Soccoro Valley Segment Rio Grande Trail

Community Planning Kick-Off Meeting “Group Memory”

February 28, 2019

NM Tech Skeen Library

Background:

Save Our Bosque Task Force gave a brief introduction to the meeting. The Task Force received a assistance grant from the National Park Service to help with outreach, planning, and organization to develop a trail that runs from the south boundary of Sevilleta NWR to the north boundary of Bosque del Apache NWR. The Task Force has already created a 3.5 mile trail through the bosque just west of the town of Socorro that is quite popular, and leads to a number of small parks with picnic tables, fire pits, and access to the river. The Task Force wants to introduce the concept of a longer trail segment to the general public with this Kickoff Meeting, and receive input and advice from community members on how they might use the trail or what kinds of things they would like to see along the trail.

You can contact the Save Our Bosque Task Force Program Director, Amy Erickson, with any questions about the trail or how to get involved, at avianecologist@gmail.com. You can also visit our website that will have updates on the trail’s progress at https://www.sobtf.org/rio-grande-scorro-valley-trails

National Park Service

* The Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program staff work with communities to help them develop or improve their local parks, trails, greenways and rivers.
* We provide technical support like facilitation, expertise in trail design or management, helping develop plans, organizational development, work planning to move a team through a community initiated planning process and exploring a wide range of civic engagement strategies.
* Since projects are local, we rely on a local champion to keep the project moving forward. We’re typically in your community from 18-24 months
* You can learn more about RTCA at [nps.gov/rtca](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CGina%5CDocuments%5CWork%5CSOBTF%5CNPS%20parks%20program%5COutreach%5Cnps.gov%5Crtca)
* Attila Bality has been assigned at the project manager for this project. attila\_bality@nps.gov // 505-346-2871 x213

The Mayor of Socorro expressed his interest in the trail project and reminded everyone that Senator Pete Domenici initiated the Mid Rio Grande Task Force over 20 years ago. Our project is really part of that vision.

Overview of the Rio Grande Trail

* John Busemeyer (NM State Parks) provided an overview of the Rio Grande Trail Plan and the designation process for a new segment.
* The key points included
	+ The community must initiate a request to the Rio Grande Trail Commission. This memorandum should include specific distance and description of features and amenities; how the segment supports the overall Vision; evidence of public support through resolutions or an adopted Trail Segment Management Plan; ease of incorporation into the RGT, and how accessible is the trail segment to various user groups.
	+ The correspondence should also address:
		- Evidence of historical and cultural compliance
		- The local ability to manage the segment (key point is partnerships)
		- Sustainable trail construction techniques
		- Description of the user experiences
		- Land ownership status
* Following the submittal of the documents, the Rio Grande Trail Commission will initiate a public review process. The request will be reviewed by a RGT working committee. An Evaluation Criteria has been adopted by the Commission (the Plan should address clearly address the criteria. A recommendation would be forwarded to the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Cabinet Secretary for approval.

Clarifying Questions about the Rio Grande Trail:

Are any Tribal communities involved so far? *Pueblo governments have been hesitant to participate to this point. The Rio Grande Trail Commission intends further dialogue with Pueblo representatives.*

What about Side Trails connecting to the Rio Grande? *The Commission has addressed Spur Trails. We received quite a bit of input from meeting attendees about possible spurs or offshoots connecting the trail to other points of interest in the area. Many bikers expressed interest in connecting the trail to various loops around the Quebradas Backcountry Byway, and loops through the town of Socorro that they already regularly use. Some of them already use the existing Bosque Trail as part of a larger loop around town and are very interested in seeing improved access to the area.*

How does Trail Mileage progress in the future? *No doubt, development will be slow. A long-term goal could be pursuing a National Scenic Trail designation. It is possible to avoid Tribal lands. We’ll soon see designated segments in Albuquerque, Truth or Consequences. The Armendaris Ranch has not been considered as a trail route.*

Are there plans or discussions about connecting to the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail? *Yes, where possible we can explore “Retracement Routes” as physical components of the Camino. (The Camino Real travels on both sides of the Rio Grande and in some places the actual routes are not identifiable)*

Is there a preferred alignment for the RGT? *Yes, the Plan does identify a proposed route. However, since designation occurs at local government levels, consensus on the actual route would be necessary before designation would occur.*

Some Community Comments & Issues:

* I really want to use some part of the RGT very soon. 10 years is too long…
* It’s important to protect the viewshed and open space along the trail (ranching, farming, bosque)
* Respecting private landowners is critical for success.
* Policing / Patrol is necessary
* Campfires / No Campfires
* How does one proceed with approval of a recently (post levee works) created trail section?
* Recreational shooting
* How will we deal with multiple trail users (equestrian, bike, run, hike)
* Will the trails be appropriate for the various uses?
* Loose dogs
* Loose cattle
* Service Roads that permit vehicular traffic
* No motorized vehicles (including electric bikes) [The NPS suggested a better understanding of eMTB’s would be valuable to the group before making policy decisions)
* Jetty Jacks – are they a hindrance or benefit to bosque management?
* Universal Accessibility – It’s the idea that anyone 8 yrs to 80 yrs should be able to travel on sections of the trail
* Trash and transient camps
* Make sure there is riverside access.

Experiences:

* Tranquility
* Excitement
* Multiple Trails and Spur Trails to other destinations
* No motorized vehicles
* Scenic Views and Access
* Fording the Rio Grande
* Single Track Trails *(narrow, typically 18-24” wide)*
* Camping Opportunities
* Paddling and canoeing. *(Could there be a complementary water trail?)*

Workgroups, Ideas, and Issues/Comments

*We had everyone write down their ideas and visions for the trail and talk about issues and concerns or things they would like to see. We then compiled these ideas into categories or “workgroups” that people could sign up to be volunteers on.*

Recreation – 4 volunteers on this workgroup.

 - Local hiking (day hikes, nature-viewing day hikes)

 - long distance thru-hikes

 - Non-motorized vehicles – do we want to allow motorized vehicles or not?

 - Horseback riding

 - Running and walking trails

 - Biking trails (including bikepacking)

 - Shelters

 - Access to the river

 - Disc golf – question – is this needed or do we want to just link to it

 - Geocaching (there are several geocaches on the bosque)

 - Special events such as ultra races and Sierra Club organized hikes

 - Campgrounds

 - Birdwatching with lookout areas/platforms

 - Access to the water’s edge for loading canoes and kayaks

 - Trail loop to Socorro

Wildlife – 3 volunteers on this workgroup

- Information about and attention to wildlife, as the Rio Grande is a flyway for many species including Sandhill Cranes

 - Connecting with nature

 - Wildlife viewing areas in many locations

Connections – One volunteer on this workgroup

 -Ability to walk from Socorro to the trail (Socorro as a Gateway Community)

 - Amenities for each type of user ie) water for horses, huts for campers

 - Make Socorro a “restock” point or an “entry/exit” point for thru-hikers

 - Include bird, wildlife, and/or plant stories along the trail

 - Just getting people down to the river

 - Access to Quebradas

 - Connections to the bike paths/routes in Socorro (the south end of Sevilleta is very hard to get to by bike).

 - Special Events

Conveniences – no volunteers on this workgroup

 - Legal camping to enable multi-day hiking and biking

 - Possible concerns over multi-use compatibility ie) bikes, horses and hikers

 - Dog-friendly, but safe – dogs on leash signs, doggy bag stations, trash containers, access to water along the trail

 - Picnic areas and campgrounds with fire pits – possibly toilets too

 - Connections to public transportation especially north of Sevilleta ie) Railrunner

Historic, Cultural and Geology – no volunteers on this workgroup

 - Civil War history

 - information pointing out historic and cultural areas of interest and stories such as mining history, the railroad, the low flow channel, Socorro springs, and Native American history

 - Align some side trails with El Camino Real

 - Interesting geologic features ie) the Socorro Magma Lens

 - Protection of sensitive sites and Native American cultural sites

Stories – no volunteers on this workgroup

 - A trail guide or informational pamphlet

 - Interpretive signs

 - Website

 - Civil War battle at Valverde and interpretive signs of other events.

 - El Camino Real history

 - Information on migratory flyways

Alignment – three volunteers on this workgroup

Go out and look for possible good routes

**Next Steps (discussed on conference call on March 15):**

**Establishing the “Core Team” and various working groups**

**Charge of core team –**

**Agency outreach**

**Workplan development**

**Charge of each working group**

**Exploration and information gathering**

**Identifying concerns, issues and opportunities from everyone**

**On-going Civic Engagement (focused outreach and participation)**

**Attila - Find out about Healthy Kids Socorro- follow up with contacts to see who the contact is.**

**Amy and Gina - Reach out to Core Team members to firm that team up**

**Attila - Reach out to agencies – (FWS, BOR, MRGCD, BLM, NMDGF, Sheriff’s office) first with a call, then meet with them if needed.**

**Amy and Gina – organize next meeting - core team – April 9th 4 pm start with that, that week works for Attila right now**

**Drafts developed on the following (to be reviewed by the Core Team)**

* **Vision and Goal – someone draft - Amy and Gina**
* **Amy and Gina - Guiding principles, assumptions – start on the guiding principles now from our notes, some examples from Attila for language, Recognizing management and property rights**
* **Attila - Workplan development - draft first 6-month tasks and who would take these on**

**Note: Look at all this from the perspective of what is needed for designation on trail segments**

**Get messaging clear so communications are consistent**

**Amy and Gina - June 1 – national trails day – hike some of the segments! Alignment workgroup to come up with possible trails**

**Recreation workgroup – take what people brought up and evaluate the feasibility of these suggestions and what other opportunities we should include. Identify other important issues and logistics around these ideas.**

* **Understanding the impacts of this recreation if it becomes popular.**
* **Indicators and thresholds of different activities and their impacts.**

**Gina and Amy - Clean this up and make it the charge for this workgroup**

**Amy and Gina - Possibly lump wildlife and history, etc. in an educational opportunities**

**Possible tasks for this workgroup if lumped - will look over what came out of meeting on the interests, and then look at tasks for them.**

**Safety and Liability – need to develop this workgroup – may come out when we do our outreach to agencies.**

**Attila will send us draft language for drafting workgroup and their charges.**

**Gina and Amy will try to find best contact for NMDGF – send to Attila**

**Gina and Amy will look over RTCA resources**