

PRESCOTT WATER ISSUES  
COMMITTEE MEETING  
FRIDAY, AUGUST 13, 2010  
PRESCOTT, ARIZONA

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESCOTT WATER ISSUES COMMITTEE held on Friday, August 13, 2010 in the LOWER LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM located at 201 SOUTH CORTEZ STREET, Prescott, Arizona.

A. Call to Order.

Chairman Lamerson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

B. Roll Call.

COUNCIL WATER ISSUES COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Chairman Jim Lamerson	PRESENT
Member Mary Ann Suttles	PRESENT
Member Steve Blair – arrived at 9:43 a.m.	PRESENT

Chairman Lamerson introduced Chuck Budinger, Gary Worob, Gordon Bean, and Michael Byrd. He also noted that Lora Lopas was no longer on the committee and Member Suttles would take her place.

C. Presentation by Walt Anderson of the Audubon Society: watershed and wildlife

Gary Worob introduced Mr. Anderson as a photographer, naturalist, tour guide, accomplished author and a professor at Prescott College.

Chairman Lamerson noted that the private committee put together some interesting speakers and thanked the committee.

Mr. Anderson said that it was a positive sign that the City was involved in the water issues. His was a story that not everyone had heard. Prescott was a beautiful area and a tremendous resource. He noted that no one could be an expert on wetlands and that they would have to be a jack of all trades to understand the water issues.

Mr. Anderson then gave a PowerPoint presentation which covered:

▶ WILLOW LAKE

▶ WATSON LAKE

He noted that Watson and Willow were important birding areas (IBA) and part of a worldwide effort sponsored by the Audubon Society.

The IBA Program started in 1985 and there were now 178 countries involved.

- ▶ IBA PROGRAM GOALS
- ▶ IDENTIFY, DOCUMENT AND RECOGNIZE THE MOST IMPORTANT AREA FOR BIRDS
- ▶ ENGAGE PEOPLE IN CITIZEN SCIENCE AND CONSERVATION PROJECTS
- ▶ PARTNER WITH OTHERS TO BRING RESOURCES TO IBA'S IN NEED OF CONSERVATION – he noted that Prescott College had contributed work study money.

Chairman Lamerson mentioned some news that he had heard about a dog dying after swimming near Camp Verde, due to the water quality. He was concerned about the birds in the Prescott area, since their waters were impaired.

Mr. Anderson said that it would depend on the source of the contamination and that it was important to be proactive. He noted that a healthy ecosystem had its own defenses. It was important to keep the water quality high. The City should fluctuate the water levels, some times more than others, to oxygenate the bottom of the lakes.

- ▶ AZ IBA WORKS ON ISSUES, MANAGEMENT, PARTNERSHIPS AND ADVOCACY
- ▶ FUNDING BY ARIZONA GAME AND FISH AND GRANTS
- ▶ SHARING OF EXPERTISE
- ▶ POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FUNDING
- ▶ VOLUNTEER WORK POOL
- ▶ CITIZEN BUY IN AND SUPPORT – noting that nature-based tourism was golden. Birding in Southeast Arizona brought in millions of dollars each year and birding in Prescott was growing annually.

Mr. Anderson noted that birders were on the wealthy end of the spectrum. A lot of people travelled extensively to watch birds.

He said that the Watson/Willow IBAs were already gaining recognition. The State meeting of Arizona ornithologists would be in Prescott in October 2010 and he would like to have a huge festival.

- ▶ HABITAT DIVERSITY IS THE KEY – there were no other comparable lake systems within 200-300 miles East and West and within 60-150 miles North and South. For the birds to complete their migrations, Prescott was a key factor.
- ▶ DIVERSITY BEGETS DIVERSITY
- ▶ THE ALGAE IS WAY OVERDONE -There are too many nutrients in the lake. In order to find out where it was coming from, the City should look beyond the lakes.
- ▶ PRODUCTIVITY IS GOOD, UP TO A POINT - Pond weeds are good water fowl food. They can get summer kill in the lake when everything was killed due to lack of oxygen.
- ▶ LAKES ARE DYNAMIC, NOT STATIC - they need to be managed and water levels manipulated.
- ▶ PLAN WATER LEVELS TO PROVIDE STOPOVER FOR HABITAT

Mr. Anderson noted that some people had talked about dredging the lake. That should be done when there was no water in the lake. There may be toxins in the mud. He thought that it was a good idea to do.

Chairman Lamerson said that when working with the Salt River Project (SRP) they had to worry about when they could draw down the water.

Mr. Anderson said that the City should approach SRP with “good science”.

- ▶ PRESCOTT THRIVES THROUGH QUALITY OF LIFE
- ▶ WONDERFUL WALKING TRAILS – children are losing contact with nature.
- ▶ MANAGEMENT PROVIDES EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES
- ▶ A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT IS OUR STRONGEST HOMELAND  
SECURITY vs SENSITIVITY TO THE LAND PAYS OFF

Mr. Budinger asked if the IBA was regulatory. Mr. Anderson said no, but the Audubon Society recognized the Prescott area as special. It had values and was a useful tool. The recognition was good for grant applications.

Mr. Budinger asked if they had a web site. Mr. Anderson said that he could check AZIBA.org or Google important bird areas. He also noted that Tucson was very involved and that the Arizona Audubon web site was great.

Mr. Budinger noted that he had a concern for the habitat. He said that the City was looking for a wide range of uses for the lakes. He asked if they were going to bring in

birds that may restrict other uses, like the bald eagle and wondered how to manage the growth.

Mr. Anderson said that municipal parks, etc. got a lot of use. When the use was predictable, the birds adapted to it and were not stressed. If the area was not heavily used and someone went out in a motor boat, the birds would be stressed. Wildlife contributed to the value of other activities. He noted that it would be a good idea to get a Safe Harbor Agreement.

The stakeholders should get together to define what was important and create a Habitat Conservation Plan. Incidental take would then be acceptable and water quality would be part of the plan. Chairman Lamerson agreed.

Mr. Worob thought that there was a need for a wetlands professional.

Karen O'Neal said that they should develop a habitat so that they did not have endangered species. She noted that the eagles did not cause restrictions in Prescott.

Mr. Anderson said that they should keep the lakes a no-wake zone and there should be no motors. Mr. Worob noted that the City would have more opportunities for grants if they allowed motors, but kept the no-wake zone.

Mr. Budinger was concerned about avian diseases. He said that migratory birds might bring something bad into the area. He also noted that Prescott was trying to get off the impaired list for Watson Lake. Mr. Anderson said that small ponds may need to be aerated, keep the system diverse and healthy and have a point source diversion.

Chairman Lamerson said that when they drained the lake to water Chino Valley the algae level was lower. Mr. Anderson agreed.

Mr. Anderson said that Mother Nature was trying to turn the lake into a marsh. Dredging and changing water flows would change the distribution of what grew in the lakes. Plants on the margin of the lake changed each year, depending on the levels of the lake. Water levels had been too high for too long. The City did not have complete control of water levels due to the droughts but, that would be the time to dredge and build islands.

Mr. Worob said that Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) said that they would do core samples.

D. Discussion of Lakes Sub-committee planning process as related to future speakers

Chairman Lamerson said that a safe harbor speaker would be good to take a preventative measure.

Mr. Budinger said that it would be good for the lake management plan. He liked "incidental take" and thought that everyone should understand the concept. Mr. Anderson said they should call the fish and wildlife office. Mr. Byrd said he would call Chris Randall. The key was diversity in vegetation, habitat, etc. with cyclical management.

Mr. Budinger said that he was in conversation with a person about remote sensing of water quality of lakes without having to collect physical samples. It looked like Prescott's lakes may be too small.

Chairman Lamerson said that they should have SRP talk about water levels. Member Blair agreed and asked if SRP could help determine what was at the bottom of the lake.

Mr. Begich asked if they had access to a botanist. He thought that the botanist may be able to come up with a solution to get rid of excessive algae. Mr. Anderson said that Phoenix and Tempe must have experts that Prescott could call on.

Mr. Byrd talked about bringing SRP in as a stakeholder. Between quality, quantity and tourism, they could help assemble some of the parts. Mr. Bean agreed.

Mr. Bean said that Amanda Richardson from Prescott Creeks would be the next speaker.

Chairman Lamerson said that politically the time was right to bring in SRP.

E. Discussion of upcoming schedule

Mr. Worob said that the mission statement was the plan to follow and that they were on target. In the winter of 2011 they would present information to the group. He said that there was potential for funding sources for planning. They would need money for analysis and speakers. He had a talk with Mark Shaffer of ADEQ to work with the State for watersheds. They could bring in huge amounts of money. He would like to start that process soon. There should be a model to present to council/public.

Member Blair said that SRP was the key. The health of the bottom of the lake was essential.

Member Suttles thanked Mr. Anderson for the presentation.

Member Blair said that there were sewer trucks that could run cameras in the creeks to see if there was any damage to the pipes.

Mr. Worob said that Greg Toth in Public Works was doing a research project that would support whatever fee schedule the City would come up with.

Mr. Byrd said that the next presentation would talk about the sampling and planning that was currently going on and looking for hot spots and sources of pollution. It would help the community prioritize. Sewer infrastructure may be part of the problem. He noted that they were mostly looking at E coli bacteria, and not looking at metals.

Mr. McConnell asked when the next presentation would be. They would email the presenter and get back to the committee.

F. Adjournment

There being no further business to be discussed, the Water Issues Committee meeting of August 13, 2010, adjourned at 10:33 a.m.

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JIM LAMERSON, Chairman

ATTEST:

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KIM WEBB, Assistant City Clerk