

**CHIRICAHUA LEOPARD FROG RECOVERY TEAM
MOGOLLON RIM STEERING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

**6 November 2008, 1000-1500
Payson Ranger District, Payson, AZ**

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Introductions

Jim welcomed the group and introductions were made. Handouts included the recovery update and the Safe Harbor information sheet. A sign-up sheet was circulated to record the names of those present and their contact information (see PDF of sign-up sheet for additional contact info).

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?

An introduction to the state of recovery in Recovery Units 5-7.

Rather than review all of the information on the recovery update, the group focused on the 5 greatest accomplishments and 3 greatest challenges in each Recovery Unit (See Recovery Update for additional activities and Table 1 for the accomplishments and challenges).

Discussion: role and function of the Mogollon Rim Stakeholders Group (MRSG).

Mike led a brief discussion on the overall roles of the Recovery Team, which has been composed of the Technical Team, three Stakeholder Groups (Mogollon Rim, AZ; SE AZ/SW NM; and West-Central New Mexico) and the Local Recovery Groups in AZ and NM. Discussion mainly focused on the role and function of the Stakeholder Groups and the Local Recovery Groups.

The Mogollon Rim Stakeholders Group played an important role in the development of the Chiricahua leopard frog recovery plan, including writing portions of Appendix A of the plan, helping to develop recovery criteria and actions, and providing input on proposals by the Technical Team. 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. Now that the plan is complete and has entered the Implementation Phase, it is more appropriate for willing stakeholders to get involved with recovery at the local level, which is where the on-the-ground recovery work will be planned and implemented. Given this shift, Mike suggested calling our group a Steering Committee, rather than a Stakeholders Group.

Roles of the Steering Committee include: 1) setting regional or recovery unit priorities, 2) placing the efforts of the Local Recovery Groups into a regional or range wide context, with the recovery criteria serving as measures or standards for success, and 3) coordinating regional reporting of recovery progress.

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

The group discussed ways to improve the organization, communication, planning and reporting of Local Recovery Groups. Roles for Local Recovery Groups can include 1) identifying local opportunities, 2) assessing local recovery priorities, 3) developing an annual work plan, 4) environmental compliance, 5) habitat renovations and population establishments, 6) monitoring local progress, and 7) annual reporting of local recovery progress. Mike and Abi have agreed to develop a handbook that will include some suggestions how to improve their function. Those present agreed that the Local Recovery Groups will undertake more detailed yearly work plans and implement them for the RU's and Management Areas (MA's) and the Steering Committee will address bigger picture priorities at a regional level.

Recovery Priorities for the Mogollon Rim:

Following this discussion, the group discussed regional recovery priorities.

RU 5:

Gentry Creek

- Continue to try to build consensus on habitat renovations and establishment of a frog population in Frog Pond

Buckskin Hills

- Continue to build a robust metapopulation via reestablishments at recently renovated sites.

Ellison Creek\

- Build a robust metapopulation

- Safe Harbor Agreements with willing landowners

RU 6:

Threeforks

- Is the population / habitat @ Threeforks lost? – perhaps so.
- Find habitats and release frogs to build a metapopulation
- Get an active Local Recovery Group going

RU 7:

Dix Creeks / Coal / Rattlesnake Pasture Tank / Blue River

- Build a robust metapopulation on Clifton Ranger District
- Assess population status on Blue River, Coleman Creek areas
- Get an active Local Recovery Group going
- Develop a partnership w/ NM

Common Challenges in the Mogollon Rim:

- Need more re-establishment sites and larger habitats
- Need more frogs for release
- Non-natives: prevent spread and research removal strategies
- Get Local Recovery Groups going

Follow-up / Tasks / Next Meeting

- Mike and Abi will draft a Local Recovery Group handbook
- Jim and Mike will develop a simple form that Local Recovery Groups can use to report annual progress towards meeting the Recovery Criteria.
- Mike and others interested will give presentations to large groups to meet broad outreach goals.
- Jim will develop a brochure that outlines the “recovery program.”
- No meeting was scheduled for next year. Please send suggestions on how to improve these meetings to Jim and Mike.

Table 1. Introduction to the state of recovery in N Arizona in 2008: the 5 greatest accomplishments and 3 greatest challenges in each Recovery Units 5-7 (see Recovery Update for further information).

Management Area	Accomplishments	Challenges
Recovery Unit 5		
Gentry Creek MA	<p>Releases to occupied and new sites</p> <p>Pine Spr: frogs persist; not reproducing yet</p> <p>Cherry Creek: frogs persisting have moved upstream 1 mile; not reproducing yet</p> <p>West Prong-2 egg masses even though a small site</p>	<p>Sites are small, need larger habitats</p> <p>Frog Pond could be a core of the Gentry area if we could over come management issues</p> <p>HY Tanks: crayfish need to be eradicated</p>
Buckskin Hills MA	<p>26 frogs reintroduced to Middle Tank; first time frogs there since 2001</p> <p>October added 18 frogs to the same tank and 48 tadpoles and 1 of the original Sycamore males</p> <p>Wedge fencing of tanks near completion w/ cooperation of permittees</p> <p>Habitat improvements: removing some sediment inputs, making sites more drought tolerant</p>	<p>Not a lot of frogs available for sites that are ready to receive frogs</p> <p>Seem to have a skewed sex ratio; more males than females</p> <p>Nonnative species; 3 tanks illegally stocked with sunfish</p> <p>Need to continue to build support for frog conservation at the Agency Leadership Level</p>
Ellison Creek MA	<p>Frogs rediscovered there 2 yrs ago</p> <p>Completed consultation with Little Green Valley; good relationship with permittee</p> <p>Protection of 2 key habitat areas: tributary 4 and Lewis Ck</p> <p>Met with private property owners about frogs & SHA</p>	<p>Need frogs! No frogs seen since 2006 despite many surveys in the area</p> <p>Survey conditions difficult; hard to detect frogs</p> <p>Small streams, permanency uncertain; main part of stream has trout</p>
Recovery Unit 6		
Black River MA	<p>Concho Bill: frogs persist; no egg masses; crayfish free</p>	<p>Three Forks: frogs absent; crayfish?</p>

<p>Found high quality release sites within 5 miles of Three Forks and Concho Bill</p> <p>Gann SHA: well installed; frogs are available</p> <p>Auditory/play back surveys showing signs of success</p> <p>Got an NRCS grant to renovate ponds on AGFD property (pipiens?)</p> <p>Three Forks: protect the site; possibility of elk fencing</p> <p>Frogs released at Sierra Blanca Lake, status unknown</p> <p>Alpine District has sites available</p> <p>Completed consultation for all allotments for the frog</p> <p>Investigate water quality testing/parameters</p>	<p>Lots of water in RU6, but many sites have crayfish and/or trout. Difficulties removing crayfish from a system; need to figure out ways to get rid of them.</p> <p>Getting started on Local Recovery Groups; getting more diversified groups--need to get these going</p> <p>Need sites to build a metapopulation</p> <p>Examine under what conditions frogs and salamanders can co-exist together and effective removal techniques</p> <p>For SHA--took a lot longer to get going</p> <p>Complex habitat makes it difficult to detect whether frogs are present</p>
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Management Area	Accomplishments	Challenges
Recovery Unit 7 Mule Creek MA	<p>Surveyed most of historic sites; good numbers of frogs in the 'metapopulation'</p> <p>Found 1 very good conservation opportunity connecting Dix Creek and Coal Creek</p> <p>Met with cattle ranchers-Sheep Spring; too low for CLF though; positive meeting</p>	<p>Fire - Sunset Mgmt Area is looking to restore some of the fire regimes. Careful management will be necessary to ensure minimal impacts to frogs.</p> <p>Looking to set up a local recovery group</p> <p>Need to look into getting frogs over into NM; no known populations (just periodic dispersing frogs) in RU 7 on the NM side.</p>
New Mexico	Ranaria in production on the Ladder Ranch that will be staffed and will be able to rear and propagate frogs for projects such as in RU 7.	Biggest challenge throughout NM is KEEPING FROGS! Small number of populations, many are <i>Bd</i> positive.
The Phoenix Zoo	<p>Reared ~7500 animals since 1995</p> <p>New building - Conservation Center</p> <p>2008 ~ 800 frogs / tadpoles</p>	<p>Need more room</p> <p>Workin' out the kinks of the new bldg</p> <p>Still workin' out the kinks of</p>

husbandry

Buckskin Hills frogs crossed with Gentry Creek frogs in captivity, progeny released in Buckskin Hills. Zoo can produce about 2000 tadpoles per year.