

**Pima County Conservation Acquisition Commission
Meeting on 2008 Election**

**Manning House
450 West Paseo Redondo
Thursday May 25, 2006
3:00 p.m.**

SUMMARY OF MEETING

The following is a summary of the May 25, 2006 meeting. Audiotapes of the meeting are available upon request.

1. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 3:15 p.m. with a quorum.

Commissioners Present

Trevor Hare
Rob Marshall
Bill Arnold
Tim Prouty
Bill Roe, Chairman
Wanda Shattuck
Tom Sheridan
Helen Wilson
Les Corey

Commissioners Absent

Jan Johnson
Chuck Pettis

2. 2008 Bond Election, Preliminary Development of Open Space/Conservation Priorities

County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry reported to the Commission that the County is beginning to plan for a possible 2008 bond election. Mr. Huckelberry stated that the County's bonding capacity continues to grow as assessed values continue to grow, and that regular bond elections keep the secondary tax rate at a stable level. Mr. Huckelberry did emphasize that a bond election in 2008 is not definite, but that the County needs to begin planning anyway.

A. Commission's Role, Timeline, Public Open Houses

Nicole Fyffe reported to the Commission that August 9, 2006 is the timeline for County departments to submit their lists of priorities. This includes the Commission's recommendations for acquisitions for open space consideration. Ms. Fyffe indicated that the County would be hosting a series of open houses in the fall for public review and input. All bond projects will be available for the public's comments. Ms. Fyffe also noted that the public is welcome to send in recommendations and attend all Commission meetings.

B. Main Objective: Conservation of State Trust Lands

Chairman Roe indicated that there are six large properties left for acquisition. All are in some kind of negotiation. Mr. Roe noted that

without the State Trust land reform Initiative, the Commission will still need to discuss the acquisition of State Land parcels.

C. Minor Revisions to the Habitat Protection Priorities category

Julia Fonseca discussed the 2008 Habitat Protection Priorities (HPP) and how they addressed conservation goals. Staff is recommending some modifications to the HPPs based on additional resource information that was not available during the 2003 process. Concerns were raised by the Commission over possible limitations to purchasing properties not directly identified in the bond ordinance. Nicole Fyffe clarified that the bond language would allow for bond ordinance amendments.

Ms. Fonseca discussed the information on the Grasslands Map. This data layer was provided by The Nature Conservancy, which maps distribution of grasslands. Existing Habitat Protection Priorities reflect very little high quality grassland. These are found primarily in the Cienega Valley. Staff recommends adding eligible properties that fit criteria of having contiguity with AB Mosaic and land with less than 10% shrub cover. Staff also recommends dropping properties that fall within the Multiple Use category of the Conservation Lands System. Ms. Fonseca indicated that there are about 30,000 acres total recommended for addition. Commissioner Marshall recommended that the portion of grass lands identified between the Santa Rita's and Santa Rita Experimental Range, be given secondary priority.

Ms. Fonseca discussed the Wet Riparian Map, which was staffs first attempt at an analysis to pick up springs and streams that were not included in the original HPPs. Commissioner Marshall had several comments regarding the analysis that staff will take into account. Commissioner Corey suggested that a regulatory approach via the Flood Control District may protect these in lieu of acquisition.

Nicole Fyffe discussed the County-owned grazing leases. Ms. Fyffe pointed out that some of the state lands associated with the ranch acquisitions were not identified for acquisition. Ms. Fyffe indicated that Rancho Seco's state lands were not identified as Habitat Protection Priorities and would not have a funding source for acquisition. Staff recommends that these state lands be included as Habitat Protection Priorities. Commissioner Marshall suggested an assessment of what state lands would assist the County for management purposes. There was discussion regarding another category being created to place the County's current grazing leases, not as Habitat Protection Priorities, but as a mechanism to acquire them.

D. Community Open Space Lands

Nicole Fyffe reported that input was received from Gayle Hartman, Michelle Zimmerman, with the Rincon Institute, Steve Anderson and Diana Freshwater regarding possible Community Open Space lands. Ms. Fyffe discussed all draft additions on the map provided. Ms. Fyffe also indicated that staff mapped all non-bond applications received so far. Not all are shown since some parcels have already dropped off due to lot splits and development. Commissioner Wilson suggested the creation of a line item for unidentified properties, to give the County flexibility.

Concerns were expressed regarding issues of accountability when implementing such a project.

E. Additional Categories: Wildlife Corridors, Conservation of Water Rights, Hybrid Parks

Kerry Baldwin reported that there is no funding source for pieces of land that would serve as wildlife corridors, or to compliment the RTA funding. Mr. Baldwin explained that these would not fit under Habitat Protection Priorities or as Community Open Space, but could as a separate category. Commissioners expressed reservation about having open-ended criteria. Instead, commissioners expressed support for delineating more specific areas.

Julia Fonseca discussed the issue of water rights and their conservation. Staff mapped all Arizona Department of Water Resources water rights. Ms. Fonseca pointed out that over 5,000 sites were mapped. They were prioritized by overlapping streams, springs, and the Santa Cruz River. Ms. Fonseca indicated that there are significant limitations in the data and ability to locate these rights, but this is just the preliminary analysis. Commissioners requested that further analysis include points of diversion and extent of impacts and that information on the different categories of water rights be provided, including those owned by the County

Lauren Harvey reported that staff has been exploring the potential of intersecting open space and parks acquisitions (Hybrid Parks). Different concepts were presented showing possible layouts and funding appropriations. Concerns expressed included the impact on biologically important lands due to associated park impacts and whether the funding source would be primarily open space bond funds vs. parks; some commissioners expressed support for exploring the concept further. Ms. Harvey indicated that further analysis is needed.

F. Bond Authorization to be Requested for Open Space/Conservation

Chairman Roe indicated that the proposed package must balance needs and reasonable numbers for a recommended authorization.

3. Next Commission Meeting

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 8, 2006 at 3:00pm. The next Commission meeting focused on a potential 2008 Bond Election is scheduled for June 15, 2006.

4. Call to the Audience

No members of the public spoke at this time.

5. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:15 pm.