

**SE AZ/SW NM/MEXICOCHIRICAHUA LEOPARD FROG
STEERING COMMITTEE (RECOVERY UNITS 1-4)
MEETING MINUTES**

16 Dec 2008, 1000-1600

Douglas Ranger District, Douglas, AZ

Attendees:

Name	Affiliation	Email Address
Abigail King	AZ Game and Fish Department	aking@azgfd.gov
Tom Jones	AZ Game and Fish Department	tjones@azgfd.gov
Valerie Boyarski	AZ Game and Fish Department	VBoyarski@azgfd.gov
Michelle Christman	US Fish and Wildlife Service (NM)	Michelle_Christman@fws.gov
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Christina Akins	AZ Game and Fish Department	CAkins@azgfd.gov
Ross Humphrey	San Rafael Ranch	rossh@rionuevo.com
Charlie Painter	NM Department of Game and Fish	charles.painter@state.nm.us
Anna Magoffin	Magoffin Ranch	Magoffin@vtc.net
Anne Casey	Coronado NF, Safford RD	acasey@fs.fed.us
Sonja Gasho	Middlemarch Allotment	bluegrama@yahoo.com
Jony Cockman	BLM, Safford	Jony_Cockman@blm.gov
Brooke Gebow	The Nature Conservancy, Ramsey Cyn	BGebow@tnc.org
Matt Killeen	The Nature Conservancy, Ramsey Cyn	MKilleen@tnc.org
Sheridan Stone	Fort Huachuca	Sheridan.Stone@us.army.mil
Mike Sredl	AZ Game and Fish Department	msredl@azgfd.gov
Phil Rosen	University of Arizona	pcrosen@u.arizona.edu
Dennis Caldwell	Tucson Herpetological Society	dennis@caldwell-design.com
Bill Radke	San Bernardino and Leslie Cyn NWRs	Bill_Radke@fws.gov
Dawn Wilson	Southwest Research Station	dwilson@amnh.org
Glenn Klingler	Coronado NF, Douglas RD	gklingler@fs.fed.us
Trevor Hare	Sky Island Alliance	trevor@skyislandalliance.org
Sarah Williams	Sky Island Alliance	sarah@skyislandalliance.org
John Kugler	Independent	jkugler@dakotacom.net
Tom Skinner	Coronado NF, Supervisor's Office	tskinner@fs.fed.us
Geoff Bender	Southwest Research Station	gbender@amnh.org
Duane Aubuchon	AZ Game and Fish Department	daubuchon@azgfd.gov

I: Introduction of attendees. The group was welcomed by Mike and introductions were made.

II: Meeting purpose / mechanics. Mike explained the objectives of the meeting: a) better define the role of this group in the recovery of the Chiricahua leopard frog, b) review 2008

accomplishments and set priorities for 2009, and c) what is needed to ensure that Local Recovery Groups operate efficiently and within the context of what is needed for recovery within a recovery unit or for the species?

III: Discuss possible transformation of the Stakeholders Group into a Steering Committee. The SE AZ/SW NM Stakeholders Group played an important role in the development of the Chiricahua leopard frog recovery plan, including writing portions of the plan, helping to develop recovery criteria and actions, and providing input on proposals by the Technical Team and other Stakeholder Groups. With the completion of the plan, we are in an implementation mode. The recovery criteria provide the standards by which recovery success is measured, and the recovery actions are the means by which we make progress on the ground. At the same time, several Local Recovery Groups, formal and informal, have been making progress on recovery in specific areas and recovery units.

In the implementation phase, we still need Stakeholders to ensure that a variety of land uses and private property rights are not compromised by specific recovery projects, but our emphasis has shifted towards finding recovery partners for site-specific recovery work. In that regard, referring to our group as a Steering Committee (rather than a Stakeholders Group) is appropriate. Broadly informing landowners and land managers about the recovery program is still needed, and this work will continue to occur through a variety of other forums. The recovery website (http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/CLF_Recovery_Home.html), and the newly established Chiricahua leopard frog listserve (<https://www.fws.gov/lists/listinfo/chiricahuensis>) are two important venues for broadly distributing information.

Roles of the Steering Committee include: 1) setting regional or recovery unit priorities, 2) help put the efforts of the Local Recovery Groups into the context of what is needed for recovery for the species or at a recovery unit level, and 3) coordinate regional reporting of recovery progress. In addition, recovery units 1-3 include significant areas in Sonora and Chihuahua, Mexico. It is important to involve Mexican partners to begin inventories and recovery in Mexico. The Steering Committee, as well as the Local Recovery Groups, should work towards this goal.

There was discussion of the listserve, its purpose, and what types of information should be distributed there. Some rules of operation the group agreed upon included: 1) before posting something to the list serve, ask yourself if you really want to “reply to all”, 2) do not engage in sparring matches, and 3) do not post site-specific locality data or data collected on private land unless you have permission from the landowner. Trip reports, pertinent publications and reports, meeting notes, meeting announcements and agendas, requests for information, discussion of recovery techniques, etc. are all appropriate topics for the listserve. We do not need to go out of our way to conceal site-specific locality information, but at the same time, some care should be taken not to post such information, unless it is integral to your post. Much of the information that is appropriate for the listserve will also be posted and available to anyone on the recovery website; however, the website will steer away from site-specific locality information and postings will take some time due to required administrative reviews.

IV: Progress made towards recovery in 2008 and setting priorities for 2009. A recovery unit by recovery unit discussion of the following topics occurred: 1) Brief review of recovery activities

in 2008, 2) status of populations, magnitude of threats, and how those threats are being addressed within the context of the four recovery criteria (see page 53 of the recovery plan), and then 3) based on “1” and “2”, we determined recovery priorities by recovery unit and determined mechanisms (including formation and operation of Local Recovery Groups) to accomplish those priorities.

Recovery Unit 1

A: 2008 Accomplishments: See the Recovery Update. Much work has been accomplished at Buenos Aires NWR, Sycamore Canyon, and in the Peña Blanca Lake area. The draining of Peña Blanca Lake presents an opportunity to eliminate bullfrogs on a regional scale. Sky Island Alliance is pursuing recovery opportunities in the Sonora portion of the recovery unit.

B: Status of populations and major threats: There are roughly two metapopulations: Buenos Aires NWR/Altar Valley and Sycamore Canyon and associated stock tanks. One of the two stock tank populations on the bajada of the Sierrita Mtns is probably an isolated and robust population. Bullfrogs are a continual threat and have been held at bay at Buenos Aires NWR and nearly eliminated at Sycamore Cyn by C. Schwalbe and others. A group formed this year, which is chaired by Tom Jones, is attempting bullfrog eradication at Peña Blanca Lake and surrounding tanks.

C. Priorities for 2009 and beyond: Bullfrog control or eradication in the Peña Blanca Lake area, Sycamore Canyon and vicinity, and Buenos Aires NWR. Sources of bullfrogs need to be identified and eliminated. Monitoring of leopard frog and bullfrog populations is important. One Local Recovery Group was identified. Tom Jones and Phil Rosen are the Co-Chairs. They will call an organizational meeting early in 2009.

Recovery Unit 2

A: 2008 Accomplishments: See Recovery Update. The Ramsey Canyon Leopard Frog Conservation Team (Chaired by Valerie Boyarski) continued their work in the southern end of the Huachuca Mountains. Scotia Canyon and a tank on the San Rafael Ranch are or will be ready for leopard frogs in 2009. Chiricahua leopard frogs were found at 14 new sites in the Santa Rita Mountains. The status of the species continues to improve at Las Cienegas. An Amphibian Monitoring and Conservation Workshop was held at Rancho Los Fresnos, Sonora for Mexican biologists.

B: Status of populations and major threats: There are two metapopulations, including the East side of the Huachucas and the Santa Rita/Las Cienegas areas. *Bd* has been a problem in both areas; however, the frogs are persisting with the disease at Las Cienegas, and although there are still significant die-offs on the east side of the Huachucas, the situation appears to be improving. Bullfrogs are a continuing problem, and crayfish are a nearby potential threat.

C. Priorities for 2009 and beyond: Two Local Recovery Groups were identified: Santa Ritas/Las Cienegas (Chaired by Mike Sredl), and Huachucas/San Rafael Valley (Ramsey Canyon Leopard Frog Team – Chaired by Valerie). The latter team will expand their activities to the west side of the Huachucas and the San Rafael Valley, and the Santa Ritas/Las Cienegas Group will cover that metapopulation as well as recovery opportunities in the Canelo Hills, Redrock Canyon, and at springs along Sonoita Creek. For the Santa Ritas/Las Cienegas Group, 2009 priorities include quantifying numbers of breeding versus dispersal sites in the Santa Ritas, getting the in-situ breeding ponds operational at Las Cienegas, and control of crayfish at Cline Pond. Recovery opportunities will also be pursued at Monkey Springs and elsewhere.

Monitoring of populations and recovery opportunities is important. Chairs will convene meetings of the Local Recovery Groups in 2009.

Recovery Unit 3

A: 2008 Accomplishments: See Recovery Update. Malpai HCP completed, 99 Bar/Barboot Safe Harbor Agreement completed. Douglas High School rearing/propagation facility completed, Southwest Research Station ready for frogs, one site at Barboot ready for frogs, a new population established on the Magoffin Ranch, and progress on Sky Island Alliance's Cloverdale Creek restoration project.

B. Status of populations and major threats: There are extant populations in the Peloncillo Mountains, but probably not a metapopulation as defined in the recovery plan. Isolated populations and periodic sightings of what are probably dispersing frogs have been recorded in the Peloncillo Mountains, Playas Valley, Magoffin Ranch, and Leslie Canyon. In Mexico, there have been recent observations of Chiricahua leopard frogs in the Sierra San Luis complex. Disease is present, but affected populations are persisting. Bullfrogs limit recovery opportunities. Crayfish are unknown in the recovery unit.

C. Priorities for 2009 and beyond. Two Local Recovery Groups will be formed: Chiricahuas and San Bernardino Valley (Dawn Wilson and Bill Radke, Co-Chairs) and Peloncillos, Animas, and Playas Valley (Charlie Painter, Chair). Priorities include getting Leslie Canyon eggs/tadpoles into captive rearing at the Douglas High School and aquaria at the SWRS, establishing frogs at the SWRS and Barboot Ranch, moving forward on the Cloverdale Creek project, repopulating Lard Tank, and finding other recovery opportunities that can build at least two metapopulations. Monitoring of populations and recovery opportunities is important. Also need to begin working with Mexican partners to survey for frogs and identify recovery opportunities in the Mexican portions of recovery unit 3.

Recovery Unit 4

A: 2008 Accomplishments: See Recovery Update. Populations were rediscovered and augmented in the Galiuro Mountains. A reestablished population in the Dragoon Mountains appears to be doing well. Recovery opportunities for building metapopulations in the Galiuro Mountains, in particular, were explored and identified.

B: Status of populations and major threats: A metapopulation exists in the Deer Creek area of the Galiuro Mountains. There are two isolated populations in the Dragoon Mountains, one of which is robust. Populations and recovery opportunities are primarily in cattle tanks and other man-made waters that in some cases are subject to drying during drought. Tiger salamanders limit recovery opportunities in the Galiuro and Dragoon mountains. Bullfrogs and crayfish are not currently obstacles to recovery, and *Bd* is not known from recovery unit 4.

C. Priorities for 2009 and beyond. Two Local Recovery Groups are operating, including the Galiuro Mountains and Dragoon Mountains groups. Both are chaired by Abi King. These groups will conduct additional reestablishments in the Deer Creek area, pursue establishing a second metapopulation in the Galiuros (Ash Creek area), and explore opportunities for a metapopulation in the Dragoons. A Safe Harbor Agreement with Discovery Park (Safford) is an opportunity to establish a refugium, and there may be potential for population establishment in the Aravaipa area and Santa Theresa Mountains. Monitoring of populations and recovery opportunities is important.

V. How can Local Recovery Groups improve the way they do business?

Each Local Recovery Group needs to define operational rules, and how formal those rules will be. At a minimum, Local Recovery Groups need Chairs/Co-Chairs and some way to communicate among team members and with the SE AZ/SW NM/Mexico Steering Group. Annual reporting of accomplishments must be done, and developing an annual work plan is recommended. Abi and Mike will work on a Local Recovery Group handbook. Mike and Jim will develop an annual report format.

There was some discussion of the standardized survey form. It is intimidating for volunteers, in particular. Trevor will work with Jony Cockman on developing a simplified survey form for informal surveys. "Absence" will not be determinable with these informal surveys. Finding of frogs or possible leopard frogs by volunteers or others using this simplified form can be followed up by surveys according to protocol. As much as possible, people should use the standard survey form and perform surveys according to protocol. Data from the standard form can be entered into existing databases, whereas information from less formal surveys may be problematic for such databases. Note that not all fields on the form are mandatory.

Phil suggested we attempt to create a layered GIS map of recovery opportunities, threats, and frog populations and metapopulations to help guide the work of Local Recovery Groups. Outreach and flyers were discussed. Jim will look into reprinting up to 1000 of the Tucson Herpetological Society's bullfrog information flyer (phone numbers for AGFD need to be revised). Sources for funding to provide signs to identify recovery projects should be sought out as well. A list of Local Recovery Groups will be posted on the website with Chairs/Co-Chairs and contact information. The next Steering Committee meeting will be held in December 2009.