

Minutes  
Arizona CRM Task Group Meeting  
May 31, 2007  
Maricopa County Cooperative Extension-Ocotillo Room  
10:00 AM

Attendees: Steve Barker NRCS, Steve Cassady NRCS, Jim Christenson UofACES, Don, Decker NRCS, Marlo Draper BLM, Phil Heilman ARS, Diana Marsh AZDEQ, Bob Michaels USBofR, Sal Palazzolo AZG&FD, Dave Smith USF&WS, Stephen Williams AZSLD

**Introduction**

Decker reviewed CRM-MOU (19 signatories) and the duties of the State Task Group.

**Review of Minutes**

Barker reviewed the State Executive Group meeting in March.

(Following are notes from Barker's summary). First meeting in 5 years. David McKay NRCS State Conservationist, wanted to focus on getting plans written and on the ground. The MOU will be re-signed by all participants with an update of the descriptions of AZDofAg responsibilities. Individuals were assigned to the State Task Group. The Arizona Grazing Lands Conservation Association made a presentation of a Utilization Paper. The Executives passed a motion to support its principles and urged agencies to adopt it. The SW Strategy formed by then Secretary of the Interior Babbitt, has disbanded except for a core group of executives who deal with non land management agency policies. The group decided on Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007 for their next meeting.

**Round Robin of Current Efforts**

Palazzolo pointed out that his agency does not own much land but they are encouraging producers to get CRM plans going. He talked about the Diablo Trust and held it out as a good example of the CRM effort in Arizona.

Barker talked about the 2008 Farm Bill which is being negotiated now. It will probably result in the combining of many programs which are currently separated within the Department of Agriculture. He wants to reinvigorate the Conservation Districts to create active Work Groups which will help the NRCS to focus its conservation efforts where they are most needed. He would like to use the Task Group to identify resource issues and what needs fixing and financing. The State Technical Committee will also be used to assist in this effort.

Marsh pointed out that the AZDEQ is interested in the water quality portion of resource concerns. She is involved in assessments of water quality, mostly from non point sources. She wants to make sure that impaired waters are addressed in conservation plans. Marsh works with the 319 grant program and would appreciate help in the interpretation of the monitoring which is included in these grants.

Draper talked about the heavy workload involved with allotment evaluations due by 2009, Standards & Guidelines, NEPA, Section 7 consultations and rangeland health monitoring. She is working with NRCS and NRCDs to see if BLM can expedite the

evaluation process, where she feels the local level is the place to make this happen. She would like to see BLM dovetail their requirements into what is needed for CRM.

Smith talked about Partners for Wildlife as a good funding source for habitat improvement with State, private and Tribal lands eligible for up to \$25,000. He talked about Safe Harbor Agreements and Habitat Conservation Plans. He consults on RMP revisions with the BLM. Steve Spangle has mentioned the possibility of consultations done in a CRM type of format.

Cassady talked about his role as the State technical support to the Field Office range conservationists. He talked about the need to improve the Ecological Site Descriptions. This would involve funding to make it happen sooner. He would like to have appropriate experts from various agencies help him on fleshing out the State and Transition models in the Ecological Site Descriptions. He reported that only 2 areas of the State are not yet finished with their soil mapping, portions of the Navajo Reservation and portions of the San Pedro River area, (not including Forest lands which are mapped by the Service using their TES method).

Heilman explained that ARS develops the tools needed for conservation planning and monitoring. A rangeland specific erosion model is under development and AGWA, a watershed model. Remote sensing is being developed to give cover estimations from satellite photography. There would be some method to password protect the private lands.

Michaels is interested in planning efforts which affect water supplies. His agency does large scale planning for how to get water where it is needed. The Rural Water Act allows for start to finish planning of water related projects without further Congressional approval for small communities. Construction will require Congressional appropriations and authorization. They are still working out the rules for eligibility and the application process for this new program.

Williams talked about his range staff's involvement in CRM at the Working Group level, the State's role with the NRCs, and their responsibility for reviewing projects that are funded by others on State Land. Doug Witte is the new State Administrator for the Natural Resources Conservation Districts.

Christenson talked about new hires and a new publication on rangeland monitoring. He sees the Task Group as the working arm of the State Executive Group, able to identify potential projects and get CRM efforts happening.

### **CRM Plan Components**

Handouts of Statewide CRM Efforts, CRM Guidelines and CRM Guidance.

Barker noted the lack of CRM efforts on Tribal Lands.

### **Heilman Presentation**

Heilman with help from Cassady gave a brief description of how ecological site descriptions are used in land management and planning. He would like to see a more complete effort from those agencies and groups who work with natural resources, to better flesh out these descriptions. There are many site observations from NRCS, BLM has good desired future condition data and the FS has good information from the TES

mapping. How do we coordinate gathering data from the agencies and use of the knowledge that local professionals have gained through their years of experience?

### **Roles for the Task Group**

The group worked on compiling a list of potential items for the Executive Group to consider. The intent is to have this list of recommendations ready for the Executive Meeting planned for October 11, 2007. (Attached is a list which Decker organized under various headings).

### **What is Next**

No date for the next meeting of the Task Group was set at this point. Decker agreed to email the group with information which came out of this meeting and solicit input. Decker will organize the next meeting based on input from the group as necessary to produce a strategic plan for the Executives to consider, in time for the fall meeting.