

Cascabel Conservation Association
Winter Meeting Minutes
January 18, 2025

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Introductions – Chris E., meeting chair

In person attendance at CCC: Chris Eastoe, Tom Talbott, Bill Doelle, David Omick, Gail Loveland, Sue Newman, Jim Bergstrom, Pearl Mast, Pat Rudikoff, Neal Rudikoff, Birgit DeGregorio, Susan Tollefson, Karen McKelvey, Katie Talbott, Erik Revere, Alex Binford-Walsh, Joe Page, Marissa Katz, Daniel Baker, Barbara Clark, David Blocker, Anna Lands

On Zoom: Kimberly Bell, Will McDowell, Tom Orum, Nancy Ferguson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, Lynn Thorsell

B. Reading of sojourner reflections (Susan)
See attached Hermitage Report

C. Approval of September 14, 2024 Minutes
David O moved, Birgit seconded, 9-14-2024 minutes accepted as distributed.

II. BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATION

A. Board election and nominations

Chris explained that Tom T has resigned and this is his last meeting as board member. Thanks were offered for his contributions. Chris also stated that he and James are likely moving to Australia and though he is willing to remain on the board, he will not be available as President after the spring, 2025 meeting.

David O reported that Brandon W would be willing to accept nomination to the Board. David nominated Brandon, Pearl seconded and all accepted Brandon's nomination, to be moved on at spring meeting. Daniel B nominated Alex B-W, who stated that he will contribute by working for CCA and bringing reports back to the Conservation Committee and Board, but not looking to be on the Board himself. Several others who had been approached by various members of the board, but who declined for the present because of other commitments were: Lynn T., Marissa, and Anna.

Reelection of sitting board members: Karen McKelvey motioned, and Susan seconded, that current board members, Chris E, Erik R, David O, Pearl M, Gail L, and Birgit D be reelected. Erik suggested it may be good for current board to depart room for open discussion by members, but members declined and all agreed to reelect current board members. Chris suggested that the next president be determined at the spring meeting.

B. Community report on the status of our water supply

Chris reminded us of this report he submitted at the Fall, 2024 meeting, summarizing information collected by others (mostly TNC) about the status of our water supply in this part of the San Pedro Valley. He found that the area is drying, seemingly not just in response to draws by humans. Despite an upturn in the Hot Springs water table for several years, we seem to be heading toward a continuing downturn. See attached.

C. Outreach / communication

Alex will work on the website for \$20/hour. He has requests from the Land Committee and the Conservation Committee for changes.

Pearl reported that no newsletter was produced in 2024. Birgit reported that there wasn't much overall decline in donations as a result, but all agreed that communication is important and that the Spring meeting agenda should include discussion of what we wish to communicate and how.

D. Finances

Birgit, treasurer, reported that all funds received substantial donations. General fund and conservation fund had high expenses because of the purchase of the McGinnis property and expenditures from the SunZia legal fund. As a result, total CCA balances for 2024 are down about \$61K. There were generous donations for the McGinnis land purchase and for the Hermitage Program transition. Most insurance, fees, etc have increased, some substantially. CCA made 2 grants in 2024: 5k to Saguaro-Juniper for purchase of the Sparrold property and 3k from the Education fund for building the goat pen at the Community Garden.

Lynn S-L questioned how CCA's investment money is being handled. Birgit explained that the bulk of the money is in 2 CD's at Self-Help Federal Credit Union that bring in about 5%. Also that several years ago the Board did some investigation about other forms of investment, but not everyone at that time felt comfortable moving forward with investment in a stocks fund, nor was anyone available to manage such an investment. She also mentioned that we wanted the money more accessible for purchase of land or the like. Lynn suggested that there would be accounts that would be more accessible at FDIC-secured accounts that would bring in more interest. Pearl stated that at the time of the discussion there was support for Self-Help because of its good work providing loans to low income people and Chris mentioned his relief at not having invested our limited funds in stocks at the time of the discussion several years ago, when stocks shortly took a downturn.

Gail moved and Sue seconded to accept financial report, and all agreed. Attached.

McGinnis-Verbance land:

--Clean-up--Katie reported that there have been a number of people who have helped clean up. She has focused on removing any outdoor items that cows could mess up. At this point the lumber, straw, and tiles are removed, and she feels it is ready for when the cows move to the Hot Springs Canyon side.

--Tax status--Susan communicated with the county assessor and he thought there wouldn't be any problem getting a property tax exemption. Birgit said that every year she files an exemption form for the parcels and truck. Will enter parcel number on that form. No need to combine parcels.

--Assessment of main structure: --Erik reported on his and Brandon's assessment trip in late summer. He said there was some degradation to roof, and some standing water on the floor. He discussed repair/modifications to prevent water entry. There was further discussion regarding possible use of the property and about road maintenance, but no motions proposed. Katie suggested Wild Divide as a possible name for the parcel.

E. Baicatcan Land Committee

Erik:

--Thanked members for approving change in policy about use of Mick's Cottage. Reported that it has been a good resource for housing workers with local organizations. Further, Baicatcan labor expenses for 2024 were extremely low (under \$200), with many volunteer hours exchanged for cottage use and lots of other volunteer hours.

Given success of new policy for Mick's Cottage use, Erik said he will be bringing a proposal to the spring meeting for an additional cottage at campground. He invited members to approach him with questions or for a show-and-tell of the proposed site. Several supportive comments were offered, including Susan, who stated that sojourners sometimes want to be able to spend time with the Cascabel community.

F. Saguaro-Juniper announcements

Katie:

--Thanked CCA for the \$5K grant for buying the Sparrold property, which is now part of SJ. She invited anyone to come spend time on the land.

--Reported plans to bring the SJ herd into Hot Springs pasture in late February or March. Meanwhile, they will fix fences in Hot Springs Canyon and shore up around the Caravan.

--Home on the Range event, Feb 28-March 1,2. Workshop on Friday, Intro to Natural Methods of Cheesemaking will be a fundraiser for Cascabel Goat Group to buy goat hay. Full price: \$80 per person, sliding scale available.

III. CONSERVATION PROGRAM

A. Committee Summary Report

Pearl: (See attached Conservation Report for more detail)

--Signed on to LSPWA DEIS comments regarding Air Force Operation Area expansion.

--Helped to coordinate Beaver survey with Watershed Management Group, especially local logistics and volunteers.

--Advocated with Connectivity Work Group associated with the Lower San Pedro Collaborative (the Collaborative) for help to find funding to secure conservation status of the McGinnis property, which lies in the Paige Canyon wildlife corridor.

--Approved Meader Fund proposal for Alex B-W to represent CCA at the Collaborative, including at several working groups under the auspices of the Collaborative.

Alex: reporting on work of Collaborative working groups

--Connectivity Group—in process of determining priority parcels for conservation in the riparian and cross-valley connectivity corridors. Focusing on Paige Canyon and Galiuros Gap.

--Indicators Group—Collecting data which can serve as on-going indicators of the health of the watershed. Alex is currently investigating how archaeological data and snowfall data can be incorporated.

--Landscape Scale Planning—Group just getting started in response to Collaborative survey that showed a majority of participants want to see this kind of larger scale conservation planning.

B. Further discussion of Chris's piece on SunZia at last meeting

--Chris suggested SunZia has happened, and that we move on, form a resilient response, and support the still-considerable ecological value of the valley. He referenced Richard Rohr's concept of Radical Resilience when facing situations that we cannot change. There was considerable support expressed for this, with suggestions that we grieve, move forward and put our money into lifegiving things, though we can still play an advocacy role in monitoring SunZia's compliance with requirements.

Bill D.: expressed that he feels the community did an amazing job with what we could and that ASW will continue to work with the tribes, still hoping that this will lead to a Cultural Landscape Study of the Lower San Pedro Valley in some other way, which could be baseline for things going forward.

Chris: expressed that based on this discussion he felt we had a consensus to move on and conserve what we have.

--What to do with remaining SunZia funds / GoFundMe account

Pearl: requested guidance on what to do with funds designated for fighting SunZia.

Anna: feels strongly that money raised in auction she sponsored should stay in SunZia fund

Lynn: feels there is bound to be something we can use it for against Rio Sol

Barbara: we must protect investment of people who designated anti-SunZia fund for donation. Since ASW is working on getting cultural landscape study, this may be resilient way to use the money

Pearl: Consensus is to leave fund intact under Conservation Fund

IV. HERMITAGE PROGRAM

A. General Program Update: (See also attached Hermitage Report)

Susan:

--Busiest season so far in her tenure as program leader. Received 15 sojourners staying 66 days, the majority being young and new. Their written reflections all express gratitude for the program.

--Proctor Academy will be here next week. More trucks needed to transport gear to Corbett Center.

--Sojourning news to be published in March. Snake workshop planned for spring.

B. Hermitage Program transition planning

Lynn Thorsell, cochair: Susan retiring at end of this season in role of accompanying sojourners and leading program. The Hermitage Committee put out request for expressions of interest for someone to assume this role from Susan. Will be talking this month with a couple people who responded.

Karen: for us to move forward, housing is critical. Committee has been brainstorming options. Culmination is that their recommendation is for CCA to buy Susan's property:

--14 acres in Hot Springs Canyon.

--Within Hot Springs Canyon wildlife corridor.

--Within walking distance of both hermitages and in view of signal board for Corbett Center.

--Probably tax exempt if used for Hermitage Program.

--Has solar system, phone line, and shared well.

--Vehicle access on community-maintained road.

--Price: Susan is asking what she has put into the land and infrastructure: \$52K.

Katie: A couple people have already come forward to offer funds. Committee would like permission to do some fundraising for pledges between now and spring meeting, then come to spring meeting with proposal for what is needed to complete purchase.

Katie invited questions:

Birgit: \$10K already donated designated for this purpose.

Sue: would they entertain private purchaser? ==> Karen: need housing so want it available for leader of program. Also concern that someone could buy it that wouldn't support CCA goals.

Lynn S-L: this is different approach to provide housing for someone rather than things being done by volunteers who live here who just want to help.==> Katie: location of person managing program is important to its management. Lynn T.: did extend invitation to local people, but no response. Karen: trying to find a model for what Susan has done to be passed on. Susan: as an aging community need creative ways to invite others to come into the program, and maybe later they can live here too.

Pearl: Susan has put a lot into maintenance. How would that be handled? ==> Erik: Perhaps a sum that would cover maintenance for 5 years could be added to fundraising goal.

David O.: How secure is the water supply?==> Erik (who has share in same well): very secure. Water level is 90' compared to 67' when well dug 28 years ago. The pump is serviced every 4-6 years at a cost (shared three ways) of about \$400.

Lynn T. made motion that the Hermitage Committee have permission to ask for housing pledges between now and spring meeting. Marissa seconded. All in favor. No opposed. The Hermitage committee will address the questions raised at the next meeting. Contact Katie if you would like to make a pledge for the purchase of Susan's property.

V. GARDEN/ORCHARD PROGRAM

Gail: Greens and garlic are planted. Big onion planting will take place in the coming week.

--Proposed housing & keeping of goats at the Community Garden

Katie T: Goat pen in progress. Andrew working hard on it.

Tom T: Marked path for goat walks on Confluence Property. Will be work party to establish path at some point after pen is finished.

VI. EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS, ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chris: He will represent CCA regarding water issues at LSPWA meeting on Feb. 11.

VIII. NEXT MEETING – April 26, the usual 3-5 PM, followed by potluck.

Submitted by Pearl Mast, February 6, 2025