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## **Wildlife Linkages Working Group**

### **Minutes of December 12, 2008, Meeting**

#### **Committee Members**

Ann Audrey, COT Office of Conservation & Sustainability  
Charles Barclay, ADOT (Alt.)  
Rafael Cancino, Town of Sahuarita  
Jennifer Christelman, Town of Marana  
Rick Ellis, PCDOT, Chair  
Christina McVie, Tucson Audubon Society  
Janice Przybyl, Sky Island Alliance  
Janine Spencer, Town of Marana (Alt.)  
Phil Trenary, Town of Oro Valley  
John Windes, AZGFD

#### **Public/Agencies**

Kerry Baldwin, PC NR  
David Benjes, PDOT  
Ray Schweinsburg, AZGFD

#### **Staff**

Dennis Dickerson  
Jeff Hildebrand  
Joan Reedy

#### **1. Call to Order and Introductions**

The meeting was called to order by Rick Ellis at 9:00 a.m. Introductions were made.

#### **2. Approval of Minutes of Nov. 21, 2008**

**Motion was made by Phil Trenary, seconded by Janice Przybyl, to approve the minutes of Nov. 21, 2008. Approved unanimously.**

#### **3. In-Kind Contribution Form**

Dennis Dickerson passed around the in-kind form for member participation.

#### **4. RTA Update**

No report.

#### **5. Working Group Subcommittee Report**

Ann Audrey, City of Tucson, provided a summary of the meeting she, Carolyn Campbell and Jim DeGrood had with Mayor Paul Loomis, Town of Oro Valley.

The purpose of the meeting was to present the working group's point of view on how the wildlife funding differs from other types of RTA programs. Mayor Loomis said that the real concern is not so much that money is spent on research but that the Board does not have a sense of the long-term plan for wildlife funds – the concern about upfront spending on research is that it may not take into account what, over the next 15-years, is likely to be needed. Mayor Loomis wanted to see the research very focused on actual projects and that he would like to see the priorities through the end of this 20-year period spelled out. This would provide reassurance that funds would be appropriately spent.

This requires the Working Group to exercise due diligence very early on. If the jurisdictions wrote down everything that they wanted for the next 20-years we'd be forced into that conversation now and jurisdictions would know that funds would or would not be available for future projects. Mayor Loomis' position as Chair ends shortly and his intention is to work on procedures and prioritization.

Ann said that the working group members participating in the meeting believed it was very productive. Carolyn Campbell described the diligence we have been trying to exercise on this and this notion that we are not spending money fast enough.

Rick Ellis, Pima County Transportation and Working Group Chair, asked how we move forward. Ann suggested that the jurisdictions could provide a plan for expenditures over the next 20 years. Rick Ellis said he wanted to discuss I-10 but would wait to discuss under item #8.

Christina McVie, Tucson Audubon Society, asked, "So it isn't the concern about the dollars that we've actually allocated. It is concern about the long-range vision for the dollars that are currently allocated through the RTA and the potential for using this as the template for future allocation or bonding for the RTA." Ann responded that the desire to create templates, and rules for operation apply to all the subcommittees of the RTA, not just wildlife.

Ann said Mayor Loomis did have a concern about a conceptual migratory corridor study because he didn't feel it was tied closely enough to a specific project. Ann said if we want to put that to a higher committee we would have to have some strong defenses as to how such a study is tied to a specific project. The concern is that if we just go along with short term, on a project-by-project basis, that the Working Group does not have a game plan in mind. Mayor Loomis related that the Working Group needs to have a game plan spelled out and needed to be specifically tied to RTA-listed projects.

Christina asked that in their conversation with Mayor Loomis was the word “science” mentioned? Ann said “yes” it was included in a long list of bullet points. The Working Group members pointed out that we have saved money by doing research that is applicable to many sites. Ann stated that it came down to having a long-range vision of how this money was going to be allocated and that the science that’s conducted will result in construction.

Janice Przybyl, Sky Island Alliance, asked for clarification concerning the regional wildlife corridor study and Mayor Loomis’s point of view. Ann said Mayor Loomis didn’t feel particularly amenable to that because it seemed like a more generalized project that wasn’t tied to a specific roadway project that would result in construction. Ann said the RTA prospective on this is going to be, “How are you going to spend this money, over this time period, and what is the minimum you need to do in order to spend it that way.” Ann said if this group feels spending money on a corridor study is essential, and explains it, and talks about the specific projects that will result from it, that will enhance the potential for funding.

## **6. Informal Technical Group**

Kerry Baldwin, Pima County Natural Parks and Recreation, provided the working group with his perspectives about what has been viewed as the “informal technical group.” Kerry reminded the Working Group that the Technical Advisory Group was always an informal group which offered to give a technical review of a proposal as a courtesy to the jurisdictions. The technical group could come to this Working Group and speak to a proposal during the Call to the Audience portion of the meeting. Mr. Baldwin said they are no longer meeting on a regular basis and that his agency will no longer provide a secretarial commitment to the group. No one has stepped forward to fill this role and there is no formal mechanism for technical review at this time. Rick Ellis explained that there doesn’t have to be a pre-proposal review by a technical group before a proposal is submitted to this Subcommittee. Mr. Baldwin said that if a jurisdiction comes to his agency for a technical courtesy review, he will pass it on to the people from the original committee.

Discussion followed. It was suggested that the newly formed EPAC Wildlife Task Force could be used as a forum for feedback on proposals and such issues. Dennis Dickerson said that the Task Force was not established to look specifically at proposals but at a broad perspective of wildlife in the Pima County area. The Task Force will be asked if they want to take on that role.

Christina McVie said to satisfy her comfort level anyone submitting a proposal to this Working Group must first have it looked at by the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and that she wants to see the results of that review.

Christina McVie said she wants the RTA Wildlife Linkages Working Group and the EPAC Wildlife Task Force to meet on the same day of the month. Dennis Dickerson said the meetings for the month of January are scheduled to meet as follows:

EPAC	January 9	9:30 a.m.
RTA Wildlife Linkages Working Group	January 16	9:00 a.m.
EPAC Wildlife Task Force	January 16	1:30 p.m.

## 7. Proposal Review

Siobhan Nordhangen, Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), did not attend the meeting and could not present the Pima County Regional Wildlife Linkages Workshop Proposal. Ray Schweinsburg, Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD), offered to answer questions. Mr. Schweinsburg explained that they have already given a workshop in Maricopa County. They found that identifying wildlife corridors helped developers in planning high-growth areas of the county. The RTA involvement he explained will occur at the State Route 77 choke point.

Ann Audrey said the proposal needs to show the breakdown of where the money is going: labor, materials, billing rate, travel and production costs. A flow chart showing how this fits with construction projects, other projects being added, and be specific. The cost breakdown is essential.

**Motion was made by Ann Audrey to request the revision as noted and as described and then reconsider this proposal at the January meeting, seconded by Christina McVie and unanimously approved.**

HANDOUT: Pima County Regional Wildlife Linkages Workshop Proposal

## 8. Remarks from the Chair

Rick Ellis said he would design and send out a flow chart to the Working Group before the next meeting.

## 9. Future Agenda Items

Pima County Regional Wildlife Linkages Workshop Proposal  
Tangerine Road and LaCholla Boulevard Wildlife Linkages Proposal  
Town of Sahuarita 3-5 year Plan Proposal  
Jurisdictional Priorities Lists  
Cost Estimates for road crossings (I-10 and SR-77)  
Invitation to ADOT– Update and timing on SR- 77 and I-10.

## 10. Call to the Audience

Dennis Dickerson distributed a copy of the SWOT Pima Count Analysis chart that will be discussed at the EPAC Wildlife Task Force meeting in January.

Jennifer Christelman requested any comments or suggestions on the Tangerine Road and LaCholla Boulevard Proposal that will be presented in January.

Rafael Cancino extended a thank you for all of the members who responded to his query about pineapple cacti in the Sahuarita area. Mr. Cancino said next month he would probably bring a proposal from the Town of Sahuarita with a 3- to 5-year plan.

HANDOUT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT)

## **11. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Rick Ellis, at 11:03 a.m.