**SONOITA CREEK FLOOD and FLOW STUDY COMMITTEE**

MISSION: The watershed is a vital component of this community’s wellbeing.  The Sonoita Creek Flood and Flow Study Committee will (i) make recommendations to the Patagonia Town Council with respect to best practices within its jurisdiction to manage erosion, to enhance water flow, to create optimal flood mitigation and to promote the long-term health of the riparian corridor, (ii) look at the entire watershed area to influence upstream conditions and to mitigate downstream consequences, and (iii) educate the public.

**MINUTES for Zoom Meeting**

**Meeting I.D. 957-511-4862 Passcode 338501**

**10 a.m., Thursday, December 14, 2023**

**Committee Members:**  *Bill O’Brien-Chair/PTE, Ron Robinson-TOP, Aaron Mrotek-TNC, Rodrigo Sierra-Corona- BRN, Carolyn Shafer-PARA, Kate Tirion-BRN, Kathy Pasierb-FoSC & recording secretary, Bob Proctor-FoSC, Howard Buchanan -TAS*

**Guests:** Ben Lomeli-FoSCR, Alex Johnson, Alan Sanchez-County Flood Plain Coordinator, Tomas Goode, Chris Gardener, Cornelia O’Connor, Jennifer Varin

1. Call to Order by Chair-Bill O’Brien at 10:00 a.m.
2. Roll Call: Bill O’Brien, Carolyn Shafer, Aaron Mrotek, Howard Buchanan, Ron Robinson, Kate Tirion, Rodrigo Sierra-Corona,
3. Pledge of Allegiance-Bill
4. Correction and/or Approval of Minutes from November 30, 2023, regular monthly meeting-approved
5. Call to Public A. R. S. §38-431-01(H):  AT THIS TIME, ANY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC IS ALLOWED TO ADDRESS THE TOWN COMMITTEE, SUBJECT TO REASONABLE TIME AND MANNER RESTRICTIONS.  THE PUBLIC WILL ONLY BE RECOGNIZED TO SPEAK ON AGENDA ITEMS LISTED FOR PUBLIC INPUT PURSUANT TO TOWN CODE SECTION 2-5-6.  PURSUANT TO THE ARIZONA OPEN MEETING LAW, AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE CALL TO THE PUBLIC, INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL MAY RESPOND TO CRITICISM MADE BY THOSE WHO HAVE ADDRESSED THE COUNCIL, MAY ASK STAFF TO REVIEW THE MATTER, OR MAY ASK THE MATTER BE PLACED ON A FUTURE AGENDA.  HOWEVER, MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC BODY SHALL NOT DISCUSS OR TAKE LEGAL ACTION ON MATTERS RAISED DURING AN OPEN CALL TO THE PUBLIC UNLESS THE MATTERS ARE PROPERLY NOTICED FOR DISCUSSION AND LEGAL ACTION -none

**OLD BUSINESS**

1. Update on School Canyon Failure of CCC Structures (Bob Proctor)

* Impact on Town and Watershed Analysis

*Bill as Patagonia Town Engineer is still working on a letter for site visit for stakeholders S32, Forest Service and others*

*Ron needs follow-up from Bob for permission from residents of the Mesa HOA to allow the town to clear the diversion debris.*

1. Patagonia Regional Flood Control Project Feasibility Study (Bill O’Brien)

*Bill is waiting on a January/February progress report from the county working through the data and meeting date.*

*Alan will reach out to the consultants ahead of his county BOS meeting.*

*Alan asked Is there cross- sectional data and / or water surface elevations data for Sonoita Creek?*

1. Watershed Stakeholders USBR/CWMP Grant Notice of Information and funding. (Howard)

*Howard has no new information to report however he is working on internal preparations with TAS. He is reaching out to other organizations for anecdotal information*.

*Alan requested to receive a Cienega Creek watershed ground water presentation by Julia Fonseca with slides. The presentation was not recorded but Howard will share the slides from the presentation to all F&F board members.*

1. Update on the South32 CCC Flood Plain Use Permit. (Bill)

*Bill is working on writing a response to Santa Cruz County.*

1. Potential Aquifer Management Area (AMA) for Sonoita Creek Watershed (Bob Proctor)

*Ben informed about how an AMA for Sonoita Creek watershed spans two groundwater basins; Cienega Creek basin (Sonoita area) and Santa Cruz River basin (starting at Patagonia Lake).*

*Suggests a cooperative with Cienega Creek Partnership who work closely with ranchers to create an AMA.*

*An AMA does not protect surface water, wetlands, streams, and springs. AMA regulates assured water supply vs adequate water supply outside of AMA’s. They have the same criteria. AMA’s make sure subdivisions of 5 acres or more have enough water, legal ability, the right water quality, but does not address impacts on surface flows.*

*Douglas AMA was successfully established based on voter initiative with criteria to focus on conservation. Goals are now tending to focus on economic development.*

*AZ state legislature would establish a ‘Rural’ AMA, (RMA) however there are no regulations in rural areas leaving stakeholders like the Farm Bureau -agriculture, ranchers, and land developers to use their political influence to prevent any kind of regulation that considers impacts on groundwater aquifers.*

*Storm recharge may be a strategy to consider as in the San Pedro River recharge which keeps the river flowing.*

1. Comprehensive Groundwater Study for Sonoita Creek Watershed status and steps forward (Ben Lomeli)

*A comprehensive groundwater study is needed with ground water criteria specific to Sonoita Creek watershed. Criteria would give a local view of local conditions and create a more accurate local model. Mayor Wood, Carolyn, and Ben worked on criteria and requested a study from the Forest Service summer of 2020. Forest Service has not address concerns about Patagonia and how it applies to our local conditions. The focus is on water beneath the Patagonia Municipal Watershed.*

*Carolyn will share the history of a series of letters requesting the forest service to fund the study.*

*Ben suggested that the USGS can do a ‘electromagnetic fly over’ to obtain a precise geology map to better understand the geology that effects an accurate groundwater model. Next letter will include a request for the fly over.*

*Would Alan contact BOS Bracker to update and gain support about letters made by the town of Patagonia? Alan says the county manager might be better for support.*

1. Harshaw Creek Watershed Restoration Plan – F&F subcommittee appointments, status, and discuss Town position (Ron, Howard)

*Howard and Bob discussed reaching out to the Forest Service hydrologists by January 2024.*

*Ben asked what is the goal of the Restoration Plan?*

*The Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) shows Harshaw creek sub watershed is rated poor for aquatic habitat. Rangeland management techniques may be applied to the upper Harshaw creek sub watershed to address and reduce sediment loads and erosion. Forest Service has gaps in data.*

*Carolyn reports the Forest Service has recognizes our official town municipal watershed which identifies six sub watersheds. The worst performing sub watershed was evaluated by the forest service. Harshaw creek conditions are poor. This was the primary reason the F&F committee/town of Patagonia years ago approved a restoration action plan for Harshaw.*

**NEW BUSINESS**

13. Next Regular Monthly Meeting: *January 18, 2024, at 10 a.m.*

14. Future Agenda Items

15. Adjourn *approved* *at 10:59*

PARKING LOT (future agenda items)

Sonoita Creek Watershed Stakeholders Group

Community Database of Water Studies

RADAR SCREEN

Hudbay property ownership

Respectfully submitted, Kathy Pasierb