



**PIMA COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**150 W. Congress Street, Suite 109**  
**Tucson, AZ 85701**

Summary Minutes – February 18, 2009  
Bank of America Building, Conference Room, 7<sup>th</sup> floor  
33 N. Stone, Tucson, AZ  
1:30 p.m.

Members Present:

Dr. Roger Caldwell  
Mr. Jeff Yockey  
Mr. Allan MacDonald  
Mr. Warren Thompson  
Mr. Peter Livingston  
Mr. Ben Dorris

Members Absent:

Mr. Daniel G. Rowe  
Dr. Eric Betterton  
Dr. Mark Witten  
Mr. Curt Lueck

Others Present:

Ursula Kramer, Director, PDEQ  
Richard Grimaldi, Deputy Director, PDEQ  
Vicki Bennie, Council Secretary, PDEQ  
Kathi Lawrence, Env. Planning Manager, PDEQ  
Roxanne Linsley, ADEQ  
David Godlewski, SAHBA  
Meg Weesner, Saguaro National Park  
Travis Bean, U of A  
Kerry Baldwin, PC Natural Parks and Resources

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Thompson called the meeting to order and introductions were made.

Handouts:

Timeline of Buffelgrass Actions at Saguaro National Park

What is Pima County doing about buffelgrass (PC Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation)

**II. APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 21, 2009, MINUTES**

Mr. Livingston made a motion, seconded by Mr. MacDonald, to approve the January 21, 2009, minutes, as written. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

**III. BUFFELGRASS ORDINANCE**

University of Arizona

Mr. Travis Bean of the University of Arizona, is a research scientist who has been working under contract with Pima County for the last three years to coordinate buffelgrass activities in the Tucson Metropolitan area. He provided a power point presentation about buffelgrass.

Buffelgrass was planted in the 1930's as a plant for cattle. The presentation included a list of significant invasive grass fires in Arizona, their location and the number of acres that burned. All contained buffelgrass.

The attributes of Buffelgrass include:

- Perennial C4 buffelgrass from Africa and South Asia;
- Individual plants can live for 20 years;
- Swollen stem bases allow it to store nutrients and survive grazing, drought and fire;
- Seeds do not need to be pollinated and are viable up to four years;
- Susceptible to cold weather;
- Introduced throughout subtropics; escapes readily; and
- Burns hotter than most grasses with temperatures greater than 1,000°F.

Mr. Bean showed a slide of major roadways that have been mapped for buffelgrass. Mr. Bean stated that the Santa Catalina Mountains have one of the worst infestations in the region for buffelgrass. Some areas are converted eco-systems with just buffelgrass: no saguaros, wildflowers or other plants.

There are two plans to deal with buffelgrass:

- Plan A – Mitigation
  - Prevent desert from becoming more flammable
- Plan B – Adaption
  - Minimizing impacts as desert becomes more flammable

What is being done?

Buffelgrass summit – 2/9/07

Volunteer efforts since 2000

Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center (SABCC) 11/08

Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Strategic Plan completed 3/1/08

Information is available at [www.buffelgrass.org](http://www.buffelgrass.org)

What is needed?

Regional coordination of resources

Info clearinghouse to include mapping and inventory data

Treatments to include research and policy

Increase number of volunteers and volunteer hours

Funding and endowments

Reducing the number of acres that could possibly burn

### Saguaro National Monument

Meg Weesner, Chief, Science and Resource Management, Saguaro National Monument, spoke about the timeline and lessons learned while trying to eradicate buffelgrass from the Monument.

Staff first noticed the presence of buffelgrass in the monument during the mid-1990's and started pulling it whenever possible. There was no inventory of how many acres were infected at that time. Staff noticed buffelgrass likes the south facing slopes and in 2001 the first staff members were hired to pull buffelgrass and fountain grass. Between 2001 and 2004, staff continued pulling and developing inventories, organizing occasional volunteer groups. By 2004, staff completed their first walking inventory that indicated approximately 400 acres of buffelgrass. They cannot keep up with the spread of buffelgrass by just pulling it. In 2005, the Exotic Plant Management Plan was approved, including chemical, mechanical and other treatment methods for a variety of invasive species, including buffelgrass. Staff started hand spraying patches of buffelgrass with Roundup using backpack spreaders. The backpack spreaders hold 4 gallons of herbicides and use a wand type of spreader. Anytime buffelgrass greens up, you must spray or pull it out because each plant produces several hundred seeds.

In the fall of 2005, increased acreage was sprayed by catching water at remote sites using stock and helicopters. In 2006 there was a setback in the spray program due to the transfer of several staff members and there was no staff spraying that summer.

Between 2007 and 2008, control programs were increasingly active using spraying whenever possible and volunteer groups pulled buffelgrass by hand. The Monument has an active volunteer program to assist in the eradication of buffelgrass. In 2008, aerial mapping by the United States Forest Service crews indicated about 2,000 acres of buffelgrass. In 2009, efforts to continue pulling and hand spraying programs as staff, volunteers, youth corps groups and funding are available. Staff began consideration of spot treatments with helicopter-based sprayers with a goal of possible start up in the summer of 2010.

Ms. Weesner stated that some of the lessons learned were that the control of buffelgrass takes a sustained effort over several years. After thick infestations are eradicated, active restoration may speed recovery and they are currently testing techniques now. Staff employed at area landscape companies need to be trained to identify invasive species and to apply effective treatments.

Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department (NRPRD)

Kerry Baldwin of the Pima County Natural Parks and Recreation Department distributed a summary called, "What is Pima County Doing about Buffelgrass?"

Mr. Baldwin stressed that in the last couple of years we have come a long way in integrating jurisdictions together in the fight against buffelgrass. The various entities are being coordinated through the Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center (SABCC).

Mr. Baldwin stated that buffelgrass does not know or respect boundaries. It would not be beneficial for the City of Tucson to remove all buffelgrass if Pima County was not also working to remove buffelgrass. The Pima County Natural Parks and Recreation Department in Tucson Mountain Park is working very closely with the Saguaro National Park, West Unit.

Pima County is doing the following against Buffelgrass:

Pima County is one of the original members of the Buffelgrass Working Unit;  
Pima County Board of Supervisors was the first jurisdiction to pass Resolutions (2005 and 2007) against buffelgrass and giving guidance to the County agencies on this issue;  
Signatory on the Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Strategic Plan;  
County Invasive Species Working Group (PDEQ, NRPRD, RFCD, PDOT, DS); and  
County has been funding a research scientist position through the U of A since 2005 (Mr. Bean).

The road system is a major element for the transmission of buffelgrass seeds. There is buffelgrass from Tucson along Interstate 19 to Nogales and west from Tucson all the way to the California border.

Mr. Baldwin stated that the NRPRD was working with utility companies and recognized that disturbed ground is a prime corridor for buffelgrass infestation. Maintenance and utility corridors are one area for continual potential for buffelgrass problems. The utility companies have volunteered to work with NRPRD on this issue. If a utility company disturbs the soil in a utility right-of-way, the company will monitor and control the area for a 3 to 5 year period.

All of the departments involved in the County Invasive Species Working Group are doing something: drafting an ordinance, mapping buffelgrass infestations, roadside maintenance

program, eradication in site specific areas (drainage and washes), spraying old El Camino Del Cerro Landfill site, controlling buffelgrass efforts in all urban parks and working with U of A to do some spraying around Tumamoc Hill. One strategic approach is to make some defensible areas around the perimeter of large tracts of sensitive lands that contain buffelgrass.

The NRPRD sponsors the Sonoran Desert Weed Wackers. Since 2000, this volunteer group has removed over 120 tons of buffelgrass in the Tucson Mountain Park alone. There are also other volunteer groups that remove buffelgrass.

Mr. Baldwin stated that they received a \$175,000 grant from the Arizona State Land Department to fund a multi-jurisdictional (county, state and federal) buffelgrass treatment project in the Seneca Creek Nature Preserve.

#### **VI. BUFFELGRASS ORDINANCE**

Last month, PDEQ drafted an ordinance to deal with buffelgrass within the unincorporated areas of Pima County. The ordinance includes an enforcement component, but staff would rather focus on education and eradication. The ordinance went to the Board of Supervisors in December and was continued to allow PDEQ time to conduct broader stakeholder involvement with community groups.

After discussion, the following comments were offered by member of EQAC:

- In beginning paragraph, when it mentions weeds, put in parenthesis behind it (except for buffelgrass);
- Include with the Notice of Opportunity to Correct, some information regarding methods of eradication (digging out, spraying, etc.);
- Include with the Notice of Opportunity to Correct, a template for a buffelgrass eradication plan or some additional information of what is required in acceptable plan; and
- Refer public receiving Notice of Opportunity to Correct to the buffelgrass website, <http://www.buffelgrass.org> and also list PDEQ's phone contact for someone to get buffelgrass information.

Two members suggested having a separate buffelgrass ordinance. Ms. Kramer explained that our statutory authority comes from Pima County Code, Title 7, and that is why we are amending the ordinance to include buffelgrass.

A motion was made by Mr. Livingston, seconded by Mr. Dorris, to support the ordinance as presented with a letter providing more detail to the Board of Supervisors. The clarification in the letter is to include the following:

*The proposed ordinance outlines a progressive process that the county will use to address the buffelgrass problem in unincorporated Pima County. The ordinance requires the county to first issue an Opportunity to Correct (OTC), which serves as a warning to the property owner. The OTC contains requirements to submit an abatement plan that will include a description and schedule of actions that will be taken to remove the buffelgrass. The County will be available to work with the property owner if there are questions about specific information required in the plan to ensure development of a complete and implementable abatement plan.*

EQAC Buffelgrass Motion (Continued)

*The ordinance also provides the ability for the county to remove buffelgrass from a property if the owner does not respond to the OTC. We believe that this type of action should only be used as a last resort by the county in addressing serious threats to public safety.*

*The key to success in addressing the serious buffelgrass problem will require all jurisdictions, public agencies, and the community working in a coordinated and collaborative manner. The county will need to work closely with buffelgrass experts, fire departments and Chair organizations such as the Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center if we are to have any chance for success in mitigating this threat.*

The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Ms. Bennie will draft the letter for Mr. Thompson's review and signature.

**V. CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

There was no response to the call to the public.

**VI. NEXT MEETING**

The next EQAC meeting will be on Wednesday, March 18, 2008, at 1:30 p.m. The meeting location will be the 6<sup>th</sup> floor conference room of 130 W. Congress.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Having completed all meeting agenda items, the Council adjourned.

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Mr. Warren Thompson, Chair

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Date

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Vicki Bennie, Recording Secretary