

Today’s meeting began at 1000. In attendance were the following RAC members:

Category A		Category B		Category C	
Caldwell	Patti	Dhruv	Suzanne	Girard	Michele
Strauss	Alan	Franklin	Kim	Hoerig	Karl
Winfield	Joe	Guiterman	Eli	Mouras	Ted
		Quigley	Mike		

The Designated Federal Official Kerwin Dewberry, RAC Coordinator Dana Backer, Notetaker Celena Soto were in attendance in addition to the RAC members. Members of the public and/or representatives of project requestors also joined the meeting. In attendance were Cyndi Tuell (joining meeting via phone), Becky with the Watershed Management group, Sarah Truebe with Sky Island Alliance, and RAC nominees Joanna Roberts and Jeff Haozous.

The DFO thanked attendees for joining today and reminded all that there is a renewed focus by both the Administration as well as the Chief of the Forest Service for funding within the Forest Service on projects related to the Wildland Fire Crisis Initiative. Future successful projects submitted to the RAC for consideration will have less complex or no NEPA needs associated with them.

- 1) The RAC Chairperson, Patti Caldwell proposed to accept the September 29, 2022 meeting minutes. Joe Winfield moved to accept; Michele Girard seconded the motion. Unanimous approval for meeting minutes acceptance.
  
- 2) Revisit decision on recreational fees for 2 Room with a View cabins on Sierra Vista District
  - At September meeting, discussion and resultant vote to assist with the recreation fee process ended in a tie. We have additional information and are now clear that we could hold a one-hour meeting to meet all of the requirements, discuss the request, and vote on the proposal.

There is an opportunity for reconsideration due to changes for the requirements of the proposal. Joe is in favor. Minimum amount of time needed from the RAC, and the Forest Service has a need since there is not a BLM sponsored Recreation RAC. Mike asks if this proposal is being brought to this SA-RAC since the Recreation RAC does not have a quorum at this time. If the SA-RAC does hear this proposal and takes on this component, it would not be a permanent change or commitment to continue into the future. All AZ RACs are being asked to evaluate recreational fees on their respective units. Recreation fee proposals will be restored to the Recreation RAC when they have a quorum.

Michele, who voted no prior, feels that there is a need, a path out, and can be done then her vote would change due to those details.

Alan would need the training again. He points out that we are meeting in March for topics and decisions that needed to happen in December. He feels the next meeting requirement to hear a fee presentation would be affected by the ability to meet with a quorum. Patti clarifies that the December meeting was rescheduled due to procedural issues (publishing in the Federal Register) and not an availability issue.

Ryan perhaps didn't realize the amount of training that was needed and upon further reflection, realized the introduction and training he provided at the September 2022 meeting was sufficient. The commitment of the SA-RAC would be strictly limited to the presentation of proposals. Ted is supportive and feels that it's needed.

Patti clarifies "would this also need to be published in the federal register?" Dana does indicate that the next meeting does need to be published since a decision will be made regarding funding.

A vote is held on whether or not to have a one hour meeting in order to consider the Coronado National Forest Fee proposal for Canelo Cabins.

Category A		Vote	Category B		Vote	Category C		Vote
Caldwell	Patti	Yes	Dhruv	Suzanne	Yes	Girard	Michele	Yes
Strauss	Alan	No	Franklin	Kim	Yes	Hoerig	Karl	Yes
Winfield	Joe	Yes	Guiterman	Eli	Yes	Mouras	Ted	Yes
			Quigley	Mike	Yes			

The measure passes with one No vote and the remaining votes Yes.

Since advance notice of 45 days needed for publishing in the Federal Register, it is desirable for a May meeting date to seek proposals. [May 25, 2023 from 9-11 am]

3) What to do with two projects who budgeted \$10,000 for third-party NEPA and the NEPA is no longer needed.

Projects: Arizona Trail Remote Rainwater Collector (ATA – Pinal County) and Building a future with saguaros (Tucson Audubon - Mesa District Tonto)

- De-obligate funds (Monies will most likely go to treasury and not be returned to the county SRS funds).
- Have partner keep money but provide justification of how use funds, assuming they could use the funds towards the focus of the project funded (ask for a budget submission on how the funding can be used).

Both projects are asking to re-purpose their unneeded NEPA funding for other aspects of their project submissions. Request from the RAC members to ask, of each project, how they would propose to use up to \$10k of additional funding. Not new work in nature will be proposed.

SHPO/Arch Clearance is needed for the Building a future with saguaros project.

Joe asks clarification – would be in favor of the group submitting their proposals for the additional dollars.

Patti asks if it would have to come back for another vote once the budget submittals are received. No further meeting would be required.

If the decision is de- obligate the monies. When would we need to know by? The sooner the better is response by Dana. There is a process involved with de-obligating the funds.

We certainly could ask "what would you propose to further this project within the 10K staying within the scope of the project" to spend the money.

Clarification that since these are reimbursable agreements, de-obligation would not hold up the current project.

Is there anyone on the RAC that is opposed to or has a different view from asking our partners what they would do with up to 10k additional dollars that do not have to be used for NEPA? No opinions voiced. Vote Have the partner to keep the monies if they can submit a budget justification that are in line with the previous submission.

Category A		Vote	Category B		Vote	Category C		Vote
Caldwell	Patti	Yes	Dhruv	Suzanne	Yes	Girard	Michele	Yes
Strauss	Alan	Yes	Franklin	Kim	Yes	Hoerig	Karl	Yes
Winfield	Joe	Yes	Guiterman	Eli	Yes	Mouras	Ted	Yes
			Quigley	Mike	Yes			

With all voting yes, the RAC will ask project submitters to move forward with their budget justification and outline for an additional \$10K of funding.

4) Decision on 2021 funds (\$259,661) and 2022 funds (will be available in April) – Patti and Dana  
The committee proposed three options for moving forward with potential utilization of FY21 funds based on the information provided:

- 1) Projects that were not fully funded originally. Please keep in mind that with each of the four underfunded projects, a new scope of work was submitted by the partners that reflected the funds they were awarded.
- 2) Projects that could use additional funds due to a change in circumstances (organization change, environmental change, delay in start of project, etc)
- 3) Projects that could use additional funds due to inflation.

Four requests for additional funds were submitted as follows:

	<b>Project Requests for Additional Funds</b>		
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>County</b>
ALWT	Pyeatt Ranch Erosion	10,290	Santa Cruz
SIA	Wildlife/Water	24,000	Cochise
WMG	Erosion Control	2,500	Pima
Natural Restoration	Bush Fire Replanting Project	20,000	Maricopa

56,790

Available funds are:

**2021 SRS payments Title II**

County	Amount
Cochise	66123.19
Maricopa	34743.65
Pima	21897.56
Pinal	48262.30
Santa Cruz	88634.69
Total	259661.39

The RAC reviewed proposals (on their own) and discussed options for each proposal. RAC decided to vote on additional funds on an individual project basis.

Cochise county – Sky Island Alliance proposal: Michele thinks that this changes the scope from implementation to monitoring. Feels there are a lot of cameras in the area already. The commitment for that amount of money needs to have more details about what the funds are to be used for. Concern for data quality and the notion that this is not a “on the ground” focus.

Mike is not as concerned with scope; the cameras are the least expensive aspect of the project. Staff time is the issue. The staff time is underestimated. Sarah Truebe from SIA, shares that the 2400 request was too low and was part of the initial ask from her, who was new to the job with little experience on what was needed.

Fund the additional needs: YES

Category A		Vote	Category B		Vote	Category C		Vote
Caldwell	Patti	Yes	Dhruv	Suzanne		Girard	Michele	No
Strauss	Alan	Abstain	Franklin	Kim	Yes	Hoerig	Karl	Yes
Winfield	Joe	Yes	Guiterman	Eli	Yes	Mouras	Ted	Yes
			Quigley	Mike	Yes			

A point of clarification was brought up if Sarah can speak to the group. For the benefit of the RAC, Dana shared that yes, Sarah was not advocating her position but was clarifying. Michele would like for additional justification and/or an additional monitoring plan to be submitted.

Santa Cruz county – ALWT Pyeatt Ranch erosion project: questions or concerns about what was proposed? None

Fund the additional needs: YES

Category A		Vote	Category B		Vote	Category C		Vote
Caldwell	Patti	Yes	Dhruv	Suzanne		Girard	Michele	Yes
Strauss	Alan	Yes	Franklin	Kim	Yes	Hoerig	Karl	Yes
Winfield	Joe	Yes	Guiterman	Eli	Yes	Mouras	Ted	Yes
			Quigley	Mike	Yes			

Maricopa county – Natural Restoration Bush Fire Cactus Planting: The program manager for Bush Fire replanting project shared that the cacti went into ground just recently. Work thus far has been salvaging component. They’ve run out of salvageable cacti. No other reports. Funds will be used to purchase nurse cactus if there is not a salvage site available. Sounds there is an immediate need.

Fund the additional needs: YES

Category A		Vote	Category B		Vote	Category C		Vote
Caldwell	Patti	Yes	Dhruv	Suzanne		Girard	Michele	Yes
Strauss	Alan	Yes	Franklin	Kim	Yes	Hoerig	Karl	Yes
Winfield	Joe	Yes	Guiterman	Eli	Yes	Mouras	Ted	Yes
			Quigley	Mike	Yes			

Pima County – Watershed Management Group: no discussion

Fund the additional needs: YES

Category A		Vote	Category B		Vote	Category C		Vote
Caldwell	Patti	Yes	Dhruv	Suzanne		Girard	Michele	Yes
Strauss	Alan	Yes	Franklin	Kim	Yes	Hoerig	Karl	Yes
Winfield	Joe	Yes	Guiterman	Eli	Yes	Mouras	Ted	Yes
			Quigley	Mike	Yes			

5) Field trip opportunities

Not all projects are amenable to field trips. Early April, May, June field trips are limiting due to weather. Fall makes for a better offering. Other projects are not at a point yet or aren’t easily accessible. This is what is online at this point.

Are there members of the RAC that are interested in a field trip component? And if so, when Spring or Fall.

Michelle would like to go in the fall. Mike supports field trip. Ted thinks fall/winter makes sense. Suzy supports and would like to go on a field trip. Fall and winter is much better. Patti prefers fall time frame when there is more options and weather is better. Dana will share with the project submitters that nothing will be planned until Fall based on today’s conversations. September/October is ideal.

Tuesday, October 24 is the tentative date for the field trip.

6) Scheduling next meeting

One hour meeting for REC RAC fee proposal discussion. After clarification of need, RAC will block out time for a 2-hour meeting - 1 hour for REC RAC and 1 hour for administrative needs, allocation of remaining funds and election of new chair person.

Thursday, May 25<sup>th</sup> from 0900-1100 is next meeting date. Will be published in the Federal Register.

Meeting open for public comment at 1121. No public comments. Meeting adjourned at 1123.

Patti Caldwell

3/24/23

Signature of RAC Chair

Date