

LAIAG (Local Area Impact Assessment Group) Meeting
Pinal County
07/18/06

J. Peter Armenta, Central Arizona Association of Governments
Brian Betcher, MSIDD - SCWPDA
Susan Craig, ADWR Statewide Drought Program
Rebecca delaTorre, USDA - NRCS
Randy Edmond, ADWR, Pinal Active Management Area
Evelyn Erlandsen, ADWR Statewide Drought Program
Tom Evans, National Weather Service
Heather Garbarino, Arizona Department of Commerce
Gregg Garfin, UA CLIMAS
Rick Gibson, UA Cooperative Extension
Rodney Held, ADWR, Drought, Conservation and Riparian Planning
Carl Holcombe, Arizona Republic
Debbie Hopkins, USDA – Farm Service Agency
Doug Littau, USDA – Farm Service Agency
Doug Olson, City of Eloy
Joe Pyritz, Pinal County
Arnie Schlittenhart, NRCD
Denise Shultz, Casa Grande Ruins Monument - National Park Service
David Snider, Pinal County Board of Supervisors
Kathy Stevens, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
Shawneen Stevenson, USDA – Farm Service Agency
Elliott Talgo, San Carlos Apache EPA
Tyler VanVleet, Arizona Game and Fish Department
Kris Walkinshaw, Casa Grande Dispatch
Pete Weaver, Pinal County Emergency Manager
Glinda Weddle, Central Arizona Irrigation & Drainage District
Carol West, Casa Grande Ruins National Monument – National Park Service

The first meeting of the Pinal County Local Area Impact Assessment Group (LAIAG) was held on July 13, 2006 at Central Arizona College. There were 27 in attendance representing various government and non-government organizations. Issues surrounding potential drought, and its effects upon urban and rural life, were discussed. A proposal to form a steering committee and three workgroups was considered and audience members were given the opportunity to volunteer for one or more of these groups. Another general meeting was recommended to be scheduled within two months.

1. Welcome and Introductions. David Snider, Pinal County Board of Supervisors, and Rick Gibson, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Agent and County Director, welcomed those in attendance and set the stage for the ensuing discussions. Drought, it was noted, is common to the desert and with the current population growth now being experienced countywide, the implications of an uncertain water supply tied particularly to recharge capability makes the topic of drought of supreme concern to all who live in the desert.

2. Drought Planning and Local Area Impact Assessment Groups. Susan Craig, Arizona Department of Water Resources, discussed the framework of the Governor's Drought Task Force and how local interests can become involved in the process of assessing and managing drought conditions. Key to the process is the Arizona Drought Preparedness Plan and local involvement in the LAIAG. A proposed schedule of operations was presented.
3. Drought and Local-Level Monitoring. Current drought conditions, and the various processes of monitoring those conditions were discussed by University of Arizona climatologist, Gregg Garfin. Highly variable weather patterns can lead to reductions in recharge rates in each of the various hydrologic areas providing the water that sustains all life in the desert.
4. Workgroup Responsibilities/Functions. Evelyn Erlandsen, Arizona Department of Water Resources, outlined the various proposed workgroups that could be organized to provide vital information to the LAIAG. Three in particular were mentioned: Monitoring Workgroup, Outreach and Education Workgroup and the Mitigation and Response Workgroup. Others could be formed as needed.
5. Proposed Organizational Structure. Pete Weaver, Pinal County Emergency Manager, presented the overall proposed LAIAG organizational structure envisioned to support and sustain the drought assessment and management work in Pinal County.
6. Next Steps. David Snider, in his concluding remarks, made an eloquent and impassioned plea for those present, and others, to become involved in the LAIAG process. In return, he pledged the entire resources of the Pinal County government to further the work and to assist the process in any way.

It was agreed to review the applications for the steering committee positions and to have those appointments made by the Pinal County Board of Supervisors in a future business session.