



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE  
MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, March 4, 2021  
Meeting held electronically**

**PRESENT:** Chairperson Cynthia Wenstrom, Vice-Chair Laurie LaPat-Polasko, Commissioners Steve Coluccio, Steve Dodd, Mark Hackbarth, Marsha Lipps, and Tawana Parker

**STAFF:** Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director; Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Wenstrom called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Members present as noted above.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comments were submitted.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Hackbarth suggested that on page 3, item 7, second paragraph should read "monitor culturally sensitive sites."

COMMISSIONER DODD MOVED TO APPROVE THE FEBRUARY 11, 2021 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES AS AMENDED. COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR WENSTROM, VICE-CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, DODD, HACKBARTH, LIPPS, AND PARKER VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

**5. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE**

Justin Owen, Executive Director of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, reminded the Commission that the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary on

January 21, 2021. Social media campaigns and website campaigns highlighting the work of the Conservancy will be posted throughout the year in recognition of the milestone.

The Expedition Days online program (originally the Junior Citizen's Science Festival) is celebrating its five-year anniversary. To date, approximately 1,500 students are signed up to participate in the interactive virtual experience scheduled to launch in March. The program offers interactive, inquiry-based education that supplements classroom lesson plans. A custom video game was created, offering an opportunity to explore the complexity of the ecosystems.

Stewards and scientists have begun socially distanced spring field work. During March and April scientists will be working with citizen scientists and partners. Thanks to the support of Arizona Game and Fish Heritage fund, a study of the telemetry of Desert Tortoises and bat monitoring are underway.

The MSC has launched a pilot program with the Scottsdale Fire Department. They look forward to learning about additional ways they can support the fire department and local communities.

Pathfinders have started a pilot program at Brown's Ranch to assess whether it is safe for trailhead ambassador services and Pathfinders to recommence.

The Conservancy is working with City staff on plans to create an interpretive trail at the Brown's Ranch site and on creating signage for Pima/Dynamite.

## **6. AZ GAME AND FISH – LARGE MAMMAL STATUS**

Mr. Hamilton said that this is the ninth year that the large mammal aerial survey has been conducted by Game and Fish. The IGA between the City of Scottsdale and Game and Fish was put in place in 2013. The helicopter flight time to conduct the survey is paid for through the Preserve's annual operating budget.

Debra Groves, Game and Fish Wildlife Manager, noted that the annual surveys of deer and javelina populations in the Preserve are conducted under an agreement between Arizona Game and Fish and the City of Scottsdale dating back to 2015. She explained the process of collecting raw data, and reviewed the population estimates for each species. The mule deer population estimate has gone down from last year although more animals were observed this year. The javelina population is estimated to be down slightly from last year. She said that the wildlife study provides a base of population data and herd health; the analysis found the populations to be stable and self-sustaining.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Ms. Groves said that comparison between the flight statistics and the cameras in the preserve have not been done. She said it could be difficult to obtain reliable information, because it is unlikely that cameras could be placed at all water sources. Ms. Groves explained that mule deer and javelina hunting is open December through January. Hunting licenses are issued over the counter and one deer per license is allowed. She noted that the hunt rate is low. Approximately six deer were harvested in 25-M this season.

Commissioner Coluccio mentioned that the corridor camera project is temporarily on hold.

**7. REVIEW OF AREA “K” TRAILS FIELD WALK IN THE PIMA DYMANITE TRAILHEAD AREA**

Scott Hamilton, Preserve Manager, reviewed the Commission field visit to the trails in Area “K” of the Phase 3 Trails Plan, which are near the Pima Dynamite Trailhead area. He highlighted improvements planned for the area, including opportunities at the crested saguaro, horizontal rock slabs, and the rock bridge. Staff is working with the Conservancy and Game and Fish to design fences intended to protect the crested saguaro, while remaining as permeable as possible for wildlife in the area. Trail work will continue later in March.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions and make comments. They commended staff for preemptively planning protections for the area.

**8. POLICY PROCESS UPDATE**

Mr. Ekblaw reviewed the reprioritizations of the policy elements list. Amendments were made based on more effectively outlining how each element relates to the purpose of the Ordinance and the management objectives. Commissioners were asked to review the policies and be prepared to provide any input by the next meeting. Mr. Ekblaw said the goal is to work through April and May to not only update the goals, but also to identify the cost basis and develop concepts to present to City Council for possible direction at a work study session in summer or early fall of 2021. It is anticipated that a formal presentation will be ready to present to City Council by spring of 2022, in case the Council desires to have the option for an election process in November 2022.

**9. STAFF REPORTS**

Mr. Hamilton reiterated Mr. Owen’s comments, noting that the Conservancy and Arizona Game and Fish are embarking on a tortoise telemetry project, funded by the Heritage fund. The project will track approximately 20 to 25 tortoises over a two-year period. Mr. Hamilton noted that the Desert Tortoise have been identified in Arizona as a species of greatest conservation and at the federal level, have been proposed as an endangered species.

Mr. Hamilton said that the route suggestion panels have been installed along southern region trails. He exhibited photographs of signs installed at the Gateway equestrian trail, Tom’s Thumb on Marcus landslide, and the sign attached to a reclaimed wood rolling door at Brown’s Ranch.

**10. UPCOMING MEETING DATES, LOCATIONS AND AGENDA ITEMS**

All dates listed are tentative and subject to amendment:

- 2021 thru June:
- 

**Regular meetings**

April 1<sup>st</sup>  
May 6<sup>th</sup>  
June 3<sup>rd</sup>

**Special meetings**

March 18<sup>th</sup>  
April 15<sup>th</sup>  
May 20<sup>th</sup>  
June 17<sup>th</sup>

Mr. Ekblaw noted that he has reached out to Maricopa County Flood Control District regarding giving a presentation about monitoring stations in the Preserve and is awaiting a reply.

**11. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

There were no Commissioner comments.

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

COMMISSIONER DODD MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER COLUCCIO SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0), BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR WENSTROM, VICE-CHAIR LAPAT-POLASKO, COMMISSIONERS COLUCCIO, DODD, HACKBARTH, LIPPS, AND PARKER VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

Recorded and Transcribed by eScribers, LLC.