

# LOWER SAN PEDRO WATERSHED ALLIANCE

PO Box 576, Mammoth, AZ 85618

## **Minutes of the Meeting held September, 23, 2013 at the Central Arizona College Aravaipa Campus**

**The meeting was attended** by the following 44 members and guests: Charlie Allen, Jeau Allen, Celeste Andresen, Jim Bergstrom, Lon Brehmer, Polly Choate, Pat Corbett, Peter Else, Heather English, Bob Evans, Carol Evans, Nancy Ferguson, Enriqueta Flores-Guevara, Cathy Gorman, John and Seth Hadwin, Doris Haynes, Phil Hedrick, Jennifer Kaplan, Anna Lands, Andy Laurenzi, Diane Laush, Chuck LeFevre, Gail Loveland, Pearl Mast, Jim McPherson, Mick Meader, Sue Newman, David Omick, Tom Orum, Elna Otter, Bill Radke, Kris Randall, Iris Rodden, Bob Rogers, Karole Skeen, Tice Supplee, Maria and Gene Troutner, Gilbert Urias, Jeannie WagnerGreven, Ralph Waldt, Scott Wilbor, John Windes and Dan Wolgast

**The meeting was called to order** at 1:12 pm by the Chair, Peter Else. He welcomed the guests from the agencies and non-governmental organizations. He reiterated the mission of the LSPWA: "*... to unite conservation-minded individuals, groups, and agencies in the lower San Pedro region of Arizona to protect a threatened riparian ecosystem and its supporting watershed.*"

He passed on the advice that, as a young organization, in order to succeed, we need to have a story, strategy and structure and that both the agenda of this meeting as well as our long-term agenda would follow that format.

**The Lower San Pedro Film Project**, a joint aerial and ground-based project of LSPWA, Cascabel Conservation Association, and Pinal Partnership, consists at present of two short videos and several hours of high-definition raw footage that the LSPWA hopes to use upon completion to tell our story. The first short piece is about the process of making the film, while the second is an example of what a longer production could be. Peter introduced Gilbert Urias, Ralph Waldt and John Hadwin, who along with others, especially the renowned cinematographer Keith Brust and the Light Hawk flight organization, have volunteered their time and resources to produce the film products thus far. They introduced the film, which we were then able to view. In addition to the \$800 of contributions used so far, there is an immediate need of \$200 to buy the music rights so it can be distributed, for example, on YouTube. Additional funding through grant applications or other sources will be needed to expand the project.

**Representatives of the designated mitigation and conservation properties** along the Lower San Pedro gave presentations. They were all able to refer to a projected map showing the extensive Conservation Investment in the Lower San Pedro River Valley.

- Bob Rogers, Lower San Pedro River Program Director for The Nature Conservancy, talked about the many properties, either directly owned or managed by TNC: The Muleshoe, Bingham Cienega, H & E, Aravaipa and the San Pedro River preserves. The focus of their work ranges from improving grasslands

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through grazing rest, prescribed fire and native grass cropping to preserving endangered and threatened species such as native fish and migratory birds by improving riparian habitat.

- John Windes, Region V Habitat Program Manager for AZ Game and Fish Department, informed us about their recently acquired Lower San Pedro Wildlife Area. It consists of the former Triangle Bar ranch property, which includes a state lease and additional adjacent property acquired due to a settlement with ASARCO that included cash for restoration work. They have 7 miles of river, 5 of which is perennial. A management plan is being developed, which includes leasing the land for appropriate ranching.
- Diane Laush, Mitigation Land Manager for Bureau of Reclamation, explained that her agency has purchased several large properties in the watershed for mitigation of habitat loss due to dam construction and improvement elsewhere in the state. In addition, as part of the agreement to build the Central Arizona Project, BoR built 12 fish barriers (3 in the San Pedro watershed). To mitigate these fish barriers, BoR purchased conservation easements on 1420 acres of the 3 Links Farm. The 3 Links Farm and the San Pedro Preserve were both turned over to TNC for management. Other mitigation properties that they own include the Cook's Lake property and, in conjunction with Salt River Project, the Spirit Hollow property and Spirit Hollow Annex. Their management goals are to increase flows and improve habitat, especially for neo-tropical migratory birds. Diane would like to see increased management coordination among all river property owners.
- Heather English from the Salt River Project, described how, as owners of the Roosevelt Dam, SRP was required to mitigate for southwest willow flycatcher habitat loss when they raised the height of the dam. Their properties include the Spirit Hollow, which they own with BOR, as well as the Black Farm and Adobe properties, which are managed under contract with TNC. The properties are managed in perpetuity for in-stream flow. In addition to flycatchers, these properties harbor yellow-billed cuckoos.
- Andy Laurenzi from Archeology Southwest reminded us that the San Pedro below San Manuel has seen significant recovery of the riparian habitat since BHP closed their mine and stopped their heavy water use. His organization has surveyed ¼ mile on either side of the river from the Narrows to the confluence with the Gila. Their goals are to preserve a cultural landscape, un-fragmented and integrated with the natural one by increasing awareness among landowners. They preserve multiple sites using conservation easements as well as outright ownership and support a volunteer site steward program.
- Iris Rodden from Pima County works with the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, which coordinates with USFWS and is funded by bond elections. They own 15 large ranches in the county with state leases that are often leased back to the original ranchers. Three of the ranches are in our watershed and include the

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A-7, 6 Bar, and M Diamond, all of which are along the eastern side of the Santa Catalina Mountains. Pima County also owns the Bingham Cienega on the San Pedro River and deeded land in Beuhman Canyon. Their goals include grazing rest, erosion control and maintaining wildlife corridors.

There followed a discussion regarding possible cooperation among the resident landowners and the landowning agencies and NGO's as part of the strategy of our organization. Archeology Southwest wants to cooperate with the landowners of the many sites that are privately owned. AGFD would like to see a Friends of the LSP Wildlife Area group develop.

**A power point presentation about the USFWS Partners for Wildlife Program** by Kris Randall and Jennifer Kaplan was next. The San Pedro watershed is one of their focus areas so proposed projects in our area receive higher consideration for funding. Funding is available up to \$25,000 with a 25% cost share provided by the landowner, which may be in-kind. Landowners agree to maintain the project for a minimum of 10 years. There are 16 projects located in our area such as a cattle trap to deal with trespass cattle, fencing to protect a spring, a vehicle barrier and a youth education project. Please see the attached pdf file for more information or visit their website:

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/Arizona/Partners.htm>.

**An update on the SunZia transmission project** was provided by Mick Meader. The Record of Decision, which was expected in mid-September, has been delayed due to conflict over the route with the Department of Defense because of its proximity to the White Sand Missile Range. In AZ, the route through the San Pedro valley would open 44 miles of entirely new corridor. This has been designated the preferred route by the BLM even though it is 28 miles longer than the Aravaipa route. The latter would open up 103 miles of entirely new corridor. This is the primary reason that the BLM selected the San Pedro route. SunZia prefers the shorter Aravaipa route. Unlike our AZ congressional representatives, NM politicians are very involved on both sides of the issue. We were encouraged to write to our representatives, Barber and Kirkpatrick, regarding a major unresolved procedural issue with the EIS, which is the repeated rejection of the best available data on reasonably foreseeable energy development effects. The BLM is required by law to utilize the best available data as the basis for their analyses of the effects in the EIS. Additional information and advocacy can be found at

<http://www.cascabelworkinggroup.org/SZhome.html>

**The business meeting followed** with a focus on the structure of our organization:

- The LSPWA is now recognized by Arizona as a non-profit corporation. Our bylaws are available to anyone who requests a copy. Our next step is to obtain federal non-profit status and knowledgeable volunteers are needed to assist with that. It will cost approximately \$400 to complete the application.
- We have expended \$1,284, \$675 of which was funneled through the Cascabel

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Conservation Assoc. Additional funding is needed to complete the film project which may generate funding for us in the future. We also need funds to apply for federal tax-exempt status. Our treasurer, Karole Skeen, is available to collect donations at this meeting. A bank account will be opened as soon as we obtain our tax ID number.

- Volunteers are also needed to help with our communication and media requirements, such as developing a website, a logo, brochures, etc.
- Outreach efforts should include the Pinal Partnership that is planning a meeting in late January 2014, on the positive effects of open space on economic development. In addition, the Copper Corridor Economic Development Coalition is sponsoring an ecotourism workshop on September 30<sup>th</sup> here at the Aravaipa campus of CAC. We need a committee to work on sustainable economic development.
- Tice Supplee of Audubon Arizona would like LSPWA to be more involved in the 2nd EcoFest next April. We had a table at the one last year. The Lower San Pedro was designated a Globally Important Bird Area in 2008 (It was designated a State IBA in 2007). They continue to do regular bird surveys. We may want to be involved in their new Western Rivers Initiative, which is building an advocacy network.
- Mick Meader reported on the workshop sponsored by the Malpais Borderlands Group he attended along with several other LSPWA members. See attached report.
- There was discussion of the proposed improvement of the road along the San Pedro by Pinal County. The consensus seemed to be that paving had been abandoned in favor of chemical treatment to control dust. A paved road is a requirement for large-scale development.
- John Hadwin noted that the conflicts over protecting the valley make for an amazing story and that a full 52-minute film production could potentially be profitable enough to cover all costs of the production. Other impending conflicts participants noted include the Red Hawk Mine in Copper Creek and the large expansion of tailings facilities for the Ray Mine, although the latter is technically outside the watershed.

**The meeting was adjourned** at the suggestion of Vice-Chair, David Omick, at 3:50 pm so we could continue informal discussion in small groups.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cathy Gorman  
LSPWA Secretary