

WINKELMAN NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

July, 2015

PO Box 68, Mammoth, 85618 WNRCD.org

From the Frog Pond by Bill Dunn

Your district has sent in extensive comments on the Mexican wolf 10J Rule for the expansion of the Nonessential Experimental Population of Mexican wolf as a result of our meeting with Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). There are so many things wrong with the economic analysis and the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) analysis in the Final EIS that one could write a volume the size of a dictionary commenting on it. At some point, one has to stop and say these are the most important things you are doing wrong.

The Board met in coordination with FWS along with the boards of the Hereford, Pima, Willcox-San Simon, Whitewater Draw and Apache NRCDS last fall. Last December, we met with the Officials of the Small Business Administration (SBA). The SBA was particularly revealing. One of the people we met with is a staff attorney for SBA assigned to the FWS actions. She said FWS is about the worst agency for ignoring the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA). The RFA requires agencies to consider the effects of their actions on small businesses. Apparently, no action they take does any significant harm to small businesses. There is plenty of case law to sue them on that but you will still have to sue them. Currently, there are at least three lawsuits on this one decision. Wildearth Guardians are suing for them to come out with a recovery plan as is the Arizona Game and Fish Department. Coalition of Counties is suing to try to rein in the releases. They have been combined into one suit. You can find our comments on the District website.

Your district is leading the charge on the Sonoran Desert tortoise listing decision. As you will recall, we entered into coordination with Fish and Wildlife Service when they made their last decision several years ago. At that time, we were the first local government to coordinate with them on a listing. We were able to keep grazing from being considered a threat at that time. That was the first time in the nation it was used on a listing and

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

From the Frog Pond, Bill Dunn	1
NRCDS Observations, Stephen Williams	2
Meet Your New Supervisor, Carol DuBois	3
Arizona NRCDS Summer Convention & Name Change	3
Kearny River Fire & Endangered Species Act	4
The Rancher and the Tortoise & Facebook	5
ASLD Grazing Fees	6
Upcoming Events	6

was very successful. Read the accompanying article to see what's next.

Your district and the Redington district will be applying for a large grant from NRCS next month to get some very large brush control and reseeding projects as well as some irrigation efficiency projects in the Lower San Pedro watershed. This grant will dedicate a chunk of EQIP money to the watershed for a period of up to five years. If you have land there, be ready to apply if we get the grant.

Our next quarterly meeting will be on July 15th at the General Kearny Inn. You should make it a point to attend at least one or two a year. Agency folks come and give us updates and we try to have a guest speaker each meeting. We will have a short tour to look at the Kearny River Fire before our meeting. The district is leading an effort to rehabilitate the river bottom to keep the salt cedar from returning and give Kearny a defensible space. Lots of people were evacuated during the fire and a few structures were burned down.

As one of the most active NRCDS in Arizona, the Winkelman district is doing a lot of work on your behalf. As with most organizations, all the work is done by a few individuals. Perhaps it's time for you to come and take part in helping your neighbors protect your interests. There's plenty to do. Until next time.....

NRCD Observations by Stephen Williams

As I conclude a 31 year career at the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD), I want to share with you some observations and reflections from that span of time.

Arizona residents have a profound lack of understanding about State Trust lands. They do not understand the nature of the conveyance of these lands from the federal government to Arizona, the purpose for which the lands were granted, and the U.S. Supreme Court cases that clarified that these grants are indeed a Trust to be managed under trust terms and obligations. Arizona residents mistakenly feel that they are the owners of State Trust land because they live here. They are welcome to their own opinion, but not the facts. The State of Arizona is the owner, with ASLD serving as a trustee managing the granted land for the beneficiaries, not the residents.

I came to realize that the ASLD does not have an adequate mechanism for informing residents about State Trust lands. We have no Information and Education Division to develop publicity pamphlets, news releases and videos to air on television explaining what State Trust lands are.

Natural Resource Conservation Districts (NRCDs) suffer from the same lack of public exposure and understanding. A small minority of Arizona residents know what NRCDs are, and the important contributions they make to the management of natural resources within the boundaries of the Districts. The new quarterly newsletter, which is a joint effort of the Arizona Natural Conservation Districts State Association and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, could serve as a vehicle for such an information and education effort. Wick Communications and Western News & Info publish both print and online newspapers in many areas of rural Arizona. They, as well as large media outlets such as Gannett, would welcome information from the quarterly newsletter. The more citizens know about NRCDs the more likely they are to advocate for them. The best outcome is for informed citizens to champion NRCD efforts and convey that support to their legislators.

It became apparent to me early in my career that some NRCDs have a farmland focus, that some have a rangeland focus, and that some are a mix of both. This focus plays a big role in the projects and issues with which each District becomes engaged. As I learned, through the development and review of many Coordinated Resource Management Plans, the plan's goals and objectives should direct the implementation of the landowner's management actions. A District's Long Range Plan and Annual Work Plan are important guidance documents that, likewise, direct the District's actions to help achieve their goals and objectives. It is well worth the time and effort that goes into preparing these plans.

One of the most encouraging new developments is the NRCDs' effort to obtain coordinating agency status with federal agencies. It may take a paradigm shift for some federal agencies to recognize their legal obligation to coordinate. Knowing many tenacious NRCD members, I envision that there will be a continuing education program for those federal agencies that are slow to respond to, and embrace, coordination by NRCDs.

Funding for operation of the NRCDs and Education Centers is always a concern. In order to assure funding it will be critical to build relationships with freshman legislators and to reinforce existing relationships with legislators who have seniority and chair key committees.

I value the friendships that I developed with you through the years and plan to maintain those into the future. This is not Adios, but only Hasta Luego.

Sincerely,
Stephen Williams



Meet Your New Supervisor, Carol DuBois

Carol was born and raised in Tucson. She attended Amphitheater High School and was a member & officer of the FFA and 4-H. After high school graduation, she attended Central Arizona College (met Button DuBois there) and began her rodeo career (Team Roping, Goat Tying, Breakaway Roping). After graduating from CAC (Associate in Animal Science), she went to the U of A and got a B.S. in Animal Science. In 1986, she married Button and moved to the DuBois family ranch in Kearny. In 1989, their daughter Renae was born. Button and Carol took over the operation in 1990. She spends a lot of her time working on projects to improve the ranch's livestock waters. During this time, Carol also worked for the Department of Agriculture as a livestock Inspector for a while. Carol enjoys traveling and hunting.

Join Us for the Arizona 2015 Summer Convention on August 11-13!

Come join the Arizona NRC District State Association at the historic Wigwam Resort in Litchfield Park Arizona for the 2015 Summer Convention! The convention will be on August 11-13. The theme of the meeting will be "Soil Health" in conjunction with the International Year of Soils. We are putting together exciting speakers, hands-on demonstrations, and a field tour to focus on some of Arizona's most innovative producers doing some amazing things to put the fertility of their soils high. Watch our web site for registration, sponsorship information and agenda updates. <http://aznrcd.org>

Proposed By-Law Change for Association Name Change

The Arizona Natural Resource Conservation District State Association, Inc. is proposing an amendment to the By-Laws to change our name back to the Arizona Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. The name change is being proposed to better reflect the membership of both the Natural Resource Conservation Districts authorized under State law, and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts that are authorized under Tribal laws in Arizona. <https://aznrcd.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/2015-aznrcd-proposed-bylaws-change-2015.pdf>



Kearny River Fire on June 18 during the back burn

Kearny River Fire Restoration Initiative, River Fire Tour at 9 am (GKI)

The Kearny River Fire, which began June on 17 and burned more than 1,400 acres, has been labeled suspicious by the Pinal County Sheriff's Office. About 300 residents were placed under an evacuation order during the blaze, which took a week to get to 100 percent contained. Lasting for 5 days in July, 2013, the Shipman fire began as a lightning strike in the salt cedar (Tamarisk) trees and burned over 500+ acres. Both fires spread very quickly due to all of the invasive, salt cedar trees along the river bottom. The district is leading an effort to rehabilitate the river bottom to keep the salt cedar from returning, restore the natural habitat, and give Kearny a defensible space. At our Quarterly meeting, a discussion will be at 1 pm on the Kearny River Fire Restoration Initiative.

An invasive and non-native plant, the tamarisk hoard light, water and nutrients, and can impact natural systems and destroy native wildlife habitat. Based on studies, a mature tamarisk can use up to 200 gallons of water a day. For more Tamarisk information: <http://www.discovermoab.com/tamarisk.htm>

Endangered Species Act

Proposed Rule U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has published a proposed rule to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to improve the content and specificity of petitions and to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the petitions process. Presently environmental groups such as the Center for Biological Diversity and WildEarth Guardians file petitions for multiple species. In the past, the FWS has been inundated with numerous species being listed as threatened or endangered in one petition. The new rule will allow only one species per petition. It also requires a petitioner to give the agency in the affected state that has management authority over wildlife the petition information at least thirty days prior to giving it to the FWS. Any information the state agency responds with must accompany the petition. To comment on this rule submit by U.S. mail or hand delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: Docket No. FWS-HQ-ES-2015-0016; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS: BPHC, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803. Comments are due by July 20, 2015 and can be submitted by going to www.regulations.gov and entering document number FWS-HQ-ES-2015-0016

The Rancher and the Tortoise by Bill Dunn

Have our worst fears come true in Arizona's desert range-lands? Will one critter finally be the end of the livestock grazing industry because of an agreement between Western Watersheds, Wildearth Guardians and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). That was certainly the intent of the agreement on the litigant's part.

The Sonoran Desert Tortoise was seen as the tool to do just that. Their petition to the FWS in 2008 was aimed directly at the livestock grazing industry. It was the same strategy they used in the Mojave Desert Tortoise in Southern California, Southern Nevada and Southwestern Utah. In that case, they were successful in eliminating the grazing industry, to be replaced by a government industry; that of studying the tortoise. When they got wind of the petition and understood what the ramifications were, the board of the Winkelman NRCD commenced coordination meetings with FWS. Luckily, they had in their district a little known tortoise study that had been going on for nearly 30 years; longer than any other. The Meyer family had been actively studying all aspects of the tortoise on theirs and their neighboring ranches with the help of the University of Arizona. Using knowledge from that study and with the help of U of A Cooperative Extension Economics Department, and Mary Darling, wildlife biologist and longtime tortoise expert, they confronted the FWS with enough information to help them to determine that indeed livestock grazing was not a threat to the tortoise.

Then in 2012, FWS and those same litigants agreed, and a judge concurred, that the FWS would go back through their list of 251 threatened species and determine whether they should be listed as endangered or removed from the list altogether. The Sonoran Desert Tortoise is on that list and will be determined by September 30th of this year. For the last three years, the Winkelman NRCD, the Arizona Association of Conservation Districts, BLM, NRCS, and FWS have been meeting and developing a Best Management Practices (BMP) document to be ready for the FWS to use when they got to this point.

Here's the point: for the livestock industry in Arizona to convince the FWS that they are doing enough to protect the tortoise without federal coercion, the BMPs need to be adopted and used by the livestock industry here. Producers will have to be trained in these BMPs and annually report on whether they have had occasion to use them or not and how they used them. These are not difficult or costly practices, mostly just common sense stuff you need to do when you are doing your everyday duties as a rancher.

So, if you are ready to help yourself, and at the same time help the tortoise, you are going to need to participate in upcoming trainings soon. The Winkelman District and the State Association will be holding these trainings around the state in the coming months so be ready to participate. You may have to postpone moving cows or putting out salt for one day, but decide now what is more important to your future as a rancher in Arizona's deserts. This is a proactive approach to the endless petitions to list species. It's the way the ranchers up north and east are approaching the Sage Grouse, Prairie Chicken, Dunes Lizard. This time it's voluntary. If you don't do this and it's listed, it won't be. For more information, go to the WNRCD Website: <http://wnrcd.org/tortoise>

Facebook! Should We or Not?

The District is consider launching a Facebook page to inform our local community about natural resource issues affecting them and especially to reach out to a younger crowd to spur their interest in future involvement in the WNRCD. Proposed subjects that we could cover are: endangered species, natural resource careers, gardening, Aravaipa Canyon, the San Pedro River, features on local people, a plant and/or animal of the month, workshops, available scholarships and news from other sites, etc. Jane Turcotte has volunteered to develop a sample Facebook page and information on a Facebook page implementation. This information will be presented at the next Quarterly meeting on July 15 at the GKI.

ASLD Grazing Fees

Following the Commissioner's recommendation of using the five year moving average price of beef (APB) for annual adjustments beginning in the 1997-98 grazing year, the Commissioner determined that the fee should be adjusted by a factor that is the ratio between the five year new average price of beef (NAPB) and the five year old average price of beef (OAPB). The 19th annual adjustment by the commissioner, for the 2015/2016 grazing year, uses the five year periods 2009/2013 (OAPB) and the 2010/2014 (NAPB). Annual updating formula: $\text{New fee} = \text{existing fee} \times (\text{NAPB}/\text{OAPB})$

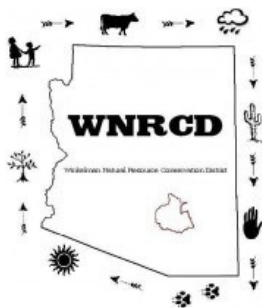
New fee = \$2.78 x (\$117.13/104.30)

New ASLD grazing fee = \$3.12

Due to unusually high cattle prices, this is the first time that the ASLD grazing fee has ever been over \$3 per animal unit.

Mark Your Calendar

- WNRCD Quarterly Meeting on July 15 (10 am) at the Kearny GKI
 - Kearny River Fire Tour 9 am
 - Kearny River Fire Restoration Initiative discussion begins at 1 pm
- Summer AACD Meeting on August 11-13 at the Wigwam Resort
- WNRCD Quarterly Meeting on October 21 at 10 am, location to be announced



PO Box 68
Mammoth, AZ 85618

