

TUCSON BASIN RECREATIONAL SHOOTING WORKSHOPS

Definition

“Recreational shooting” is defined as the discharge of any firearm for any lawful, recreational purpose other than the lawful taking of a game animal. It is thus distinct from—and does not include—hunting.

Issue

The Tucson Basin is comprised of multiple managers, including the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the National Forest Service, private lands, state and county lands, the city of Tucson and various smaller communities such as Marana and Vail. With a rapidly increasing urban population throughout the Tucson Basin, land managers are faced with many issues related to urban expansion, including growing interest in recreational shooting. Given the limited number of locations where recreational shooters can pursue their sport safely, recreational shooting raises both resource management and public safety issues that must be addressed on an interim, as well as long-term planning basis.

Affected Area

For the purposes of this project, participants have agreed to define the Tucson Basin as the area within a 30-mile radius surrounding the junction of I-10 and I-19. This designation has no legal, political or topographic significance—it has been designated solely for defining the area upon which to focus current discussions about recreational shooting issues. Affected neighboring areas and jurisdictions, and interested individuals living outside the defined area, will be considered in the overall context of these discussions.

Participants

Dialogue participants include federal, state and local government agencies, public land users and organizations (e.g., NRA, shooting clubs, conservation organizations, hiking and other recreational user groups, etc.), representatives from the Arizona Governor's Office and Congressional districts, and other affected parties.

Project Background:

Between May and December 2003, a neutral facilitation team under contract to the U. S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (U.S. Institute) conducted a situation assessment regarding recreational shooting issues within the Tucson Basin. The assessment team interviewed agency personnel, recreational shooting organizations and individuals, various other public land user groups, and affected individuals. The assessment included an analysis of stakeholder interests, identification of points of agreement and possible areas of controversy, and recommendations for designing a process to build collaborative support for resolving issues associated with recreational shooting. The assessment report identified four main areas for further resolution:

1. Locations for recreational shooting, including the criteria for identifying appropriate zones for formal and informal shooting opportunities.
2. Safety and enforcement issues
3. Resource impacts (e.g., vandalism, litter, resource damage, etc.)
4. Education (including firearm use and safety, opportunities for education about shooting activities on public lands, etc.)

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The report, completed in January 2004, concluded that widespread support existed for convening a public dialogue about recreational shooting in the Tucson basin. Recommendations included organizing a directed, outcome-oriented process with few meetings and clear, tangible outcomes. Participants in this dialogue would include representatives from all affected stakeholders, and "they would be encouraged to work together to identify, analyze and resolve issues, developing specific action steps that can result in concrete outcomes."

The full report, "*Recreational Shooting in the Tucson Basin: The Potential for Collaborative Dialogue and Action*," can be obtained online at http://www.ecr.gov/s_publications.htm#Tucson_Basin

Sponsoring Agencies

Several state and federal agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management, the USDA Forest Service, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department, have committed to seeking opportunities to work with a wide array of stakeholders in order to define a common vision for resolving issues related to recreational shooting on public lands. The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (the U.S. Institute) was asked to assist the parties in assessing the issues and to provide a forum for discussion, including convening and facilitating a series of preparatory meetings. The upcoming workshop is one of a series of public dialogues that will be conducted as part of this process.

About the U.S. Institute

The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution is a federal program established in 1998 by the U.S. Congress to assist parties in resolving environmental, natural resource and public land conflicts. It is a program of the Morris K. Udall Foundation, an independent agency of the executive branch that is based in Tucson. The U.S. Institute serves as an impartial, non-partisan institution providing professional expertise, services and resources to all parties involved in environmental disputes, regardless of who initiates or pays for assistance. It provides a neutral venue where public and private interests can explore potentially controversial issues. For more information about the U.S. Institute, call (520) 670-5299 or visit www.ecr.gov.

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