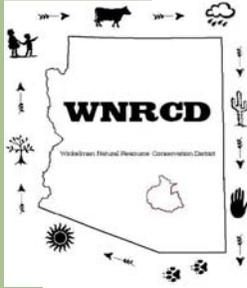


NEWSLETTER

Winkelman Natural Resource Conservation District



Spring 2011

www.wnrcd.org

P.O. Box 68

Mammoth, AZ

85618

From the Frog Pond

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Chairman: Bill Dunn

Supervisor: Beverly Miller

Supervisor: Miriam Reed

Supervisor: Gary Vinson

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Well, things have slowed down for a couple of months so everyone could get their spring works done. Stefanie Smallhouse, Walt and Francie Meyer, and I had a couple of meetings with Arizona Game and Fish, and United States Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), BLM, and NRCS people to work on conservation measures for grazing concerning the tortoise. What form this will take is unknown yet. There's a thing called a **4D Rule** that allows the FWS take into account all that a rancher does on a ranch concerning livestock and determine what actions have the possibility to affect the tortoise, then come up with ways to mitigate any possible negative affects, for instance by changing the time of year he would build a fence in tortoise habitat, then if the rancher agrees to these mitigation measures he would be issued an incidental take permit for his operation. This option is for listed species. The FWS people are working under the assumption that it will eventually be listed.

Another option is a **Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA)** that would be an umbrella permit held by the District. This option is designed to keep a species from needing to be listed. If enough ranchers would agree to practices like the one mentioned above and joined in under the umbrella permit that it would cover enough of the habitat area of a species, and then the FWS would not need to list. A couple of problems with this one is that all the other Districts in the tortoise habitat area would have to do the same thing, then there is a deal in it where the FWS monitors that people are doing what they say they are doing and that the species is not responding negatively. The other problem is grazing wasn't identified as being a threat to the tortoise here in the United States, only in Mexico. In fact nearly all the threats were in Mexico. The identified threats here were development, recreation, climate change, and exotic plant species, so doing good for the tortoise by ranchers would have no effect on the identified things that threaten it.

We just received word from the BLM state office that they would like to meet with us on the SunZia Transmission Line. Secretary of Interior Salazar sent word that he would be unable to meet.



Coordination has become a dirty word for some of the agencies. The Forest Service tried to get Congress to exempt them from it, then is trying to change their obligations to it in the new Forest Planning Rule, including adding Non –Government Organizations (NGO’s) as a part of the coordination process. You have to know it’s a valuable tool for us if they don’t want to have anything to do with it. We added the District to a petition to remove that language.

Perhaps you heard about SB1517 in the legislature. The SunZia folks hired ex-Senate President turned lobbyist Stan Barnes to shepherd a bill through the legislature exempting power lines from the Corporation Commission’s review if they had passed a NEPA review for it to go through federal lands. This would have had the effect of subjugating the state’s control over its state lands and over any local input on private lands to the federal government. It was killed in the Senate then revived in the House under a strike-all amendment. Although it passed through the Natural Resources Committee, we were able to get Chairman Pratt to promise to amend it on the floor so that it would weaken the tar out of it. He did so. We were still afraid it could be re-amended in the future to its original text. The Redington and Winkelman Districts got the Arizona Cattle Growers Association and the Arizona Farm Bureau lobbyists to go to work on it at the last minute. Between that and the work of the Cascabel Working Group, it was defeated 40 to 14. Good job to all!

Some of us have been attending the Pinal County Open Space Initiative meetings so we can see what the west side of the county is planning for the east side. They want to make us the recreation center of the Phoenix-Tucson corridor. They figure we are going to be so we might as well plan for it. They have a point but they want to build trails of all kinds and a regional park. They just don’t know how to get someone to pay for it yet. They will.

Now that the cow work is about done, we can get busy.

Until next time ,

Bill



News from around the State and District.....

Hohokam RC&D

On April 15, 2011, the federal fiscal year 2011 appropriation bill was signed to allow the federal government to continue operations through September 30. The bill did have considerable cuts in long-standing programs and services provided through federal funding. The funding for the Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) program was eliminated for the current federal fiscal year and the government does not anticipate funding for FY2012.

Immediately after the passage, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) stopped work on RC&D agreements and could not incur additional costs associated with RC&D activities. Therefore, the RC&D Coordinators were given new assignments to support conservation programs and services at the state and area levels on a temporary basis until they can be placed into permanent position within the Agency. **Rebecca de la Torre** is assigned to work with Cy Sokoll, Assistant State Conservationist for Operations. The other former RC&D Coordinators are also working with the NRCS state leadership either from the state office or area offices. Donna Mathews will be a Soil Conservationist for the NRCS Wilcox Office.

Due to the lack of federal financial support, the Hohokam RC&D office was also moved to the Sunburst Farms Irrigation District and has a new mailing address and telephone number:

Mailing Address:

1050 E. Ray Road, Suite A5 #146
Chandler, AZ 85225

Telephone: (480) 559 5436

Website: www.hohokamrccd.org

The Hohokam RC&D, a viable non-profit organization, will continue their 2011 operations and projects through December 31. They will be deciding at an upcoming Council Meeting whether they would like to continue into 2012 and beyond or dissolve at the end of the calendar year. Please stay involved with the RC&D and join them at one of their upcoming meetings:

July 20	Natural Resource Education Center	Coolidge, AZ
September 21	Superstition Farm – DOS Garden	Mesa, AZ
November 16	SRP Roosevelt Dam Facilities	Roosevelt, AZ

State Conservationist to Retire

David McKay, the State Conservationist is retiring June 1. The position vacancy has been announced. The USDA/NRCS and the Conservation Districts have benefited from his time in the position.

AZNRCD Summer Conference:

The dates and location have been set for the AZNRCD Summer Conference 2011. They will be meeting together for education, information, networking, and socializing at the Prescott Resort and Conference Center located in Prescott, AZ. The dates are August 8-9, 2011. Hotel and registration information will be going out next month with a draft agenda. The Prescott Resort and Conference center is a great location sitting atop a hill overlooking the valley. After two years in Flagstaff it was time to try something new. We hope that you will all be planning to attend!

CRIEP Grant Installations

Three Cooperators have taken advantage of the Stimulus Grant money known as Agricultural Renewable Energy Conversion Incentive Program (CRIEP). Mike Mercer, Miriam Reed and Randy Hoopes have received grants to convert gas powered operations of wells to Solar Power. This grant has brought about \$26,555 into the district and is saving time, money and energy for those ranches.

Local Workgroup Meeting - June 7

The Annual Local Work Group Meeting will be held on June 7th, 2011. It will be held at the NRCS Tucson Plant Materials Center Conference Room from 9 am – 12 pm. They are located at 3241 N. Romero Road in Tucson. If you need directions, please phone 520-292-2999 ext 105.

The Local Work Group in our area includes the Pima, Santa Cruz and Winkelman NRCD's and the Tohono O'odham SWCD. In addition, other professionals who represent relevant agricultural and conservation interests will be invited. Please feel free to pass this notice on to others that you think might be interested. The current contact list is located below.

If you are unable to attend the meeting but would like to give us input, please forward this input to Kristen Egen, District Conservationist at Kristen.egen@az.usda.gov or to the Local Work Group Chairman, Dan Bell at voslash@aol.com Please feel free to contact me if you are unfamiliar with the Local Work Group purpose as well.

The more individuals that can attend, the better input we will have for our Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Wildlife Habit Incentives Program for FY2012.

Winkelman NRCD Small Land Owner Workshops...

The WNRCD held some of the first workshops for small land owners that began in March this year. These workshops were aimed at developing interest in natural resources among land owners in the District. Many topics were discussed at these workshops including: soils, ecological sites, animal health, animal laws, wildlife and plant laws as well as gardening techniques. Several different speakers presented at these workshops including; specialist, the U of A Extension and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Soils Workshop: Soils are a major factor in why certain plants grow where they do. Components such as texture, placement and physiology all are variables in plant growth. This workshop was a step-by-step description on what a land owner should consider when looking at soils on their property, how to determine soil types and their capabilities and what types of resources are out there for land owners to utilize.

Plant Workshop: Many native and naturalized, non-native plant species are found on the different land types in the Southwest. Some are specific to different soil types covered in the soils workshop and some are found uniformly throughout Arizona. In this workshop, we learned what factors affect plant growth such as topography, elevation and precipitation and how these are broke down into classes from Common Land Units to Major Land Resource Areas to Ecological Sites; and how agencies and land owners alike use them for specific site descriptions on individual land types.

Gardening Workshop: This workshop was an overview of local food production and market gardens in the State. Examples of vermi-composting and its value of turning waste into profitable production were given. Importance of garden size, structure and variety also play a part in the gardens success and produce production. Types of irrigation systems uses, frequency of use as well as mulching play an integral part in a successful garden. We also learned that pest and weed management should be applied if we desire a fruitful bounty.

Livestock Workshop: Livestock; whether they are goats, cattle or horses are most always present on large and small land tracts alike and should be a major consideration when deciding use on native rangeland as well as irrigated pastures. Livestock health will be affected by the number of livestock run and the type of management system chosen. We learned in this workshop, what types of management systems are used in differing land types, how to calculate carrying capacities, supplementation of livestock and animal stresses and diseases. We also learned about State and Federal laws that were enacted to protect certain threatened or endangered species in this State including wildlife and plant species and what kind of actions we might take that may interact or affect these species.



Katie Cline, NRCS Rangeland Specialist, conducts Small Landowner Workshop.

Spring Meeting Minutes * April 13, 2011 * Box "O" Ranch * Florence, AZ

The regular spring meeting of the Winkelman Natural Resource Conservation District had 20 people in attendance.

Supervisors and District Personnel Present: Chairman, Bill Dunn, Beverly Miller, Miriam Reed, Gary Vinson and Peter Else; Vicki France, District Clerk.

Members, Cooperators and Guests Present: Pat Reed, Hattie Hedrick, Joe and Gloria England, Jan Wilson, Becky Dunn, Diana Manning, and Witte Patton.

Agency Personnel Present: Kristen Egen, Katie Cline and Alisha Phipps, USDA-NRCS; Doug Witte, AZ State Land Dept.; Kristen Duarte, BLM and Steve Barker, State Office NRCS.

Call to Order, Welcome and Introductions: Bill Dunn called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. Cooperators and guests introduced themselves.

Pledge of Allegiance: Bill led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Consent Agenda: Beverly Miller made the motion to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of the Minutes of January 19, 2011, the treasurer's report and the following bills:

Pima Natural Resource Conservation District \$1,127.74

Hagerty-Haynes \$375 for surety bond

AzNRCD Dues for \$1,200

Miriam Reed seconded the motion, which was passed by voice vote with no nays. There was one clarification on the minutes. We need a copy of our policy for the Surety Bond to see if amounts can be reduced to lower the premiums. Vicki will contact the insurance company.

New Business:

Tortoise Conservation Plan and Team – Steve Barker

Steve reviewed the Programmatic Agreement that NRCS has been working on with the USFWS for all Threatened and Endangered Species in Arizona. This would apply the 4d rule exemptions for certified activities. Kristina Jones is the Az Game and Fish representative. Steve passed out a list of key activities that they have been discussing. He wanted the District to review this to see if it included all of the activities that ranching involved. The main ones that are a concern for the Desert Tortoise are any that have ground or vegetation disturbance. After this list is complete, then a list will be made of what is to be done to avoid harming the tortoise during these activities. This will be the 4 d rule. This same process can now be done with all species, Jaguar, Chiricahua Leopard Frog etc. The Sonoran Desert Tortoise is one of the most documented of the Endangered Species in Arizona. Steve B. said that the BLM still believes that there should be no activity during the active period of the tortoise, Steve disagrees with this. He will talk to Steve Spangle and Tim Hughes (BLM) about it. The Coordinated Conservation Agreement with Assurances was also discussed, but this is a process to use before the species is listed. The 4 d rule is used after it is listed. Jeff Servoss said that the process will be done in 6 months. Kristen asked when we are going to tell people we are doing this. Jeff S. recommended that we do the preparation work and then announce. Doug said that this would be a good panel discussion at the summer meeting of the AzNRCD. (Prescott, Aug 8). Steve B. closed by sharing a suggestion that he heard while working in New Mexico...don't be afraid of the science.

Pinal Partnership Open Space Update

Pinal Partnership still sees recreation as the only use for open space. Pinal Partnership is becoming more aware of the mining and ranching operations, but do not see that recreation will affect them. We need to get the other three districts attending these meetings. (The meetings are held the first Tuesday of the months at the Fire Department in Florence.) The Districts are active for the most part. We need to get the farmers involved in this too. Jan thought we should take them to a ranch like the Rail X to see what effects recreation has. It was decided that it was a little early in the process for this. Peter said that these people are not the decision makers, but the Partnership is trying to get the Supervisors to the meetings. The Partnership is still adding points of views. There is also a State Land representative. Doug Witte said that State Land still has the final say. Peter thinks we should support Dick Powell. Bill

asked Doug if we should represent our selves or could we represent the District. Doug said that it was within our mission and that we were not “congregating to make a decision”. The District will keep going as we have been and tell them we are taking the information back to the Cooperators. We will contact Carolyn Harbison and Ronnie White to get the other districts involved.

Letter of Support for Coordination in Forest Planning Rules

This needs to be distributed to all of the Districts. Vicki will contact Stefanie. May 12 is the due date so there is time. Miriam Reed moved to send the letter, Beverly Miller seconded it and it carried by a voice vote.

Field Guide Revision, Long Range Plan, Newsletter and Website

Most of the information lost in Jenny’s house fire was backed up except the history of the Boundary Changes. Doug will look in the State’s files to see what he has. He will bring them by the Tucson Field Office on one of his trips thru town. Katie will finish the field guide and talk to Jenny about the web site. It comes up as “under construction”. Several people may be able to help get it up and running. Bill and Vicki will get the newsletters out. Bill handed the long range plans, district two year plan and? There may have to be a work session or two to update these.

Government Entity Agreement with the American Stewards of Liberty

Fred has resigned from the Stewards to start another project. We had some questions about the contract and if this was a yearly payment or a one time payment. Dohn R. Henion, who replaces Fred⁶, will work for the same amount. His experience is in marine species. He has been given the information on Sunzia and will be working up a letter for us. The Tortoise is a done issue so there should be no more expense. Sunzia is the only one left we will have expenses for. Bill will talk to Margaret tomorrow (4/14) to clarify these issues. No action was taken.

BLM Wild Lands Initiative Update – Kristen Duarte

Kristen brought the 1970’s inventory. The number on the map corresponds to the disposition in the book. The memo directed them to look at the inventoried parcels and see if it is still a candidate; to see if the same three criteria are met. In the 1970 inventory, size, naturalness and solitude needed to be present. This time only two need to be present to remain a candidate. Of course they got no money to do this additional work. All processes such as RMP’s and draft EIS’s are on hold. Peter said that this was delaying Sunzia’s Draft EIS too. TFO is concentrating on the Ironwood Forest NM because they were just about to release the Draft EIS. This will be out by the end of 2011. There are no areas in Winkelman Natural Resource Conservation District that have a high potential for being designated as wilderness. We need to see the map for the Safford District.

We adjourned for a pot suck lunch and some socializing.

2. Old Business:

Coordinating Agency Status

USFWS and the Desert Tortoise: We have formed a Conservation Team and are working on getting a 4 d rule in place. We still wrote a letter to Steve Spangle saying that we did not believe it warranted listing.

Sun Zia Transmission Line: The Am. Stewards is drafting up a letter for us because the BLM still refuses to coordinate on the issue. Margaret said that this is the worst case of non cooperation that she has seen. Sunzia is trying to end run the process with SB1517 in the State Legislature. This bill is so contrary to the Local control philosophy of the Legislature, it is obvious that a larger (\$\$) force is behind it. Peter reminded us that Margaret has frequently told us to reduce conflict and keep asserting coordination.

Minnows: The San Pedro may have been taken out of Critical Habitat because of the mining situation in Mexico, up stream.

Jaguar Habitat

The Pima District is about ready to have the first meeting with the USFWS.

Range Monitoring for the district

Kristen said that there are 70-80 sites to be done in the Winkelman Natural Resource Conservation District; only half are done. Bill had talked to David McKay and David said that he may be able to find some funds, but Bill has heard nothing else. Steve said that the State office really wants TSP money to be spent for on the ground projects. The Society for Range Management has approached some districts wanting to partner on projects. This may be a source

of funding. Kristen will ask again if TSP money is not being used could it go to Winkelman. But basically, this must be done on EQIP Program ranches. But it would free up the staff time to do the non EQIP sites.

Winkelman Resource Mgt. Center

There have been two small landowner workshops. They were soils and plants. Next will be gardens and irrigation. The fourth will be livestock. Publicity has been sparse and she needs help getting the word out. Kristen and Vicki will help work up an email list.

3. Reports from Supervisors and District Personnel:

Beverly said that she has checked various places to restock the Guides and they were still some left. Doug said that he had a case.

4. Reports from Agency Personnel

NRCS –Kristen Egen

She will still be busy on out of State Projects and acting as DC for Avondale. The focus from National is going to be on Technical Assistance for Conservation Plans. There is now a sign up for so this can be tracked. But it still boils down to time and a Range Con. Can only get about two done a year. Many of the existing ones need to be up dated. The RC&D's have been eliminated from the budget that was just passed. If projects are on going like Coronado's, the Boards will have to decide what to do without NRCS support.

ASLD – Doug Witte

We have received full funding for 2011-12. Bev's term is up in 2012, Miriam 2014 and Bill in 2016. Peter and Gary are two year appointed terms. There has been a change to election laws that will eliminate an election if there is only one candidate in a race. The lawsuit has gone away because the ASLD was put back into the General Fund

5. Call to the Public

Diana Manning said that the information on Coordination was very helpful to the Az Mining Association.

6. Adjournment

Peter Else moved to adjourn the meeting, Gary Vinson seconded it and the meeting adjourned at 2:06 pm.

Loss to the District and A Valued Cooperator

In the middle of March, Mike and Jenny Cordrey's house in Dudleyville was burned to the ground. Along with their possessions went a lot of District information and of course her computer. This will leave use without a newsletter coordinator and a web site manager. Anyone who could volunteer to help for a year or so in these areas would be a real help. She was in the process of getting the web site switched to another company and we are left with no presence on the internet. Please contact Bill at 520-560-0721 if you have some time to help out.



To the Cordrey's, you know the District and Cooperators are here to help if you need any thing!