

**ARIZONA OUTDOOR RECREATION COORDINATING COMMISSION
(AORCC)
OF
ARIZONA STATE PARKS (ASP)
Offices of Arizona State Parks
1300 W. Washington St.
Phoenix, AZ
April 10, 2008**

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Bell called the meeting to order at 1:00pm. Ms. Shulman took the roll and announced that there was a quorum.

Commission Members Present:

Jeff Bell, Chair
Mary Ellen Bittorf (*via telephone*)
William Schwind
Devin Rankin
Karla Brady

Commission Members Absent:

Larry Voyles
Ken Travous

Arizona State Parks Staff:

Doris Pulsifer, Chief of Grants
Tanna Thornburg, Chief of Planning
Annie McVay, Recreational Trails Coordinator
Bob Baldwin, Grants Coordinator
Ruth Shulman, Advisory Committee Coordinator

Guests:

Kent Taylor – Arizona State Committee On Trails (ASCOT)
Bonnie Winslow – Chair, ASCOT
Maureen DeCindis - ASCOT
Jim Horton - ASCOT
Daye Halling - ASCOT
Cate Bradley – ASCOT/National Park Service
Tom Fitzgerald - ASCOT
Kyle Birkemeier – Yavapai County
Connie Lane – Tonto National Forest

B. INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS AND STAFF

Members and staff introduced themselves.

C. ACTION ITEMS

1. Approval of Minutes from the December 13, 2007 and March 20, 2008 meetings.

Mr. Schwind noted that in the minutes of December 13, 2007, the name of Mohave County was misspelled as “Mojave County”. Ms. Shulman will correct the spelling. Mr. Schwind then moved that the minutes for December 13, 2007 be accepted as amended and the minutes for March 20, 2008 be accepted as presented. Ms. Bittorf seconded the motion, which passed with 4 ayes. Ms. Brady abstained from voting.

2. Consider Recommending a Trails Heritage Fund Match Decrease.

Kent Taylor spoke on the reason ASCOT is requesting a decrease in the match for Trails Heritage Fund grants. He began with a history of this request, which began as recommendation of the Trails Heritage Fund criteria-review task force. ASCOT came to AORCC with this request three years ago, and AORCC did not feel it could be supported at that time.

He noted several reasons for the request:

- 1) There are a disproportionate number of grant applications for the Trails Heritage Fund program from larger metropolitan communities. During the planning for the Arizona Trails Plan 2005, stakeholders recommended lowering the match amount to level the field for smaller and rural communities to have access to the funds. He noted that in the breakdown of grants awarded over the past several years (copy available on request) the majority have not gone to projects in outlying areas, and in some cases not to the best projects because of the matching funds.
- 2) Lowering the required amount for matching funds will make the grant program more competitive and should result in more projects being completed, and higher quality projects through competition.
- 3) The match for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants available through Federal funds is very low; under 10%. The RTP grant program is typically oversubscribed, and therefore more competitive.

Mr. Taylor said that these three reasons are the major reasons for decreasing the match. He noted that the Trails Heritage Fund grant program is currently undersubscribed. Lowering the match would be the best mechanism for getting more grant applications in the door, raising the competition and getting more and better trails projects on the ground. Ultimately he feels that everyone would be more interested in getting more and better trails projects available to Arizonans.

Mr. Schwind asked about uncommitted balances in the Trails Heritage Fund going back to 2002 with available extensions. He asked how long grants can remain open without being completed. Mr. Baldwin noted that the project cycle is three years, from the time the agreement is signed. Carryover amounts roll into the next grant year; including the new funds available each year, the money to award grows. If there are issues with completing the project within that three-year time frame, the grantee can request an extension of one additional year. Mr. Baldwin also noted that in the 2003 cycle, grants awarded to US Forest Service (USFS) were delayed while the grant agreement language was refined. Mr. Schwind then asked whether extensions were ever denied. Mr. Baldwin that recently, there have been extensions recommended for denial by AORCC. Chair Bell noted that a one-year extension can be granted administratively by ASP Staff. All other extension requests must be reviewed by AORCC, and passed on the ASP Board with a recommendation to either approve or deny the extension.

Chair Bell noted that the previous request three years ago had been to reduce the match to 35%. Today's request is to reduce the match to 25%. Chair Bell asked what went into the change? Mr. Taylor noted that between changes to ASCOT and the feeling on ASCOT that the difference in the match should be distinct enough to make a major positive impact on the program.

Chair Bell said that there were several requests to speak on the issue from members of the public.

Connie Lane of the Tonto National Forest discussed the current budget difficulties within the USFS. She noted that 32 miles of the Arizona Trail in the Globe Ranger District were completed with Trails Heritage Funds. The current amount of the match, 50%, is increasingly difficult to raise at this time, though the number of potential projects has not diminished. Often, the match is raised through donations of volunteer labor on projects, however this is not always possible due to considerations of location and terrain. She asks that AORCC consider lowering the match to 25%.

Kyle Birkemeier, the Yavapai County Trails Coordinator, spoke to represent both Yavapai County and the Verde Valley communities of Jerome, Sedona, Cottonwood, Camp Verde and Clarkdale who are working on a Verde Valley trail plan. He said that the trail projects in smaller communities have fallen by the wayside because it is difficult to raise the funds. Additionally, in the seven months he's been with the County, two trails projects have fallen through due to lack of being able to raise the match. A trails project to provide connectivity amongst the communities is planned, as well as an extension of the Black Canyon Trail. None of this will happen without the assistance of this Commission in lowering the match.

Cate Bradley, a member of ASCOT and an employee of the National Park Service spoke next. In her position, she works with communities to provide technical

assistance in planning trails and protecting open spaces. She works all over Arizona, but especially in the rural areas. She discussed the history of trail planning nationally, beginning in the 1930s with the building the Appalachian Trail, and continued through to the present Arizona trails. She noted that much has changed since the founding of the Heritage Fund in the 1990s. Issues of health, both physical and mental, and the issue of children “disconnecting” from nature and the outdoors are growing while funds for recreation are diminishing from all levels of government. Nevertheless, the trails community has worked hard to form partnerships with governments, non-profit agencies, hiking clubs and developers to continue to ensure that trails remain available to the populace. Reducing the Trails Heritage Fund match will, at the very least, allow smaller communities to submit applications where now they may not be doing so. She also asked that, in the event AORCC approves this decrease, that AORCC publicize and celebrate the decrease by communicating to community stakeholders across the state.

Daye Halling of ASCOT addressed the Commission. He is a citizen-at-large member of ASCOT whose profession is land development. He noted that when the situation becomes dire financially, the ability to recreate inexpensively gains a higher importance to the public. He requests that the reduction be recommended because it will be incredibly significant now and in the very near future.

Maureen DeCindis, ASCOT’s Vice-Chair and the Maricopa Association of Government’s (MAG) Coordinator of the Bicycle, Pedestrian and Elder Mobility program spoke next. She noted that MAG had in times past created a ratio for funding based on the population levels. The program was quite successful.

Chair Bell opened the floor to the Commission for questions. Mr. Schwind asked about the budget in the Tonto National Forest and the recreation positions. Ms. Lane said that many of those positions were cut and therefore eliminated. He then asked Mr. Birkemeier about the trails projects that had fallen through. Mr. Birkemeier said that of those projects: one had not been able to arrange funding for the trail head project, and one had not been able to raise the match funds.

Ms. Brady asked Mr. Baldwin about the grant rating process, and whether there was a sliding scale of points available for the level of the match. Mr. Baldwin said that had been the case at one time, but was no longer.

Chair Bell noted that there had been two letters submitted in support of the proposal. One was from Patricia Smillie in Dewey, Arizona and was from Robert Taylor on behalf of Deryl D. Jevons, Acting Forest Supervisor.

Mr. Schwind asked whether there was a cap on the amount of grant funding a project can receive. Mr. Baldwin noted that the cap was set by statute at 20% of available funds per entity.

Ms. Brady moved to support ASCOT's recommendation to reduce the match requirement for the Trails Heritage Fund from 50% to 25%, and to forward this recommendation to the Arizona State Parks Board for final action. Ms. Bittorf seconded the motion. Ms. Brady noted that raising the level of competition in the grant program can only result in better applications, and more quality projects on the ground. Mr. Schwind noted that his support is particularly for the rural communities, where trails recreation is more likely to occur. Chair Bell noted that he supports the reduction, but does have a concern that the larger entities will take advantage of the reduction to submit more applications resulting in the smaller entities again being pushed out. Chair Bell then called for the vote, which carried with no further discussion.

D. REPORTS

1. Arizona Trails 2010 Plan Update

Tanna Thornburg spoke on the reason for, and the process of, doing the Trails Plan in Arizona. The document needs to apply both to motorized and non-motorized trails throughout the state. Similar to the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), the Trails Plan must be based on a variety of public inputs. Arizona State University (ASU) will again be conducting surveys among the populace as they did with the SCORP last year. Assessments are made of trails use in the state. The general public will be surveyed as well as the "avid trails user" community, and there will be focus groups around the state. The issue of trails connectivity will be explored, as will trends in trails and trails usage. In addition to bringing the report to ASCOT and the Off-Highway Vehicle Advisory Group (OHVAG), the report will come to AORCC for recommendation of approval to the ASP Board. The timeframe for the draft plan will be January/February of 2009, and the final plan should be presented by the fall of 2009 to be approved by 2010. Chair Bell asked when the focus groups will be held. Ms. Thornburg noted that the sessions have not been scheduled, but are anticipated for the fall of 2008. Mr. Schwind asked that information be posted on the ASP website. Ms. Thornburg noted that the information will be posted, and that events are planned for approximately five locations throughout the state. Both land managers and the general public will be held separately.

2. Parks Board Actions on AORCC Items

Ms. Pulsifer noted that at the December 2007 AORCC meeting, the Commission considered changes to six different projects. The extension requests recommended for approval were: BLM-Kingman Field Office Trails Heritage Fund Project #680204, Monolith Garden Trail Development, City of Flagstaff Trails Heritage Fund Project #680207, FUTS: Rio de Flag North Acquisition/Development, Tonto National Forest, which the ASP Board approved.

AORCC did not recommend approving the extension of Trails Heritage Fund Project #680211, Seven Springs Interpretive Trail Development. This request was ultimately withdrawn. The State Lake Improvement Fund Project #780114 –

Mohave County Willow Beach Fishing Pier extension request was not approved by AORCC, however after a presentation by the National Park Service, the ASP Board did approve. Finally, Coconino National Forest Trails Heritage Fund Project #680208, AZ Trail: Mormon Lake Segment Dev., Phase III deletion of certain scope item was approved by the ASP Board.

At the March 2008 meeting, Assistant ASP Director Jay Ream presented a request to approve funding the purchase of the Picket Post House near Boyce Thompson Arboretum State Park using funds from the Heritage Fund Historic Preservation grant program and the Local, Regional and State Parks grant program. AORCC voted to approve the request. The ASP Board at their April 4, 2008 meeting authorized AD Ream to enter into purchase negotiations for the Picket Post House.

3. Travel Policy Changes and Updates

Ms. Shulman presented the new rules for travel claims from the Arizona Department of Administration as adopted on January 1, 2008. Payment for travel claims now comes from the employee payroll computer system, which requires advisory committee members who make travel claims to fill out the same paperwork employees do for entry into the system. In addition, meals during an overnight stay on business are not considered taxable income, however meals without an overnight are taxable income according to the IRS. Ms. Shulman noted that each committee member in attendance had a packet of forms, and FAQ on the travel claim policy and a travel claim form should they wish to receive reimbursement for travel expenses. One additional requirement is that, per the Arizona Attorney General, anyone receiving reimbursement must also complete an I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification form. This requires presentation of documents verifying a person's right to work legally in the United States.

Ms. Rankin asked how often reimbursement applies. Ms. Shulman noted that mileage for travel to meetings is always reimbursable, however AORCC seldom if ever arranges meetings in locations requiring an overnight stay. The determination whether one cares to be reimbursed should be made by that person. Ms. Shulman also noted that I-9 verification documents must be presented in person, so there will be an opportunity to do so at the coming meeting.

4. Legislative Report

Ms. Pulsifer noted that the Joint Committee on Capital Review (JCCR) met in December 2007 to review the State Lake Improvement Fund (SLIF) applications for 2007. Several grantees attended the meeting to speak on behalf of the projects, as well as Assistant Director Jay Ziemann. The SLIF projects received a favorable review from the JCCR. At this time, the 2008 SLIF applications are pending. Twelve applications for over \$6 million were received.

Senate Bill 1011, introduced by Senator Burns, is the Funds Elimination and Transfer Bill would result in Legislative appropriation. Since the bill was

introduced, however, SLIF has been removed from the bill's scope. However, the funds for SLIF may still be "swept" via another bill. SLIF funds help with ASP's operating budget, as well funding 28 positions with ASP. Those areas would be severely affected by a Legislative "sweep".

Ms. Brady asked whether SLIF included the \$4 million funds approved for Bullhead City. Ms. Pulsifer said that it was pending. She then also clarified SB 1011, which would have moved approval of SLIF projects to the Legislature, but since SLIF was removed from the bill that will not occur.

5. Heritage Fund Report

Ms. Pulsifer noted that as of February 29, the Heritage Fund is on track to be fully funded for 2008. She anticipates full funding by the end of April, 2008.

E. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

None.

F. SUMMARY OF CURRENT EVENTS, MATTERS OF BOARD PROCEDURE, REQUESTS AND ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

G. TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

June 12, 2008 – Peoria City Council Chambers

H. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Bell adjourned the meeting at 1:55pm.