter made the motion to approve the minutes of July 25 2012 and October 9 2012, pending Redington's approval. Diana seconded it and the motion carried. Peter moved to pay the following bills:

Approval of IOU

Pima Natural Resource Conservation District - \$771.65

Treasurer's Report

We have not received any money from the State Land Department. The Ed Center has received about \$1,900.

We have received donations from Sheryl Christensen a Yuma Supervisor, Herford NRCD, Pima NRCD and Redington NRCD. The State Account has \$75.61 and the District has \$800.46.

### 1. New Business:

#### a) Status of the legal actions regarding Coordination

Bill was on a conference call Monday with Mark Trux (NACD), Cynthia Moses - Nedd (BLM), Phoenix BLM, Stefanie Smallhouse and ? The State BLM folks asked why we would not be cooperating agencies. Stefanie and Cynthia both told them the difference. Bill said that there is a need to train BLM staff. It was then decided that there would be a training session for districts at the National Convention in San Antonio this winter. Mark would like to come to train Az BLM Staff specifically, sooner. Cynthia said that it would be good to have the Forest Service too. Assistant State Director wants to set up a meeting so Winkelman Natural Resource Conservation District can once again tell them what they want in the document. We all agreed that this is great, but it does not address the issue of due process, the Administrative Procedures Act, the incorrect statements of purpose and lack of coordination with our plans etc. Margaret and Lat will have to advise us on when to bring that back up.

#### b) Formation of a sub Committee to develop Alternatives to a Refuge along the San Pedro River

Bill brought every one up to speed on what has been going the past year and the developments so far. The minutes to the meeting last week were also available. Gale had several comments such as what does the committee want, what are the specific financial implications of the refuge, what do the property owners think and how many know about the issue. Jeff suggested a mailer to property owners and stressed the importance of formulating an objective description of the proposal for this questionnaire. The committee would gather the facts to present to them. Jeannie has a list of property owners. Peter moved that we join Redington NRCD to form a sub committee. The first order of business would be doing the pros and cons and getting community input. Then the committee would make recommendations to the Boards on any actions to be taken if any. Gale seconded the motion, the motion carried. Gale and Diana Manning, Walt and Francie Meyer were Bill's first appointees.

### 2. Old Business:

#### a) Field Report Update

Peter move to accept the Field Report as written by Katie Cline. Diana seconded the motion and it carried on a voice vote. Vicki will get quotes to print it and the Ed Center will pay for printing and binding.

b) Hattie reported on the AzNRCD summer conference. It was very good, but the Ed Center portion was weak.

### **3. Reports from Supervisors and District Personnel:**

Kristen told the group about the Quivera Conference in Albuquerque NM this November 14-15. They have excellent topics and conferences.

Bill said that the State Association was working on ESA reform and had gotten a lot of other professional groups that would be affected (mining e.g.) to adopt them. They want to have it to the Governor and made a national push by the time Congress reconvenes to consider it.

Bill also wants to place on the next agenda the issue of buying a mini mobile storage unit to consolidate all of the district equipment and files. It could then be moved to the Chairman's house as this changes.

### **4. Reports from Agency Personnel**

**NRCS** – See the attached report.

#### **Pinal County Sherriff**

Brad Messing reported for the Sherriff's office. Rave Parties are back and the PCSO needs everyone's help in looking for them. Bill asked how the Meet the Rancher Program was going. Brad said that it was slow.

#### **Open Space Committee**

Celeste said that they will have a report out at the end of October summarizing everything. Joe Goff and other ranches are still having trouble with OHV's using the Arizona trail.

### **5. Call to the Public**

Jan Wilson requested a copy of the district with the ranch names and brands if possible.

Miriam had a request from some agency to do forest survey's on her ranch. Jan got the same thing and said that it is the Forest Service and they do not have funding to do it.

### **6. Adjournment**

The next District meeting was set for the third week in January 2013. Peter Else moved to adjourn the meeting, Diana Manning seconded it and the meeting adjourned at 12:20 pm.

### **NRCS Report:**

#### **Conservation Planning**

Battle Axe plan is done but waiting on BLM NEPA.

Dubois is field work is being completed for inventory.

Willow Springs field work is in process – hunting season will slow it down a bit but should be finished soon.

#### **Farm Bill Programs**

EQIP – Always taking applications, regardless of status of funding and farm bill.

New WHIP program applies to work with Southwest Willow Flycatcher only. Please contact office if you have an interest.

No information on the new Farm Bill is yet available. NACD Website might be most valuable for information.

Farm Bill funding on Federal lands must have all NEPA completed by the Federal Agency and then NRCS must post the documents such as the EA or the EIS on our website for 30 days. This is called adopting NEPA for our use with our funds. This must be completed before an application is considered eligible for our funds – mainly pertains to EQIP in this office.

#### **Field Office Operations**

FSA Office has closed in Tucson now. Pinal County now needs to work from Pinal County. If you need to update any paperwork for any USDA programs, you will need to call the Casa Grande Office and make an appointment – 520-836-2048 ext. 2. Debbie Hopkins will still be serving Pinal County customers. Michelle Ontiveros has moved on to a position in D.C. and her replacement has been hired.

NRCS had a separate meeting at the AzNRCD meeting in early August. District Cooperator Agreements were discussed. Since voting in a District Election is only allowed by District Cooperators, NRCS should have no involvement with the Agreements. In the past, we have given Agreements to new customers and sometimes collected them for the District. We have also kept them in our files. This is not appropriate since we are Federal

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Employees and this effectively facilitates voter eligibility. From now on, we can give someone an Agreement, but, we cannot receive a signed agreement back from them and we must remove the existing Agreements from our files.

Kim McReynolds with Extension monitoring update – Hired their new person on with Extension that will cover BLM allotments out of the Tucson Field Office, including working in partnership with you on a whole ranch basis where we can. Her name is Maria. They also have an on-call monitoring position flying right now for Tucson, so we will have another person when we need them. Same position as Maria, but not full time. She is coordinating with agencies and ranchers for those that have BLM permits. She can monitor on state and private if the rancher has a BLM allotment.

Plans for potentially reorganizing Field Offices to Teams could impact us soon. More info to come.

## 2012 Census of Agriculture

The Census of Agriculture is the leading source of facts and figures about American agriculture. Conducted every five years, the Census provides a detailed picture of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. It is the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every state and county in the United States. For the 2012 Census of Agriculture, forms will be mailed in late December 2012 and farmers and ranchers are asked to respond by mail or online by February 4, 2013. Participation by every farmer and rancher, regardless of the size or type of operation, is vitally important. By responding to the Census, producers are helping themselves, their communities and all of U.S. agriculture.

The 2012 Census of Agriculture will collect information concerning all areas of farming and ranching operations, including production expenses, market value of products, and operator characteristics. This information is used by everyone who provides services to farmers and rural communities - including federal, state and local governments, agribusinesses, and many others. Census data is used to make decisions about many things that directly impact farmers, including:

- community planning
- store/company locations
- availability of operational loans and other funding
- location and staffing of service centers
- farm programs and policies

Participation in the Census is required by law, and that same law protects the confidentiality of all individual responses. The Census of Agriculture is your voice, your future and your responsibility!

## Keep the money local...A reminder about tax credits

Arizona law ARS 43-1089.01 enables taxpayers a tax credit contribution of up to \$400.00 per calendar year if filing status is Married, filing Joint Return; \$200.00 per calendar year if filing status is Single or Head of Household; and, \$200.00 per calendar year if filing status is Married filing separate return — for contributions that fund extracurricular activities in public schools. A tax credit is a full refund, not a deduction.

Contributions eligible for a tax credit are donated directly to schools, not to the state or the school district. To participate, go to the web site of your school district or give them a phone call. You can donate online or you can mail a form to your school to make the contribution. This is just another way you can help the local economy.