Turtleback Trails Network Concept Plan

Prepared for the City of Truth or Consequences and the Village of Williamsburg



Updated September 2023

This page is reserved for official city resolution.





Acknowledgment

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Turtleback Trails
Network Concept Plan

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Executive Summary

The Turtleback Trails Network Concept Plan provides a vision for several proposed recreation and conservation projects centered around the Rio Grande in Sierra County, New Mexico. The Concept Plan assesses the potential benefits to the community, addresses community concerns, and sets out a framework for developing the project components.

The Concept Plan is intended to become a tool for city and county officials along with partnering community groups to use in order to coordinate trail development and associated infrastructure, to improve opportunities for outdoor recreation and exercise for residents and tourists in Sierra County.

Development of the Turtleback Trails Network can occur in phases. Any specific project requiring the investment of local government time through the development of contracts, grants, project administration or management should be presented to Commission /Trustee's for discussion and approval before initiation.

Major components of the Concept Plan include:

- Designations of trails on BLM land on the south/east side of the Rio Grande
- Construction of footbridges to enable river crossing
- Construction of a pedestrian trail between Williamsburg and Truth or Consequences on the South side of the Rio Grande
- Enhancements to river put-in/take-out sites and signage along the river to direct floaters
- Restoration/conservation of the wetlands in Rotary Park

The Turtleback Trails Network Concept Plan includes the following components:

Chapter 1: Community Vision Statement shares how the plan will have a positive impact on recreation, health, economic development and tourism, conservation and education, and stewardship in the community.

Chapter 2: The Background chapter explores how outdoor recreation enhancements can promote tourism and increase local tax revenues. The chapter also shares excerpts from a number of existing local and state recreation plans, including the New Mexico State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, the City of Truth or Consequences Comprehensive Plan, and the Rio Grande Trail Concept Plan, that relate to and support the implementation of the proposed projects in this Master Plan. Finally, the chapter gives an overview of community demographics, a health needs assessment, and statistics on residents' access to parks, making the case that enhanced recreation amenities will benefit the health of many community members.

Chapter 3: Community Engagement summarizes the efforts undertaken by the Steering Committee to gather community feedback in developing this plan. Multiple outreach projects solicited input from individual citizens as well as from a number of local groups, including the City of Truth or Consequences, the Village of Williamsburg, Sierra Vista Hospital, several groups at Hot Springs High School, and numerous other local organizations.

Chapter 4: Visitor Safety addresses the need to provide a safe experience for users of this trail system. The chapter summarizes ways to mitigate safety risks and offers recommendations for ordinances, signage, and emergency operations plans.

Chapter 5: The Physical Projects gives detailed recommendations for each of the proposed projects that make up this trail system.

> **Part 1** addresses the proposed Rio Grande Paddle Trail. Existing conditions are summarized, and recommendations given for enhancements to improve user experience, including designating unloading and parking areas, building boat launch ramps and stairs, providing restroom and trash facilities, installing signage and maps at launch sites, and providing signage along the river to inform paddlers/tubers

of obstacles and approaching take-outs. The chapter includes maps of each launch site with suggested layouts and examples of signage, and an appendix gives details on possible ramp designs.

Part 2 addresses establishing a trail system on the east/south side of the Rio Grande, made accessible by several pedestrian bridges (with proposals given for bridge locations and design). A map is provided with current trail use data from local runners and bikers. This trail system would include a portion of the statewide Rio Grande Trail. Recommendations for the construction of a new riverside trail from Williamsburg to Truth or Consequences are also given.

Part 3 of this chapter focuses on a redesign of Rotary Park to improve visitor experiences and restore its wetland ecosystem.

Chapter 6: River Corridor Conservation and Education summarizes the history of this stretch of the Rio Grande, including both the natural resources and cultural heritage of the area. It addresses challenges to continued conservation, including removing invasive plant species and restoring native habitat. The chapter identifies conservation concerns in the establishment of the trail system. It proposes interpretive signage to educate users on a variety of natural history themes, and offers recommendations for conservation-focused youth and community events.

Chapter 7: Management, Maintenance, and Stewardship addresses the need for ongoing maintenance of the trail system, and offers suggestions of ways to solicit community help in maintaining the system through trail/site adoptions and user fees. The chapter proposes a breakdown of which agency or entity would be in charge of maintaining each component of the trail system.

Chapter 8: Federal Coordination offers guidance on the process of seeking approval from federal agencies, which will be required as some of the proposed project areas fall under jurisdiction of the Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers, and Bureau of Land Management. Permitting from these agencies will require compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the Clean Water Act.

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Promotion, Programming, Policy, and Physical Project supporting successful implementation

Throughout the document, look for the following icons:



Promotion: indicates a way in which the recreational opportunities arising from this project can be promoted to residents and tourists.



Programming: indicates existing or potential new programming to take place within the parks and trails encompassed in this proposal.



Policy: indicates new policies that are needed, or existing policies/regulations/ agreements needing change, to successfully implement this concept plan.



Physical Project: Indicates river or trail related features to be constructed.


Healing Waters' Trail Vegetation
Sierra County is in the lower Chihuahuan desert and the Rio Grande riparian zone. Around the New Mexico Veterans' Home, you will find elm trees, whose original ancestors were brought onto the site in the 1930s when Carrie Tingley Hospital for Crippled Children was built. You will also find native desert grasses (i.e., Indian ricegrass and sideoats grama, etc.) and desert cacti (i.e., Christmas cactus, ocotillo and cholla, etc.). Shrubs such as four-wing salt bush and creosote, etc. are found in the open fields.
Ocotillo
Cholla
Sideoats Grama
Indian Rice Grass
Elm Tree
Four-Wing
Christmas cactus
Creosote

01 Community Vision Statement

Pedestrian bridges, trails, and river access improvements along the Rio Grande in Truth or Consequences and Williamsburg provide access to the natural environment that helps our community grow healthier and wealthier.

This plan will have a positive impact in the following aspects of life in this community:

Recreation: Our community benefits from amenities that increase access to and safety of our public lands near the Rio Grande. The project will provide outstanding outdoor recreation for all our community members, including those who cannot afford destination recreation opportunities.

Health: Our community grows healthier through new opportunities for physical activities and the mental benefits of getting outdoors in the natural environment.

Economic Development & Tourism: Our community grows wealthier through the additional tourism dollars spent and associated gross receipts and Lodger's tax collected.

Conservation & Education: Our Rio Grande is healthier with enhanced wetlands and improved native habitats that support wildlife and fisheries while serving as an important outdoor classroom for everyone.

Stewardship: Our community, inspired by better access to the Rio Grande, readily partners with the City, Village and public land managers on projects that improve access, maintain trails and river access sites, and monitor trail and resource conditions.



02 Background

Recreation and Tourism

Over the past decade, as the traveling public has trended toward a younger demographic, tourism has seen a shift away from the "sight-seeing" mentality of past generations to "sight-doing." According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, New Mexico's outdoor economy contributed $2.4 billion (2.2 percent) to the state's GDP in 2019. The industry employed 35,065 New Mexicans, with $1.2 billion in income. This growth in experiential tourism provides Sierra County with an opportunity to capitalize on this trend by developing its outdoor recreation offerings. As more and more tourists take outdoor recreation opportunities into consideration when choosing where to travel, the value of tourism in trail development is clear and compelling.

Not only will trail development attract new visitors to Sierra County, it will also provide those who already visit regularly with yet another amenity to experience, thereby potentially increasing the length of their visit. Increasing visitor stays will result not only in additional revenues for our tourism related businesses, but will also increase tax revenues that may be used to develop future recreation projects that will benefit residents and visitors alike. Additionally, the opportunity exists to organize more outdoor recreation events (such as mountain biking/trail running races and group hikes) that will bring a more active demographic to our communities. The target market for these events trends younger and more active. Not only will these events result in "heads in beds," increasing tourism revenues, but may also result in some of these participants finding Sierra County an attractive place to live and work.

Relevant Local/State Plans

Development of the Turtleback Trails Network supports several adopted state, regional and local planning documents. These include the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), regional economic and tourism plans, and T or C's Comprehensive Plan, all of which address outdoor recreation, community health and quality of life, and tourism. Excerpts from these plans are listed below.

New Mexico State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
Home | Get Outside, New Mexico | Outdoor Recreation Plan (getoutsidenm.org)

The 2022-2026 SCORP, completed in December 2021, provides guidance for the allocation of Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program funding. Many of the goals, objectives and strategies identified in the SCORP align with the Turtleback Trails Network. Relevant goals include:

- Encourage development in the outdoor recreation economy that supports the health and wellbeing of New Mexicans.
- Connect communities with outdoor recreation resources to grow local tourism economies.
- Identify and protect privately-owned, critically important lands at greatest risk for development through acquisition or conservation easements from willing landowners. Determine if additional legislative action to permanently protect them from development is required.
- Develop projects and programs that promote greater recreational and ecological connectivity

In the Southwest region (including Sierra County) the SCORP identified trails & trailheads as the most important outdoor recreation facility to survey respondents. Hiking, trail running, camping and backpacking are the most common outdoor recreation activities, and more people would participate in biking, hiking and camping if high quality facilities were available.

Comprehensive Plan Update for Sierra County, NM 2017
sierra-county-comprehensive-plan-2017.pdf (sierraco.org)

Tourism and recreation hold the greatest potential for continued growth in Sierra County and the county should showcase tourism opportunities and experiences to visitors and potential new residents. The marketing of facilities, services, and events must be coordinated and aggressive. (pg. 2)

City of Truth or Consequences Comprehensive Plan, 2014
Final Comprehensive Plan - October 2014.pdf (revize.com)

The following excerpts from this plan are directly supported by the goals of the Turtleback Trails Network:

Achieve a sound and balanced local economy which supports existing businesses, attracts new investment, increases the tax base, creates employment opportunities, and generates public revenues.

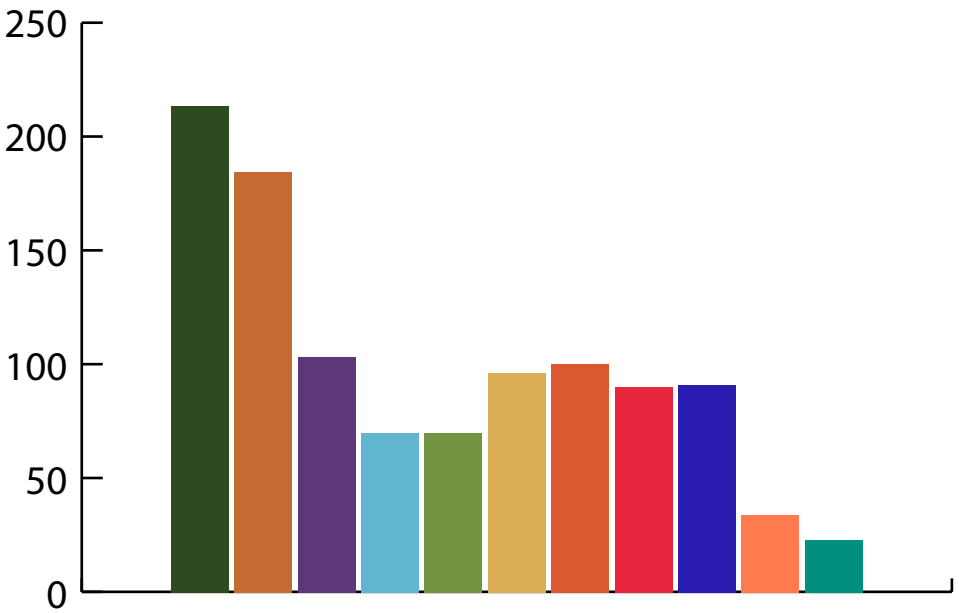
- Create and maintain recreational opportunities for residents of all ages.
- Increase access to recreational activities on and along the Rio Grande, including rafting, kayaking, canoeing and fishing.
- Work with the Bureau of Reclamation to determine the feasibility of installing access ramps for rafting, canoeing, and kayaking on the Rio Grande from Ralph Edwards Park and Rotary Park.

City of Truth or Consequences Riverfront Economic Feasibility Study, 2021

In 2021, the City of Truth or Consequences contracted with engineering firm Wilson & Company to examine the community's economic opportunities along the riverfront. The firm conducted a public survey to which over 300 residents responded. The results indicate strong support for pedestrian bridges and trails.

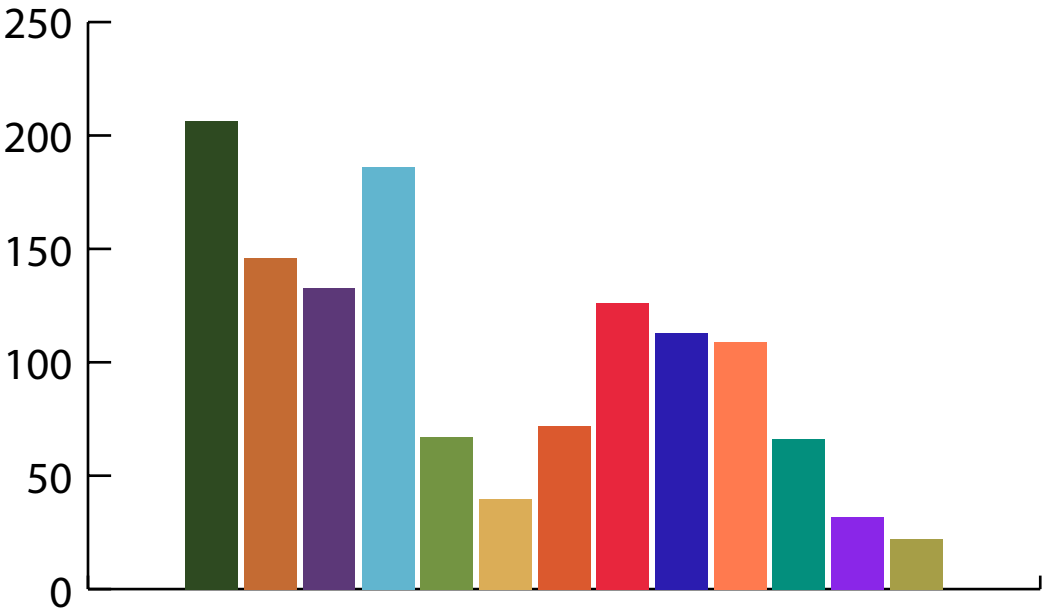
1. Which of the following changes would you like to see along the Rio Grande?

Bike/pedestrian paths	213
Crossings to the South Side...	184
ADA Compliant loading...	103
Camping/Camp grounds	70
Additional Parking	70
Wayfinding and educational...	96
Small-scale restaurants	100
Outdoor recreation equipment	90
Conservation with limited river...	91
No changes	34
Other	23



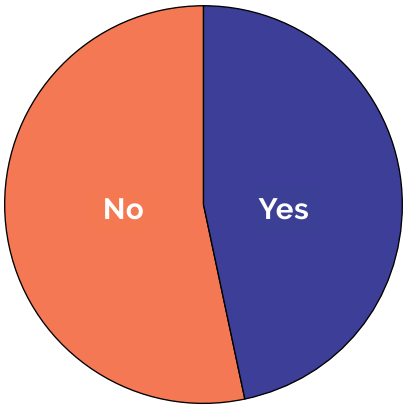
2. What activities would you participate in along the Rio Grande, if available?

Hiking	206
Fishing	146
Kayaking	133
River Floating/Tubing	186
Horseback Riding	67
Outdoor Sports	40
Camping	72
Farmer's Markets	126
Food Trucks	113
Small-scale restaurants	109
Shopping	66
I would not participate	32
Other	22



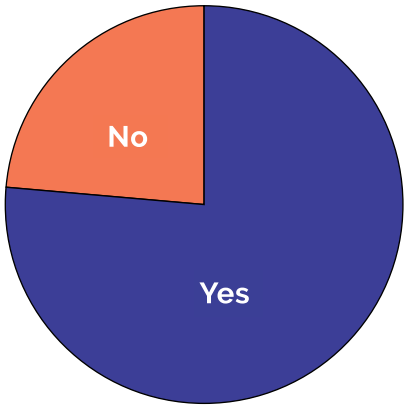
3. Do you believe a vehicular bridge crossing to the South side of the Rio Grande is important?

Yes	143
No	162



4. Do you believe a pedestrian bridge crossing to the South side of the Rio Grande is important?

Yes	231
No	71



Rio Grande Trail Master Plan

RioGrandTrail_MasterPlan_FINALwChanges.pdf (nm.gov)

The Rio Grande Trail (RGT) is New Mexico's cross-state, recreational trail for hiking, biking, and horseback riding along the Rio Grande. The Rio Grande Trail will improve public access to the Rio Grande, which will increase the connection New Mexicans have to the river and cultivate river stewardship. The following excerpts from the Rio Grande Trail Master Plan highlight some potential areas of coordination with the Turtleback Trails Network:

- Establish the Rio Grande Trail as the conduit connecting communities, local and state destinations, and geographies, as well as promoting health, quality of life, and economic vitality in New Mexico.
- The Rio Grande Trail non-profit should establish a Gateway Communities program to connect trail users with towns along the route for food, lodging, cultural amenities, or additional recreation activities. Program implementation will foster strong relationships with local municipalities and provide resources for developing connector trails from communities to the Rio Grande Trail.
- The Rio Grande Trail non-profit should develop a trail sponsor program and Adopt-a-Trail program. The non-profit's Adopt-a-Trail program should draw from and work in tandem with the EMNRD State Parks Division's volunteer program and provide guidance for how the Rio Grande Trail program could work with local jurisdictions.

The proposed route of the Rio Grande Trail runs along the east/south side of the river between NM 51 and Williamsburg, and could be incorporated into the Turtleback Trails Network. Additionally, construction of footbridges (see Chapter 5: Physical Projects) would connect RGT users with commercial amenities in Truth or Consequences.

Middle Rio Grande Economic Development Plan 2016
New Mexico (mrgeda.com)

The goal is to improve the economy and quality of life of the region via Arts, Recreation and Visitors Industries. This cluster holds opportunities for significant growth in our region. Cities, counties, chambers of commerce, and recreation and tourism businesses can easily collaborate on regional resource and skill development. The growth of visitor, recreation and tourism industries will provide jobs and revenue opportunities for the region. The synergetic effect of this collaboration allows the region to leverage existing resources for exponential growth.

- Increase recreational opportunities for tourists.
- Increase visitors in the region by 5% over the next 5 years.

Community Profile

Population

According to the 2020 Census, the total population of Truth or Consequences is 6,052, which is a decrease of around 400 since 2010. The median age is 51.5 years. 82.5% of the population is over 18 years and 29.5% of the people are 65 years and over. Source: Census - Geography Profile

Income and Poverty

The median household income in Truth or Consequences is $23,998, compared to $51,945 for the state of New Mexico. 33.4% of the residents in T or C are living in poverty.

Source: *Census - Geography Profile*

The economy of Truth or Consequences employs 1,960 people. The largest industries in T or C are Health Care & Social Assistance (577 people), Retail Trade (211 people), and Construction (184 people), and the highest paying industries

are within the local government sector including: Public Administration ($54,750), Administrative & Support & Waste Management Services ($43,611), and Professional, Scientific, & Management, & Administrative & Waste Management Services ($42,917).

Source: *Truth or Consequences, NM | Data USA*

Community Health

26.9% of the population in Truth or Consequences has identified as disabled, compared to 16% of the overall NM population.

Sierra County ranks in the lower third of NM counties in the percentage of adults who meet the recommended physical activity guidelines, with only 49.4% of adults achieving this benchmark. Physical activity among adults has numerous benefits, including reducing risk of heart disease, stroke, and some cancers; improving physical fitness, bone health, and mental health; preventing high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol, prediabetes and diabetes; maintaining a healthy weight, and increasing mobility; brain health benefits, including improved cognitive function, reduced anxiety and depression risk, and improved sleep and quality of life. Among older adults, physical activity is crucial in preventing falls. Only half of adults in the U.S. meet physical activity recommendations. Research demonstrates any amount of physical activity is beneficial; however, for substantial health benefits, the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition recommends adults do 150 to 300 minutes a week of moderate-intensity physical activity, or 75 to 150 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity physical activity. Preferably, aerobic activity should be spread throughout the week.

Source: *Welcome to NM-IBIS - New Mexico's Public Health Data Resource (state.nm.us)*

Community Health Needs Assessment

Sierra Vista Hospital ("SVH" or "the Hospital") has performed a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) to determine the health needs of the local community. Data were gathered from multiple well-respected secondary sources to build an accurate picture of the current community and its health needs. A survey of a select group of Local Experts was performed to review the prior CHNA and provide feedback, and to ascertain whether the previously identified needs are still a priority.

The 2020 Significant Health Needs identified for Sierra County include:

1. Mental Health/Suicide
2. Drug/Substance Abuse
3. Affordability/Accessibility
4. Alcohol Abuse
5. Obesity
6. Chronic Pain Management
7. Cancer

Within Sierra County 34.2% of the population is identified as morbidly obese, 18.4% are affected by chronic diabetes and 51.7% of the population fail to meet vigorous exercise recommendations.

Lower income groups, older adults, and residents of rural areas have been identified by Sierra Vista Hospital Local Expert Advisors as priority populations. Unique and pressing needs of these groups include access to affordable healthcare/transportation and behavioral health issues.

Findings from the community health needs assessment lead to the development of a detailed implementation strategy plan.

The goal for Chronic Disease Management is: Promote healthy lifestyles through education and outreach. Relevant implementation strategies for trails include: Exploration of additional community programming such as health fairs and screenings to promote prevention and early detection of chronic diseases.

Access to Parks & Trails

According to a report from the National Recreation & Park Association, adults living within a half mile of a park spend more time visiting parks and exercising. Access to trails provides a potential opportunity for increased physical activity. Any increase in physical activity can lead to medical cost savings. The annual individual medical cost of inactivity ($622) is more than two and a half times the annual cost per user of bike and pedestrian trails ($235)(Source: Wang, G. et al. “Cost analysis of the built environment: The case of bike and pedestrian trails in Lincoln, Neb.” American Journal of Public Health 94, no. 4 (2004): 549- 553. Increased phys-

ical activity and easier access to nature along the river and the foothills can help address obesity and mental health issues challenging our community.

Park Serve Database/10 Minute Walk

The Trust for Public Land has built a comprehensive database (called "Park Serve") of local parks in nearly 14,000 cities, towns, and communities. The database uses a "10 Minute Walk" concept to identify residential areas that are/are not within a 10 minute walk of a park. The analysis identifies physical barriers such as highways, train tracks, and rivers without bridges, and chooses routes without barriers to access the parks. Using these 10-minute walk service areas, overall access statistics were generated for each park, place, and urban area included in the database, and then further disaggregated by several demographic variables – race/ethnicity, age, and income.

As reported by the Park Serve database, about 40% of residents in Truth or Consequences live within a 10 minute walk of a park. The database also uses a set of metrics to identify areas of highest priority for park construction.

Detailed information, maps, and graphics are available at *Truth or Consequences, New Mexico | Trust for Public Land (tpl.org)*


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03 Community Engagement

A foundation of the Turtleback Trails Network planning effort has been to engage community members as much as possible to hear their ideas and concerns about outdoor recreation opportunities along the Rio Grande corridor. A number of organizations have participated in the planning process, and feedback has been sought from individual community members.

The planning efforts began in late 2019, and soon after, COVID-19 limited opportunities to interact with the public. The Sierra County Health Fair was the only public event prior to public health restrictions, but the Steering Committee has engaged in many non-contact interactions with the public.

Timeline of community engagement efforts

November 2019

Steering Committee Meeting. Discussion topics included workplan and civic engagement strategies.

December 2019

Steering Committee Meeting. Discussion topics included planning project study area tours, social media outreach, and assigning roles and responsibilities to team members.

January 2020

Steering Committee Meeting. Discussion topics included social media posts, health fair planning and establishing project vision and goals.

February 2020

Steering Committee Meeting. Discussion topics included Rio Grande Trail evaluation methods, and preparing briefing for T or C City Commission.



July 2021

Steering Committee Meeting. Discussion topics included Rotary Park workshop preparation, work plan review and plan outline content.

August 2020

Steering Committee Meeting. Discussion topics included establishing working groups to address Conservation & Education, Trails & Footbridges, and River Access; additional outreach strategies.

Spring 2021

New Media outreach. Organizers met with local independent media, resulting in an article that further informed the community as to our efforts. At least 185 community members read the article, according to the publication.

June 2021

Steering Committee Meeting. Discussion topics included Rotary Park workshop preparation, collaboration with River Walk Economic Feasibility Study contractor and affiliated tribal nation outreach.

August 2021

Steering Committee Meeting. Discussion topics included briefing new city manager, city commission project update, new publication content and design, planning for Rotary Park Workshop.

February 2020

Sierra County Live Long & Prosper Festival-A table top display invited community members to learn about the project and provide comments on how they would use the new trails and how trails could help our communities.

Summer 2020

Chalkboards were installed in Rotary Park and Williamsburg. New questions are posted periodically by volunteers and the resulting community responses added to a spreadsheet. The data will be used by planners to attempt to realize the shared vision of the community. Please see Appendix A for more details on the information received from these chalkboards.

Summer 2020

Project factsheets were distributed throughout the community, and a Facebook page was launched that as of August 2022 had amassed 873 followers.



July 2020

Briefing to the City Commission on project organization and accomplishments to date.

August 2021

In partnership with the City of Truth or Consequences and the NPS , the landscape architecture firm Groundwork Studio led a two-day workshop on desired improvements to Rotary Park. Approximately 75 community members participated.

September 2021

Steering Committee Meeting. Discussions included management, maintenance and stewardship of the trails and amenities, working group updates.



August 2021

A brochure was produced describing the project and envisioning potential improvements to water and trail amenities. The brochure was distributed at the weekly Farmers Market, the downtown brewery, Morningstar Outfitters, and the community board in Rotary Park.

March 2022

Steering Committee Meeting. Discussion topics included coordination with BOR survey, interns for project coordination, working group updates, and management, maintenance and stewardship strategies.

Since May of 2022 members of the Steering Committee have been gathering more community input for the plan in order to help facilitate the communities thoughts on the priority of implementation of major components of the trail. Presentations have been made to: Sierra County Commission, City of Truth or Consequences Commission, Village of Williamsburg, City of Truth or Consequences Chamber of Commerce, Sierra County Arts Council, Truth or Consequences Municipal School Board, City of Truth or Consequences Recreation and Tourism Board and the Sierra County Recreation and Tourism Board. In addition, a community display was set up during the annual T or C Fiesta, at the County Commission Chambers during early and Primary Elections Voting, and at the T or C Brewery. The community was asked to provide written input on selection of priorities, and survey votes were gathered from over 350 citizens.

The working groups were tasked with understanding the issues around river access, trail development, pedestrian bridge crossing, river habitat improvements, and education opportunities. The working groups met on multiple occasions and worked to define the physical projects, described in Chapter 5 of this document.

In addition to the community outreach and engagement described above, project partners also reached out to numerous local clubs and organizations including:

- City of Truth or Consequences
- Village of Williamsburg
- Jornada Resource Conservation & Development Council
- Sierra Vista Hospital
- Sierra Soil and Water Conservation District
- Sierra County Recreation and Tourism Board
- MainStreet Truth or Consequences
- Sierra County 4-H Council
- Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway
- Hot Springs FFA Chapter
- Hot Springs High School Envirothon Team
- Hot Springs High School JROTC
- Hot Springs High School Cross Country Team
- Hot Springs Marketing

- Hot Springs High School Envirothon Team
- Hot Springs High School JROTC
- Hot Springs High School Cross Country Team
- Hot Springs Marketing
- Bureau of Reclamation

Because of known cultural sites within the project area, the Village of Williamsburg corresponded with nine Sierra County affiliated tribes and pueblos inquiring whether our project elements would adversely affect any sacred sites and cultural landscapes. Three responses were received, all of which indicated no immediate concerns, and each group requested to be kept updated on the project. This affiliated tribal outreach is not intended to preclude official agency consultation, which will be necessary through federal planning processes.

Turtle Mountain Trails Network

If the City gave you $100 to spend on these projects, how would you allocate the money?

_____ Rotary Park Wetlands Improvements

_____ River Access /Boat Launch Improvements

_____ Accessible River Trail across the river

_____ Shared Use Trail from Rotary Park to Williamsburg.

_____ Adventure Trails Network for hiking, running, mountain biking, and motorized recreation.




Truth or Consequences
Healing Waters Trail

04 Visitor Safety and Security

The Turtleback Trails Network will provide many opportunities for residents and visitors to explore the Rio Grande corridor and adjacent public lands. With increased usage comes an increased need for visitor safety and security. While good informational signage and well-designed trails can minimize user risk, some trail and river users may become lost or injured during their recreational outing. As outdoor recreation amenities are developed along the Rio Grande (river access and trail corridors), there may be a need for emergency response to visitors in distress.

Key Issues

- **Illegal Dumping:** Along A005 (Turtleback Road), some uncontrolled dumping occurs, and occasionally transient camps are set up along the river bank. These activities and associated vandalism may deter people from using the trails network.
- **Signage:** No informational or directional signage exists to help people navigate the landscape and river.
- **Watercraft Conflicts:** Motorized watercraft can conflict with human-powered craft (tubes, stand up paddle boards, kayaks).
- **Trail User Conflicts:** Motorized and non-motorized trail user conflicts along the river corridor and adjacent public lands is likely. ATV/UTVs, mountain bikes, runners/hikers, and horses frequently use this land.
- **Law Enforcement Jurisdiction:** The City of T or C Police Dept. is prohibited from enforcing the State Boating Act, per legislation.
- **Emergency Response:** City of T or C, Village of Williamsburg and Sierra County are individually ill-equipped to respond to trail related injuries or water rescue. Each entity relies on available people and equipment from neighboring jurisdictions (informal mutual aid) for appropriate emergency response.

- **Access:** There is limited access across the Rio Grande. First responders rely on A005 and must cross the river at the Hwy 51 bridge to reach stranded or injured people during river release season. During low flow periods, low water crossings below Rotary Park and below Williamsburg can be used by limited equipment.

Signage

Signage, whether directional, informational, or regulatory, is non-existent for recreational users in the T or C area. Signage would help recreational users navigate the river and the backcountry trails beyond the city limits. Information such as time and distance to river access sites, markings of river hazards, and length and difficulty of hiking/running/biking trails, can provide a safer experience. Knowledge about conditions can help a user to be prepared and avoid difficult or dangerous situations.

Specific recommendations for signage for each proposed project are provided in Chapter 5.

Emergency Operations



The T or C Police and Fire Departments are aware that neither department can respond to emergencies on the river or adjacent public lands with sufficient resources. They understand other local EMS resources are available and may be necessary. Informal mutual aid agreements exist among Sierra County, T or C, Elephant Butte, Las Palomas, and NM State Police, and more coordination and planning is necessary to address increased recreational use on the river and adjacent public lands. A better coordinated response should include additional swift-water rescue training and acquisition of watercraft capable of assisting in a rescue.



The T or C Police Department is constrained from enforcing the NM Boating Act (Chapter 66, Article 12 NMSA 1978,) which stipulates the use of personal floatation devices (PFDs) among other rules. Better compliance with wearing PFDs could reduce some stranded/rescue situations. The City of T or C could adopt local ordinances that mirror the NM Boating Act so local enforcement personnel have enforcement authority over river safety. The cities of Ruidoso and Carlsbad, NM have adopted similar ordinances for recreational activities on waters within their

jurisdictions.

Key Recommendations

1. Develop Emergency Operations Plan for river and trail-based search and rescue operations and for natural hazards such as flooding or wildfire. The EOP should also include a Master Mutual Aid Agreement among all the local governments, Sierra County, NM State Police, etc. Sierra County would take the lead on developing the Emergency Operations Plan.
2. Provide detailed trail route maps to Sierra County GIS staff. Incorporate trail layer into 911 Dispatch system so dispatchers can direct emergency response to the right place in the quickest way.
3. Consider adopting river use ordinances that mirror the NM Boating Act and address PFD use, excessive noise, unruly behavior, trespassing, and littering, and ban motorized watercraft between Paseo del Rio and Rotary Park.
   See Appendix B for an example of a boating ordinance.
4. Design pedestrian bridges to accommodate UTV's or Side-by-Sides for use by first responders. Install removable bollards at either end of bridges to prevent unauthorized access and use.
5. Inform landowners about New Mexico Recreational Use Statute, which gives liability protection to private landowners who agree to provide public trail access without charging user fees. See Appendix C for text of the statute.
6. Establish a "Trail Stewards" program to provide "eyes and ears" for law enforcement. Trail stewards would report dumping, illegal camping, and other unauthorized recreational activities to local law enforcement. Encouraging and inviting public use of the trail corridors, trail stewards and response by law enforcement will significantly reduce the undesirable activities along the Rio Grande.



Wildfire Threats Along the Rio Grande Corridor

Along the Sierra County stretch of the Rio Grande, the native vegetation such as Rio Grande Cottonwood, Black Willow, New Mexico Privet, Wolfberry, four-wing saltbush, New Mexico Locust, and native grasses are being replaced by invasive species such as Russian Olive and Salt Cedar. The non-native plants have drastically reduced the number of native plants and have greatly reduced the plant diversity and have increased the possibility of wildfires igniting.

The Sierra County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Core Team identified the Rio Grande corridor, Mims Pond, and the Seco Creek areas as high wildfire risk areas. The Turtleback Trails Network, particularly the shared-use path between Rotary Park and Williamsburg and various river access sites could be impacted should wildfires ignite in the area.

Continued efforts will be necessary to help reduce the chances of wildland fires within the Turtleback Trails Network, along with education outreach of the risk of fires. Mitigation of wildfire risks and community education is necessary to protect lives, property, and native habitats.


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GREENHALGH TRAIL
THIS TRAIL IS OPEN TO
tread lightly!

05 Physical Projects

Part 1: Rio Grande Paddle Trail

A Rio Grande Paddle Trail could be developed from the Paseo del Rio Campground river access area downstream to the Seco Creek river access area, a distance of about 20 miles. Many of the amenities and facilities are in place, all needing improvements for safety and better visitor experiences. River access sites requiring improvements include Paseo del Rio Campground, Hwy 51 Bridge, Rotary Park, and Seco Creek. River access sites requiring development include Ralph Edwards Park and Village of Williamsburg Community Park area. A new river access site could be developed along Hwy 51, across from Mescal Canyon to relieve potentially crowded conditions at the Hwy 51 Bridge site.

This section describes the key conditions, existing conditions and recommendations for improvements for each river access area.

Very rough estimated costs for each river access improvements are $40-60,000 including concrete step or ramp launches, informational signage, loading/ unloading zones, and parking area. Vault toilets at key access sites would be an additional cost.

Key Issues

- Lack of signage along the river (directional, safety)
- Noise along river that disturbs residents/businesses
- Crowded launch sites with lack of parking and facilities (trash, restrooms)
- Steep river banks at launch sites

Existing Conditions

Recreational use of the lower Rio Grande is primarily seasonal, during water releases from Elephant Butte Dam. The typical floating season begins Memorial Day Weekend and lasts through Labor Day, although the water release period is getting shorter. During the release, the river flows at 1,400 – 2,300 CFS (cubic feet per second). Low conditions are releases of below 900 CFS and high are at 5,000 CFS and above.

Following the irrigation season, when river releases are halted and the Bureau of Reclamation constructs the earthen dam at Rotary Park, the Rio Grande becomes a very slow-moving river. Opportunities for flat water canoeing and stand up paddle boards exist if recreationists launch at Rotary Park, paddle upstream and return.

Tubing is the primary means of river floating in and through Truth or Consequences. Most tubers access the river at the Highway 51 bridge and float to Rotary Park. This float is approximately 4 miles in length and takes about 1.5 – 2 hours. Hard-shell boats (kayaks and canoes) either launch at the Paseo del Rio Campground or Highway 51 Bridge and float to Rotary Park or to a river access site just downstream of the Village of Williamsburg. A few adventurous canoeists and kayakers will make the day-long journey from Williamsburg to the Seco Creek access area at the mouth of Caballo Reservoir.

Very few hazards exist on the Rio Grande from the Paseo del Rio Campground river access site to Rotary Park, the stretch of the river where the majority of the floating occurs. Known hazards include the old and existing bridge pylons on Highway 51. There is a partially submerged hazard ~100 yards upstream of the NM 51 bridge; a metal piece that can damage inflatable watercraft. Two rock gardens downstream of the Paseo del Rio Campground river access (@ 1 mile and 1.65 miles) offer floaters a little adventure navigating through the rocks. The entire run, from Paseo del Rio Campground to Seco Creek, during the water release period, could be classified as swift water. The two rock gardens could be classified as easy Class One rapids.

Currently, about 250 people per week float the Rio Grande using the locally available commercial outfitter/concessionaire. According to local reliable sources, private floaters and tubers average 200-300 per week and some weekends can

generate 200 river users on a single day.

Local parks along the river corridor include the Paseo del Rio Campground, Ralph Edwards Park, Rotary Park, and Williamsburg Community Park.

The Paseo del Rio Campground site is ~½ mile downstream of Elephant Butte Dam and features river access and camping sites along the Rio Grande. The Elephant Butte Dam Site Historic District is at this location. It is managed by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) under a lease/ concession agreement.

Ralph Edwards Park is not currently accessible by watercraft or tubes. The park is an important community asset with park and playground equipment, fish pond, festivals and a weekly farmers market in the summer and fall, and a large parking area. The park is not directly accessible from the river.

Rotary Park features picnic shelters, hot springs discharge, wetlands, fishing access, and serves as a trailhead for the Healing Waters Trail which provides access to Veterans Hill and the Historic Bathhouse District. The park is directly accessible from the river.

Williamsburg Community Park features tennis and basketball courts, horseshoe pitching pits, and picnic shelters. The park is not directly accessible from the river.

River Access Site Recommendations and Visitor Use/Concerns

Paseo del Rio Campground River Access (+33°09.123', -107°12.231')

The Paseo del Rio Campground river access is predominantly used by Sierra County residents. Locals enjoy the gentle river bank slope to the river, allowing easy access for floating and fishing. This area offers 17 developed campsites with a fire ring, picnic table, and adobe shelter. It is a popular spot for fishing and swimming. Critical issues and concerns at this river access area include lack of informational and directional signage, poor flow management of vehicles, very poor road conditions, and congestion and crowding, especially during holiday weekends.

The Paseo del Rio Campground to NM 51 access

Specific Conditions Noted:

- There is no signage directing floaters from NM 51 to parking areas or from parking areas to river access spots.
- There is no signage for river users – ethics, duration, map, requirements, safety (pilings and bridges), hazards.
- The paved road ~½ mile long from NM 51 accesses the upper parking area near the old fish hatchery and can accommodate ~10 vehicles; there are two vault toilets at this site. The upper parking area is not organized – no parking spots. There are wooden steps and metal handrails leading down from the vault toilets to the river.
- Lower parking area just off NM 51 can accommodate ~15 vehicles and also has two vault toilets; many people hike a river trail between these two parking areas. It fills up fast when floaters leave vehicles at the lower lot.
- The road between upper and lower parking lots can wash out. The pavement is failing, and regular passenger cars may have trouble passing through.
- Dirt road ~¼ mile along the river that is crowded when people park vehicles and fish, especially on weekends and holidays.
- Vehicles often park in the riparian corridor, taking advantage of the shade canopy. Vehicles damage vegetation along the river's edge.
- The river access site is designed to minimize user conflicts; however,



the unimproved road can become crowded on weekends and holidays and impede traffic.

Key Recommendations

1. Install River Access Information Sign with maps showing hazards, river access locations, float distances and times, emergency numbers, rules and regulations and a community board.
2. Develop a long-term parking area and a separate 30-minute unloading zone. Loading Zone signage should educate floaters to prepare equipment prior to arriving at the loading zone.
3. Define pathway to riverbank
4. Protect and restore riparian areas, barricade vehicle access and parking.
5. Coordinate with Bureau of Reclamation concessionaire/permittee on improvements
6. Maintain a natural surface river access area.

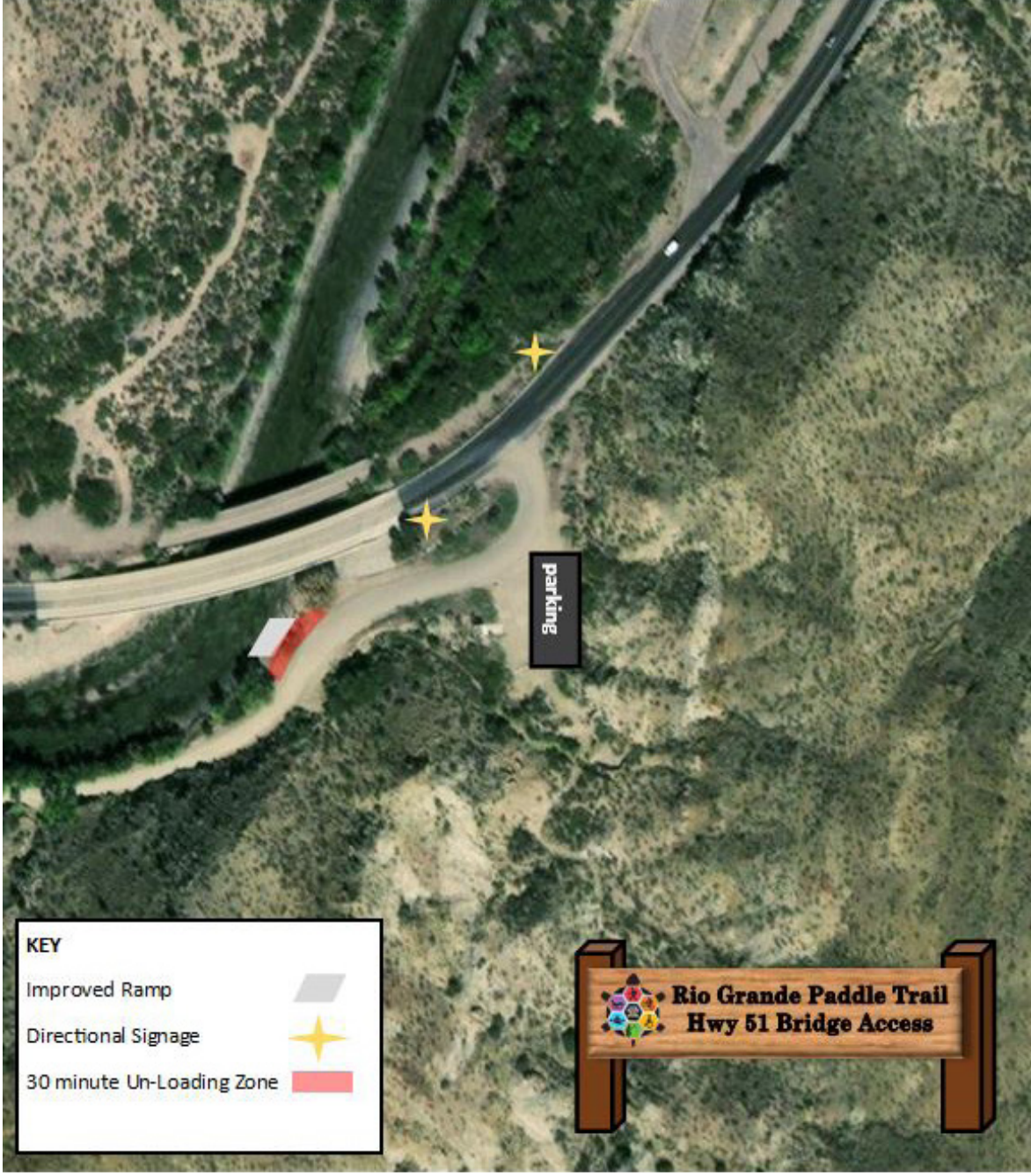
New Mexico Highway 51 Bridge River Access (+33°08.682', -107°12.550')

The NM 51 Bridge river access is very popular, especially with the local commercial floating business and residents. The area can become congested with vehicles and floaters, and parking can be an issue during weekends and holidays. The actual launch area is on a steep riverbank without steps or handrails. The riverbank just downstream is a popular place for people to fish. Critical issues and concerns at this launch area include a lack of informational and directional signage, insufficient parking, lack of garbage receptacles or toilets, and a river access site that increases risk of slips/trips/falls.

The Paseo del Rio Campground to NM 51 access

Specific Conditions Noted:

- There is no signage for river users – map, duration, requirements, ethics, hazards.
- Access the main parking area on Turtleback Avenue (dirt road) just off NM 51; the parking area can accommodate ~5-10 vehicles.
- Cars are frequently parked in the few shaded spots right beside the river access site, which causes congestion for other river users.
- Secondary parking area accesses trails to the south and can accommodate ~15 vehicles.
- No toilets or garbage receptacles.
- Main parking area gets very busy during weekends and holidays.
- Streambank launch is about 20' long, steep, gravely, with no ramp/steps or handrails (people do fall climbing down the slope).
- Site can support existing recreational activities on weekdays, but is very congested on weekends and holidays, limiting recreational experience.
- Users experience waiting periods between float groups on busy days (launch etiquette would help – inflate tubes before getting to river put-in.)
- Site is next to a road and hillside; there are congestion conflicts with vehicles and floaters on busy days.



Key Recommendations

1. Install River Access Information Sign with maps showing hazards, river access locations, float distances and times, emergency numbers, rules and regulations and a community board.
2. Establish a long-term parking area away from the river access area.
3. Establish a 30-minute unloading zone adjacent to the ramp.
4. Construct a concrete ramp or steps to the river's edge. Install railings for user safety and as a conveyance to slide hardshell boats down to the river.
5. Construct toilet/changing facilities and drinking water fountains.
6. Information signage could inform visitors of overflow parking downriver on NM 51.

<u>Mescal Canyon River Access PROPOSED</u> (+33°08.947', -107°12.989')

A new river access at Mescal Canyon could alleviate crowding and congested conditions at the Hwy 51 Bridge river access area. It is ½ mile down river from the NM 51 Bridge and is located on a NM Department of Transportation right-of-way. This site could accommodate a launch, loading and unloading zone, water trail information signage, and some long-term parking. Sight distances along E. Third Ave (NM 51) appear favorable for vehicles entering or leaving the area. If launching from this site, floaters will still be able to experience the small rapid rock gardens.

Key Recommendations



1. Install River Access Information Sign with maps showing hazards, river access locations, float distances and times, emergency numbers, rules and regulations and a community board.



2. Establish a long-term parking area away from the launch area.



3. Establish a 30-minute unloading zone adjacent to the ramp.



4. Construct a concrete ramp or steps to rivers edge. Install railings for user safety and as a conveyance to slide hardshell boats down to the river.



5. Coordinate planning and site development with NM Department of Transportation.


Rio Grande Paddle Trail
Mescal Canyon Access
KEY
Improved Ramp
Directional Signage
30 minute Un-Loading Zone
You Are Here Signage

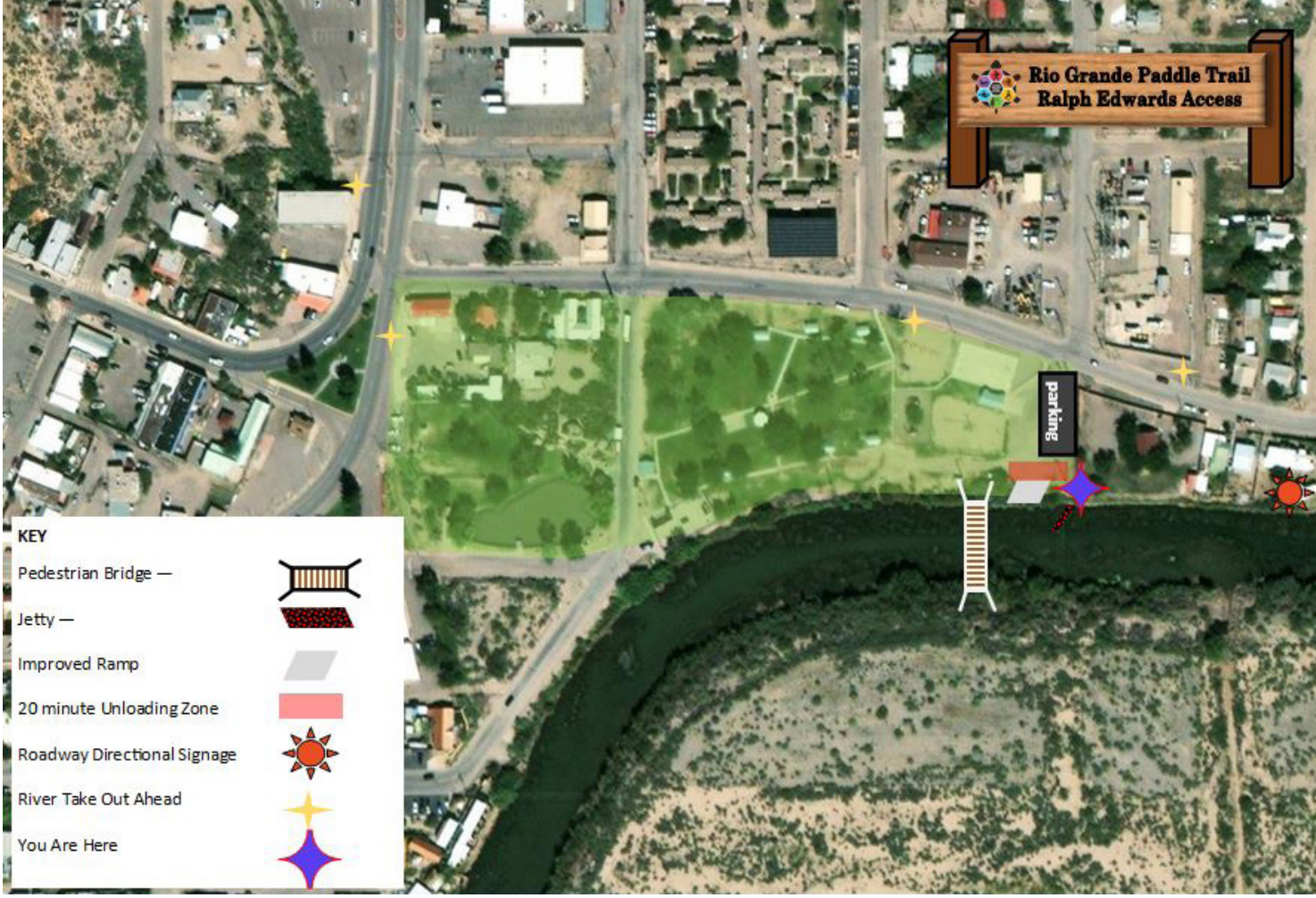
<u>Ralph Edwards River Access PROPOSED</u> (33°07.379', -107°15.296')

A river access site at Ralph Edwards park would be a welcome amenity for the park. This launch area could primarily serve people interested in a short tubing float from Ralph Edwards to Rotary Park. If a 0.6 mile multi-use trail is developed connecting Rotary to Ralph Edwards, (see Part 2 of this chapter) then floaters could easily and safely walk back upriver and float the river section again.

Key Recommendations



1. Install River Access Information Sign with maps showing hazards, river access locations, float distances and times, emergency numbers, rules and regulations and a community board.
2. Establish a long-term parking area away from the launch area.
3. Establish a 30-minute unloading zone adjacent to the ramp.
4. Construct a concrete ramp or steps to rivers edge. Install railings for user safety and as a conveyance to slide hardshell boats down to the river.
5. Construct a rock jetty upstream of the ramp to create an eddy. The jetty would slow the water velocity near the bank, allowing for several floaters to enter or exit the river at one time.


Rio Grande Paddle Trail
Ralph Edwards Access
parking
KEY
Pedestrian Bridge —
Jetty —
Improved Ramp
20 minute Unloading Zone
Roadway Directional Signage
River Take Out Ahead
You Are Here

Rotary Park River Access (+33°07.379', -107°15.296')

The Rotary Park take-out/launch area is used by the local commercial floating business as well as many private floaters. It has space for many vehicles, including vehicles with trailers. There are porta-potties, garbage receptacles, and covered picnic tables. There is no potable water. The primary take-out has steep, gravely and muddy slopes that make launching and take-out difficult and potentially dangerous. The secondary take-out is upstream approximately 100 feet, and has crude stairs and a handrail. The parking area has potential to offer food truck and beverage services. Critical issues and concerns at this area include lack of informational and directional signage, and two launch/take-out areas that need improvements to reduce potential for slips/trips/falls.

Specific Conditions Noted:

- There is no signage for river users – map, duration, requirements, ethics, hazards.
- Two parking areas accessed via city streets that can accommodate ~40 vehicles.
- Primary take-out for floaters, including the local commercial float company.
- Primary take-out is ~20' long, steep, gravely, with no ramp or handrails.
- Floating from Hatchery or NM 51 Bridge takes 1.5-2 hours, depending on CFS, and requires floaters to safely navigate two small sets of rapids (Class I).
- Float takes recreationists through T or C and near many homes and a couple of businesses; noise from floaters can be an issue to residents.
- Port-a-potties and a garbage dumpster at site along with a few covered picnic tables and barbecue grills.
- Secondary take-out near the picnic area has handrails and poorly maintained steps that are camouflaged by brush.
- Site is busy during weekends and holidays.
- Earthen dam is constructed annually and provides "unauthorized" access across the river for hikers and runners.
- Jurisdictional responsibility for this site and land ownership is in question.
- This area is a trailhead for the Healing Waters Trail.
- Site can support existing recreational activities, but take-out is small and congested, especially on weekends and holidays, limiting recreational experience.
- Steep, unimproved streambank decreases safe take-outs and launches, especially when CFS flows are lowered by BOR.
- First-time floaters risk missing the take-outs due to the small size of the first one



and brush at the main take-out.

- Wetlands conservation/restoration could significantly change park/parking function layout.

Key Recommendations

1. Install River Access Information Sign with maps showing hazards, river access locations, float distances and times, emergency numbers, rules and regulations and a community board.
2. Establish a long-term parking area away from the launch area.
3. Establish 30-minute un-loading zone adjacent to ramp
4. Construct a concrete ramp or steps to rivers edge. Install railings for user safety and as a conveyance to slide hardshell boats down to the river.
5. Construct a rock jetty upstream of the ramp to create an eddy. The jetty would slow the water velocity near the bank, allowing for several floaters to exit the river at one time.
6. Explore the possibility of installing an accessible boat launch for persons with disabilities. These specially designed floating docks allow persons with disabilities to climb in/on and launch their own boat. This launch design could provide river access opportunities year-round when flow is backed-up allowing out-and-back trips for stand up paddle boards, canoes and kayaks.
7. Construct toilet/changing facilities and drinking water fountains.

Williamsburg River Access (+33°06.347', -107°17.831')

River use is much lower from Rotary Park to Williamsburg and Seco Creek than on the section from the Fish Hatchery to Rotary Park. Hard-shell boats are preferred due to time and distance on the water. Prevailing southwest winds can add hours to the float times.

The Williamsburg take-out / river access area is 3/4 mile south of the S. Broadway and State Route 187 intersection. The area is currently being managed by the BOR; however, the Bureau is in discussions with Village of Williamsburg officials to transfer management responsibility to the Village. Village officials have expressed interest in developing an RV campground and other recreational amenities in the area.

Kayakers and canoeists would most likely use this site as a take-out for trips originating at the NM 51 launch site. Hardshell boaters floating to Seco Creek would likely launch from Rotary Park. The Williamsburg river access site is not envisioned as a primary launch location at this time.

Currently, the river access area is uninviting to recreational river users. Complaints of garbage and illegal dumping are mentioned and the riverbank is steep, often muddy, and covered in cow manure.

Specific Conditions Noted:

- No signage directing floaters.
- Parking area can accommodate ~10-15 vehicles.
- Take-outs/launches are either steep and gravely or VERY muddy with high levels of bovine excrement .
- Floating from Hatchery or NM 51 Bridge takes 3-4 hours, depending on CFS, and requires floaters to safely navigate two small sets of rapids (Class I).
- Parking area is used by RV campers and BOR may develop a campsite in the future to be managed by the Village of Williamsburg.
- No toilets or garbage receptacles.
- BOR has jurisdictional responsibility for this site.
- Garbage is prevalent and the location is often used as an illegal dump site.



Key Recommendations

1. Install River Access Information Sign with maps showing hazards, river access locations, float distances and times, emergency numbers, rules and regulations and a community board.
2. Establish a long-term parking area away from the launch area.
3. Establish a 30-minute un-loading zone adjacent to the ramp.
4. The Village of Williamsburg should secure management responsibilities for this river access area.
5. Construct a hardened ramp to mitigate muddy conditions.

Caballo Reservoir – Seco Creek River Access (+32°59.045', -107°17.327')

A river access at Seco Creek just upriver of Caballo Reservoir would provide a quality day-long river experience for canoe or kayak enthusiasts. It would be a very long float for tubers due to prevailing winds from the south pushing against recreationists. The setting is more remote with no amenities. It is about 14 miles south of Rotary Park to the takeout, predominantly on NM 187. The site is popular for RVing, camping, and fishing.

Specific Conditions Noted:

- No signage directing floaters
- Parking area can accommodate ~20 vehicles and is used by RV campers.
- Take-out is on gentler stream bank slopes and easily accessible.
- Site is accessed by driving NM 187 then through a small community.
- Paddle float from Rotary Park launch takes 6-8 hours and typically done in a kayak or canoe; it takes significantly more time in tubes.
- Gravel access road is ~¾ mile long, poorly maintained, rutted, and has numerous pot holes
- The BOR has jurisdictional responsibility for this site.
- Take-out can support existing recreational activities, but poor condition of gravel road limits the type of vehicles accessing it.
- The river access site is difficult to find if water levels are high.

Key Recommendations

1. Establish a shuttle parking area away from the river access area.
2. Establish a boat loading zone, so vehicles and RV's don't block access to the riverbank.
3. Post signs up-river informing boaters that the river access site is up ahead.
4. Maintain a natural surface take-out area.
5. Install a tall flagpole at the take-out so boaters can navigate to the site during high water levels.


KEY
30 minute Loading Zone
Roadway Directional Signage
River Take Out Ahead Sign
You Are Here Sign


Shuttle par king
Rio Grande


Rio Grande Paddle Trail
Seco Creek Access

Ramp Designs

Considerations for using a ramp or steps to the river's edge depends on slope length and steepness. Excessively steep and long slopes could benefit from steps leading down to a flatter launch area. Concrete ramps with safety railings may be appropriate for most of the river access areas between Fish Hatchery and Williamsburg. Please see Appendix D for details of different ramp designs and their advantages and disadvantages.

Signage and Wayfinding

Signage should help the public find the river access sites, understand any risks involved in river floating, and spell out rules and regulations to provide enhanced visitor experiences and reduce/manage risk for paddle trail users.

Turtleback Trails Branding and Logo

The Turtleback Trails logo helps communicate the diversity of the trails system – land and water trails, and the variety of recreational experiences available to everyone. The logo idea emerged from our local mountain namesake.

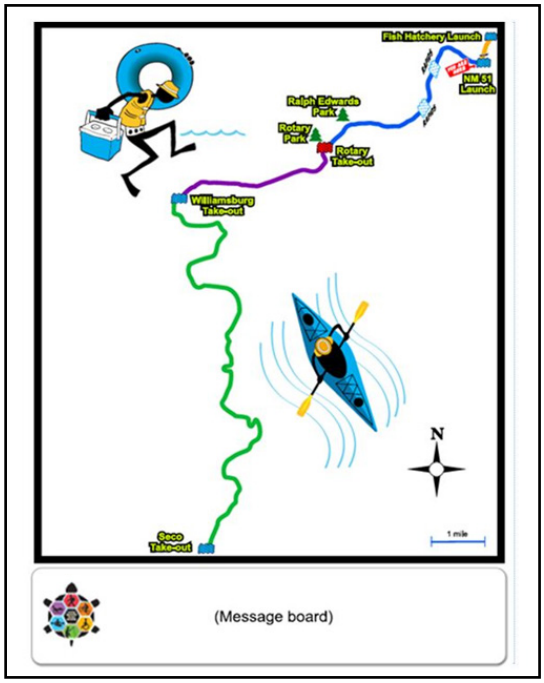
Using this logo on all signage related to the Turtleback Trails Network helps establish a strong long-term ownable identity. The logo works as a system and it provides an easily recognizable brand that serves as an identifier marker throughout the trails system. The logo will create visual continuity and clarity and improve the trail user and river floater experiences through clear wayfinding.

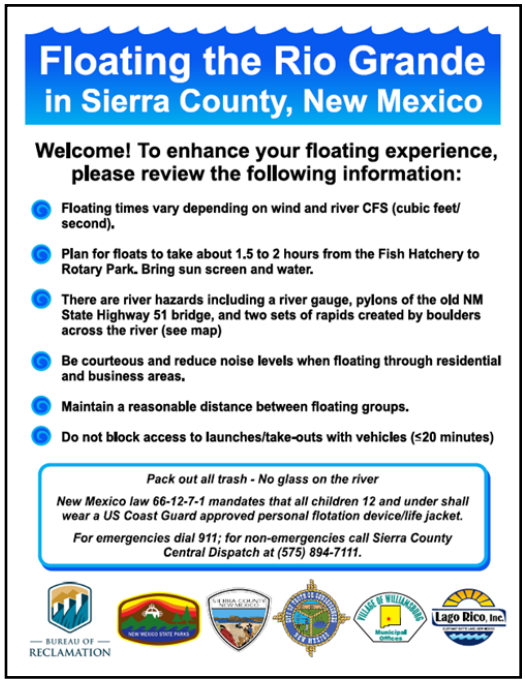


This logo should be utilized on roadway directional signs, at river access sites signage, at trailhead signage and on trail marker signage. It should also appear in print publications and electronic media.

River Access Site Kiosk

The most important information about the Rio Grande Paddle Trail should be displayed on a kiosk at each river access site. The kiosk should contain a river map pointing out float times and distances, hazards, publicly accessible sites (since much of the river corridor is private), rules and regulations governing floating activities, and a message board for public use. The river access working group prepared these kiosk concepts for further consideration.





Graphics credit to Dustin Runyan)

Directional Signage

Visitors to T or C and Williamsburg should be able to get to the Rio Grande access points easily. Directional signage throughout main roadway arterials and residential areas are necessary. Signage could be simple, following the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) – with brown background color for guide and information signs related to points of recreational or cultural interest.



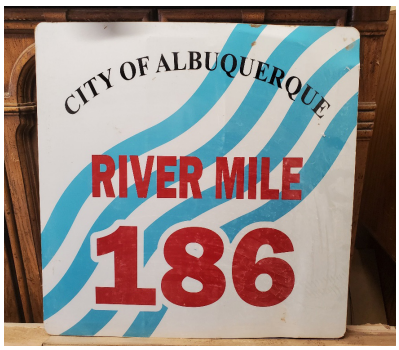
Location Signage

Each river access site will become an important amenity in the community. A stand alone "gateway" sign would help define the spaces as important community areas.



River Mileage Signage

First responders indicated that the placement of river mileage signs would help river recreationists to be aware of their locations in case of emergency. The signs should be visible from the river.



"Take Out Ahead" Signage

River floaters indicated that the take-outs can "sneak up" on them because there are no indicators the take-out is ahead. If the Rio Grande water levels are up, preparing to exit the river becomes even more difficult. Floaters need to be alerted that a public river access site is ahead. A "River Take Out Ahead" sign should be installed 100 yards before each take-out.



Wayfinding Concepts

Key wayfinding principles include:

- Connect Places. Facilitate travel between destinations and provide guidance to new destinations.
- Keep Information Simple. Present information simply, using clear fonts and simple designs, so that it can be understood quickly.
- Maintain Motion. Be legible and visible for people moving so that they can read the signage without stopping.
- Be Predictable. Standardize the placement and design of signs so that patterns are established, and the signage becomes predictable.
- Promote Active Travel. Encourage increased rates of active transportation by helping people to realize they can use the bikeway and pedestrian network to access the places they want to go.

River Management

Several unique river experiences are possible on the Rio Grande from the Fish Hatchery to Seco Creek. Marketing these different experiences will help visitors and residents understand which segment they should float. Established use patterns should be maintained so all river users can enjoy their experience.

The Fish Hatchery segment caters to families playing in the river shallows and very short tubing runs. The adjacent campground helps establish a family-friendly atmosphere at this location.

The Hwy 51 to Rotary Park segment has become the high use zone, favored by almost everyone who floats. It features the only "riffles" on the river, and can be floated in 1.5-2 hours, it's an easy shuttle and doable after work. River managers will likely have to address some emerging trends on this section including: excessive noise from portable speakers, river crowding, and occasional motorized watercraft. Potential strategies to address these problems could be: enforcing the municipal noise ordinance at specific times of day, like 4-8pm when residents may want to enjoy the river views from their properties; establishing launch times during busy weekends or holidays, and prohibiting motorized watercraft during the short tubing season in this segment.



The City of T or C and the Bureau of Reclamation should also develop a plan of action in the event several liveries or tube rental operations begin competing for launch times and staging areas for launch and take-outs. Depending on the success of the paddle trail and predictable water levels, a permit system may be necessary in the future.

The Rotary Park to Seco Creek segment experiences low to moderate use.

Part 2: Trails and Pedestrian Footbridges

The trails and pedestrian footbridges component include three trail segments and at least two pedestrian footbridges crossing the Rio Grande to access the trail segments. Trail segments are: a riverside multi-use path from Rotary Park to the Village of Williamsburg community park; a riverside multi-use path from Rotary Park to Ralph Edwards Park; and a 26+ mile trail network on Bureau of Land Management lands using existing routes and roads. All of the trail segments are across the Rio Grande from T or C and Williamsburg.

Very rough estimated costs are $500,000 for each bridge including engineering, prefabricated bridge purchase and installation. Trail construction and materials for two trail segments could range from $150-200,000 dollars with a stabilized crusher-fines surface. Trail improvement costs for BLM land trails would primarily be focused towards informational and directional signage at trail junctions and intersections.

Key Issues Heard Around Town

- Maintenance/vandalism/trash
- Private land - need signage to inform trail users
- Archaeological site adjacent to the planned trail needs to be protected
- Handicap accessibility - possibly construct an accessible pier at either Ralph Edwards or Rotary, accessible river launch sites, and consider accessibility in trail construction
- Private land easement to access County Road A005
- Maintenance of County Road A005 - currently has some portions maintained by the City of T or C and other portions maintained by Sierra County
- Trail user conflicts - manage potential conflicts between runners/bikers/hikers/dogs and wildlife
- Trail development - need to coordinate with BLM and BOR in their prescribed planning processes for developing trails
- Bureau of Reclamation easements - need to coordinate with BOR on any trail work/footbridge construction that would impact the flow capacity of the river channel

Components of the Trail Network

Rio Grande Trail Extension from the Fish Hatchery to Williamsburg

This project envisions an opportunity to extend the Rio Grande Trail in Sierra County by an additional ten miles. From the Fish Hatchery site off of NM Highway 51, a hiker could cross the road to access Turtleback Avenue (A005), a dirt road utilized by the Bureau of Reclamation and locals, to travel approximately four miles through federal and private land to a point just across the river from Rotary Park.

From Rotary Park, a BOR access road follows the riverbank for approximately a mile before turning left away from the river to higher ground. Here, due to the topology of the riverbank area, there are three options for establishment of a hiking trail. The river channel is below 4240' elevation, and for much of the study area, a wide swath of low terrain is also below this elevation.

Option 1: Lower Bench

This stretch of land, which some residents call "the flats," stays below 4240'. There is an existing dirt/sand road that follows the riverbank closely (within 100') for most of the study area.

The width of the lower bench varies within the study area from less than 50' (especially at roughly 33.112694, -107.276500, "the chokepoint") to almost a mile in the deep bend just past Williamsburg. Trail construction through the chokepoint could be technically challenging and prone to weather damage due to the erosion-vulnerable steep hillside. The area can become muddy during rains.

A trail that closely followed the riverbank would offer some shade, ample wildlife viewing, and fishing opportunities.

Option 2: Upper Bench

What some residents call "the mesa", the upper bench rises rather abruptly from the lower bench in most of the study area.

There are established dirt/sand roads that a trail could parallel. A trail that roughly followed the edge of the Upper Bench would feature commanding views of the river.

However, federal officials have cautioned against new trails on the mesa due to the existence of nearby fragile cultural sites.

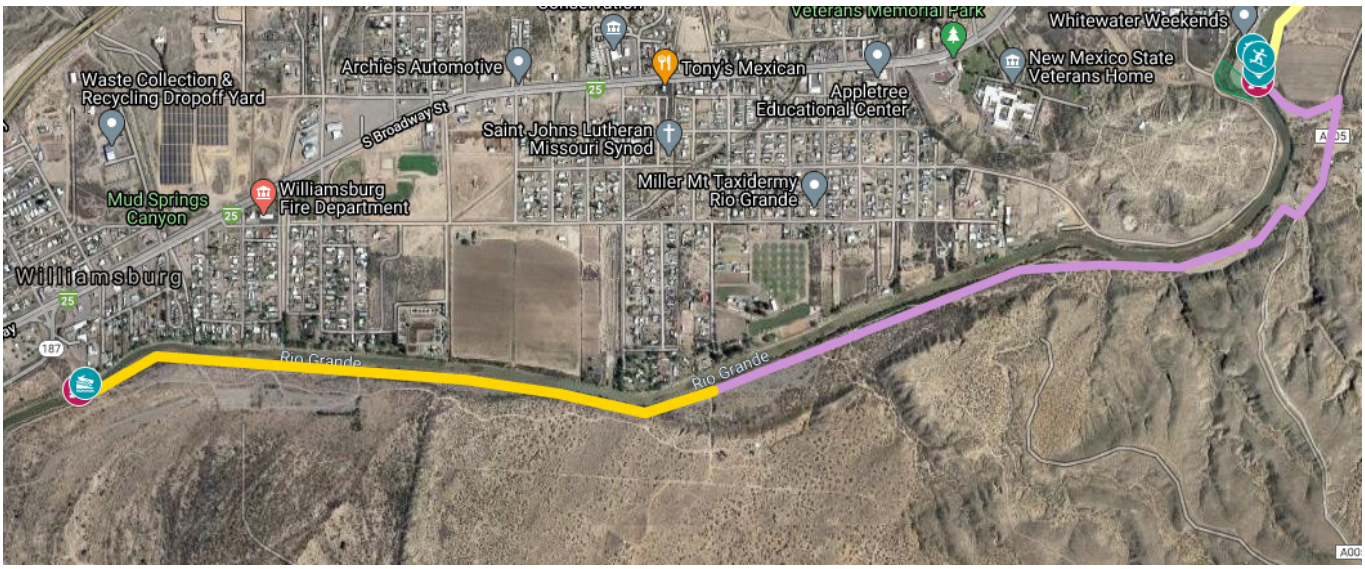
Option 3: Combination of Lower and Upper

A compromise alignment could begin and end on the Lower Bench, running parallel to the established dirt roads near the riverbank, only ascending to the Upper Bench for a few hundred yards above the chokepoint.

Recommended Route

The trails working group developed a trail alternative evaluation criteria based on User Experience, Aesthetics, Ease of Implementation, User Accomodation, and Cultural/Historical. Based on these criteria, the lower bench is the preferred alternative. Please see Appendix E for the full Trail Scoring chart and criteria.

It will require some creative engineering to develop a trail or boardwalk through the salt cedar thicket. However, overcoming some construction hurdles will result in a consistent riverbank course that has more shade and is more accessible to a broader range of non-motorized traffic, while avoiding risk of disturbing fragile cultural sites.



Existing dirt road *New trail construction*





Proposed riverside trail to Williamsburg

Key Recommendations

- Coordinate with Sierra County and City of T or C to designate Turtleback Road (AOO5) as a Rio Grande Trail alignment. Work with appropriate local entities to recognize foot traffic on the road and allow for Rio Grande Trail signage.
- Develop a 1.2 mile multi-use pathway between Williamsburg and the intersection with Turtleback Road as it turns South. Construct the non-motorized pathway to 6-8 foot wide standards, accessible by foot, bicycle, or wheeled mobility device. Install barricades to prevent unauthorized motorized use.
- Install informational, educational and river stewardship signage along the route. (See Conservation section for signage recommendations).
- Install trail amenities such as shade structures and benches.
- Determine organization or agency responsible for trail management and operations

Riverside Trail from Rotary Park to Ralph Edwards Park

Truth or Consequences has two public parks on the banks of the Rio Grande that are less than a mile apart. While the city side of the river is already populated by private residences, the east/south side is platted for future development and currently in a natural state. A recreation easement will provide up to a 100-foot wide buffer zone for the creation of an ADA-accessible footpath along the shady banks of the Rio Grande. This pathway would provide a much needed amenity in the City, providing access to nature and offering health benefits to all residents and visitors.

Any public trail development on private land will be established through voluntary agreements between private landowners and a trail administrator/manager. The Turtleback Trails Network will not entertain condemnation or eminent domain to secure any trails rights-of-way.

Key Recommendations



- The City of T or C should work with Rio Vista Land Holdings (or subsequent owners) to secure a recreational trail easement so it can legally fund, build, and help maintain a riverside trail.



- Develop a 6-8 foot wide universally accessible pathway connected by two pedestrian bridges (one at Rotary Park and one at Ralph Edwards Park). The 0.6 mile long trail surface should be firm and stable, and should be able to withstand overbank flooding.



- Assure that private property owners on the east/south side of Rio Grande have secured legal access to the trail at strategically located access points. (Individual property owners should not have personal access to the trail from their property as this causes trail management problems).



- Develop a trail management agreement with Rio Vista Land Holdings (or subsequent owners).



- Encourage riverbank conservation to protect riverbanks.

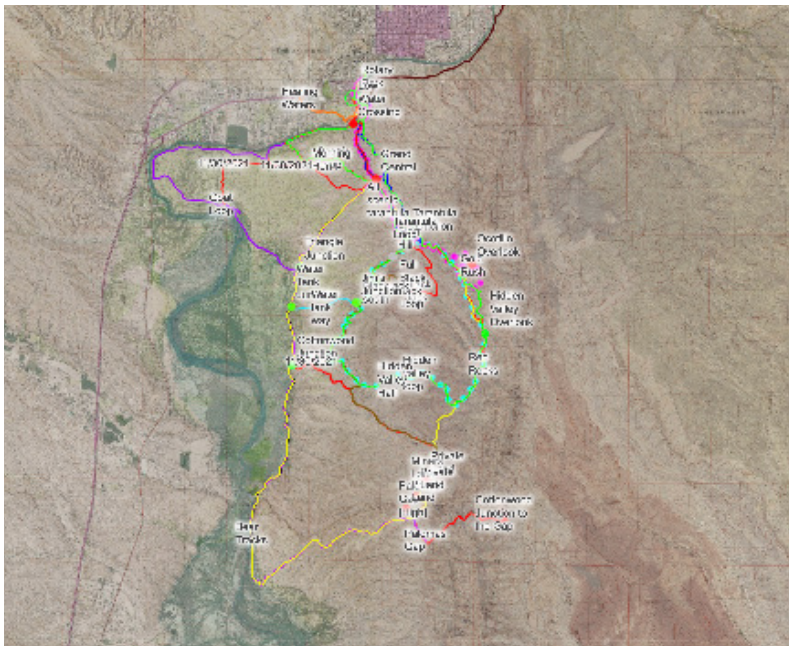
BLM Trails Network

Old mining and 4WD trails currently form a network of rugged mountain trails throughout the public lands between the Rio Grande and Turtleback Mountain.

These trails are currently used by hikers, runners, mountain bikers, and OHV enthusiasts. Establishing some of the network as official BLM trails, suitable for certain types of use, would reduce user conflicts, protect delicate ecosystems, and create an enhanced recreational amenity for Sierra County.

Existing conditions:

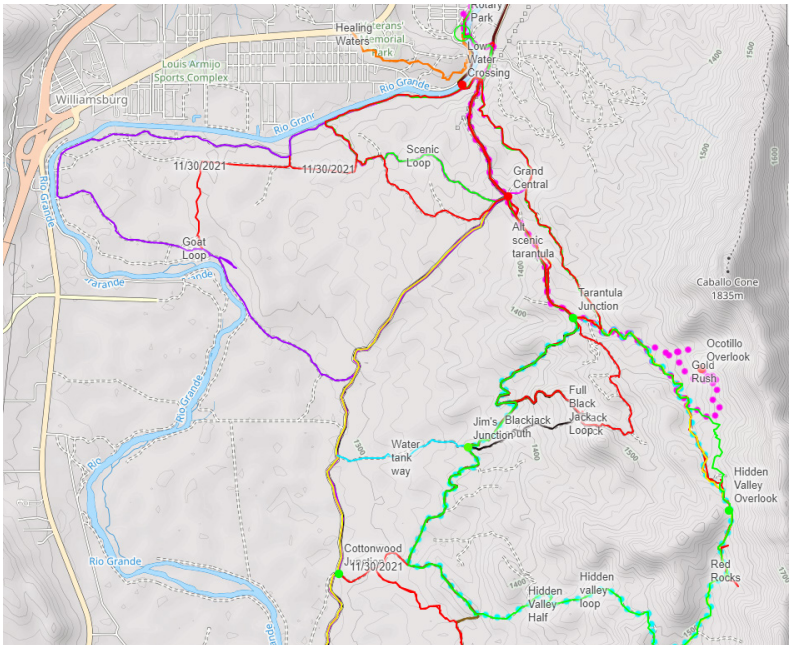
- Some of the trails are graded dirt roadways, maintained by Sierra County, BLM, and/or BOR and suitable for most vehicle traffic.
- Some are rocky and/or sandy, requiring a 4WD vehicle.
- Doubletrack: Many are rugged, rocky, sandy, and/or steep, accessible for experienced OHV drivers in small, high-clearance 4WD vehicles, but perhaps not sustainable.



The Caltopo map (https://caltopo.com/m/22DF) showing recent recreational uses.

Designating and integrating any new trails into the BLM Tri-County plan will require review (see Chapter 8), though some of this has already been done. In October 2021 and October 2022, local organizers received a BLM permit to conduct a trail running race, the Truth or Consequences Desert Ultra (www.runtorc.com), which involved a review of any sensitive ecological or archeological sites.

The primary access route to get to the trails on the south/southwest slopes of Caballo Cone is Turtleback Avenue (County Road A005). The road ascends from the Rio Grande up to a junction some locals refer to as "Grand Central" (see map below). The improved gravel roadway turns southwest here, descending back to the low river valley and becoming sandy in places. A brief accounting of the various roads and trails follows the map:



Roads and trails on BLM/BOR land:

- **Tarantula Loop:** The loop created by ascending Turtleback Avenue past Grand Central, up a very steep jeep trail to Tarantula Junction, and then dropping into the arroyo that parallels the main trail to return to the Rotary Park area. A confident driver in a 4WD vehicle could drive to Tarantula Junction, but much of the arroyo is too sandy and rugged for highway vehicles. This loop, at about 4 miles total, is frequently used by trail runners.
- **Scenic Loop:** The loop created by following the river west from Rotary Park, turning left in and ascending an arroyo shortly past the cattle gate, and following a jeep trail up to Turtleback Avenue at Grand Central. A variation on the loop ascends a very rocky jeep trail to a junction with Turtleback Avenue just downhill from the primary loop. A confident driver in a 4WD vehicle could drive this.

There are some very sandy and steep rocky areas.

- **Goat Loop:** This refers to sandy/muddy ranch roads that track the Rio Grande downstream from the vicinity of Rotary Park before turning back towards Turtleback Avenue.
- **Blackjack Loop:** A roughly 4-mile loop of steep and rugged jeep trail beginning and ending at Tarantula Junction. It passes the historic Blackjack mine. A variation turns south at the mine site to descend a rugged jeep trail.
- **Gold Rush Loop:** After ascending the sandy arroyo southeast of Tarantula Junction for less than a mile, a spur to the east leads up a steep and narrow trail to the historic Gold Rush mine, and then levels out and follows an old railroad presumably used for mining carts. This part of the trail is not suitable for any vehicle traffic.
- **Hidden Valley Loop:** A roughly 8-mile loop beginning and ending at Tarantula Junction. After ascending the sandy arroyo southeast of Tarantula Junction for approximately two miles, this rugged jeep track reaches Hidden Valley Overlook, with long views to the Caballo Mountains and Caballo Reservoir. The trail becomes more rugged as it descends into the arroyo on the other side, only suitable for hikers and experienced OHV drivers. In less than a mile, the loop ascends west/northwest to a ridge before dropping back to Miner's Lane, though continuing down the arroyo is also possible for hikers interested in experiencing a slot canyon with several four-foot drops and connecting to the jeep trail leading to Palomas Gap.

Key Recommendations



- The City of Truth or Consequences should work with the Las Cruces District Office of the BLM to include the recreation opportunities and proposed pathways described in this document in the BLM's TriCounty Resource Management Plan and subsequent travel management planning.



- The City and County should formally adopt the recommendations described in Chapter 5: Visitor Safety.



- The City should ensure that the outdoor recreation opportunities and pathways described in this document are included in any relevant regional marketing projects.



- Local trail users (non-motorized and motorized) should collaborate on creating trail experiences without adversely affecting trail user goals. This would involve

evaluating trail segments for sustainability and user experience and presenting concepts to the Bureau of Land Management.

- In coordination with BLM, determine if temporary trail directional signage could be installed to improve the visitor experience.

Footbridges

To access the other side of the Rio Grande from Truth or Consequences, the current options are:

1. Drive approximately 4 miles northeast on NM 51 to the vehicle bridge, and then turn right on Turtleback Avenue and follow the road along the other side of the river (driving from Rotary Park to the point directly across the river is approximately 8 miles).
2. Pedestrians may cross the BOR rock dam at Rotary Park while it's in place in the winter. The dam is neither designed nor intended for pedestrian use, and passage can be treacherous, involving stepping on unstable rocks with water rushing past.
3. While the rock dam is in place, enterprising pedestrians may wade across and higher-clearance vehicles can drive across the low water crossing approximately 200 yards downstream from Rotary Park.

Footbridge Locations

The Steering Committee envisions up to four pedestrian crossings between Elephant Butte Dam and Williamsburg. The most important crossings are at Rotary Park and the Village of Williamsburg.

1. Rotary Park: A bridge at Rotary Park is the core of the system and the highest priority. The site offers ample parking, regular visitation by locals and tourists, and is within easy walking distance of the downtown business district and many residences, hotels, and vacation rentals. A bridge here would also allow Rio Grande Trail users to cross the river in order to access amenities in T or C.
2. Ralph Edwards Park: Several plans identify a vehicular bridge crossing near this park. A pedestrian walkway should be incorporated into the bridge design.
3. Williamsburg: The preferred Williamsburg bridge and river access location

is near the VFW post, which could provide necessary parking. There is a private lot south of the VFW property which the Village would need to negotiate for a recreational easement or purchase the lot.

4. Paseo del Rio Campground (fish hatchery): The campground is managed by the Bureau of Reclamation and concessionaire or permittee operations are being explored. Potential concessionaires have considered a pedestrian bridge here to allow campers and day users to hike to the dirt dam and for Rio Grande Trail hikers to cross the river into the Paseo Del Rio Campground and continue hiking along Turtleback Road. Another possibility is utilizing the old Hwy 51 bridge structure as a pedestrian crossing and constructing a river-side trail on the opposite side of the campground.

Design Recommendations

The bridge at Rotary Park offers an opportunity to meet several goals with one comprehensive design, including:

- Fishing Access: New Mexico Department of Game and Fish stocks the river with trout, drawing regional anglers.
- Emergency Services: A removable bollard could provide access to emergency vehicles.
- Floating Access: The current riverbank is brushy, steep, and muddy. See the Rotary Park river access section earlier in this chapter for details.
- Dam Operation: At the end of the irrigation season, BOR technicians construct a rock/dirt dam at Rotary Park to maintain hydrostatic pressure in the Hot Springs District, and then remove it in the spring. A mechanical/hydraulic dam structure would provide BOR operators a permanent option for controlling the river's flow at a much lower cost going forward. The pedestrian bridge crossing and permanent dam construction could be consolidated into one project sharing some engineering and design features.

The Steering Committee recommends the bridges:

- Visually resemble one another, even if they are built in sequence over a period of years.
- Are informed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service migratory bird research in order

to minimize harm to any endangered species (see Part 3 of this chapter).

- Are ADA-accessible.
- Prevent livestock from crossing.
- Provide ample clearance for tubes and kayaks and other river-legal & appropriate vessels, including law enforcement/emergency services watercraft.
- Allow for unimpeded BOR river channel maintenance operations.
- Structures support nesting opportunities for swallow species using the river corridor



Barn Swallows adapting to portico structure designed to support nest building.

See also: Appendix F: Pedestrian Bridge Resources

Part 3: Rotary Park

Wetlands Restoration

An oxbow of the Rio Grande toward the south end of Rotary Park created a small wetland ecosystem. Many previous community planning efforts have identified opportunities to enhance the wetlands at Rotary Park. Strong community support exists for improvements in pedestrian and vehicle traffic flow, river access, and wetlands restoration.

Currently, the site only receives water when the flows of the river are high enough that in-flows occur into the lower portion of the wetland. The goal is to restore the wetland to closely mimic its original design as part of an oxbow of the Rio Grande and to provide water to the wetland area on a year-round basis.

Excess hot mineral water from hot springs spas is discharged into the Rio Grande through a ditch system that enters the river at the north end of Rotary Park. Installation of a "check-gate" in that ditch system would divert that water on an as-needed basis into an existing dirt ditch that runs along the west side of Rotary Park. That ditch leads directly into the north end of the wetland. In addition, excess sediment buildup in the wetlands, along with an influx of cattails, would be removed, allowing water into the wetlands when the Rio Grande is in full flow. The planting of native shrubs and trees would encourage more wildlife, especially birds and bird nesting.

Rotary Park Redesign

In 2009, the City of T or C conducted a workshop in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These goals emerged from that workshop:

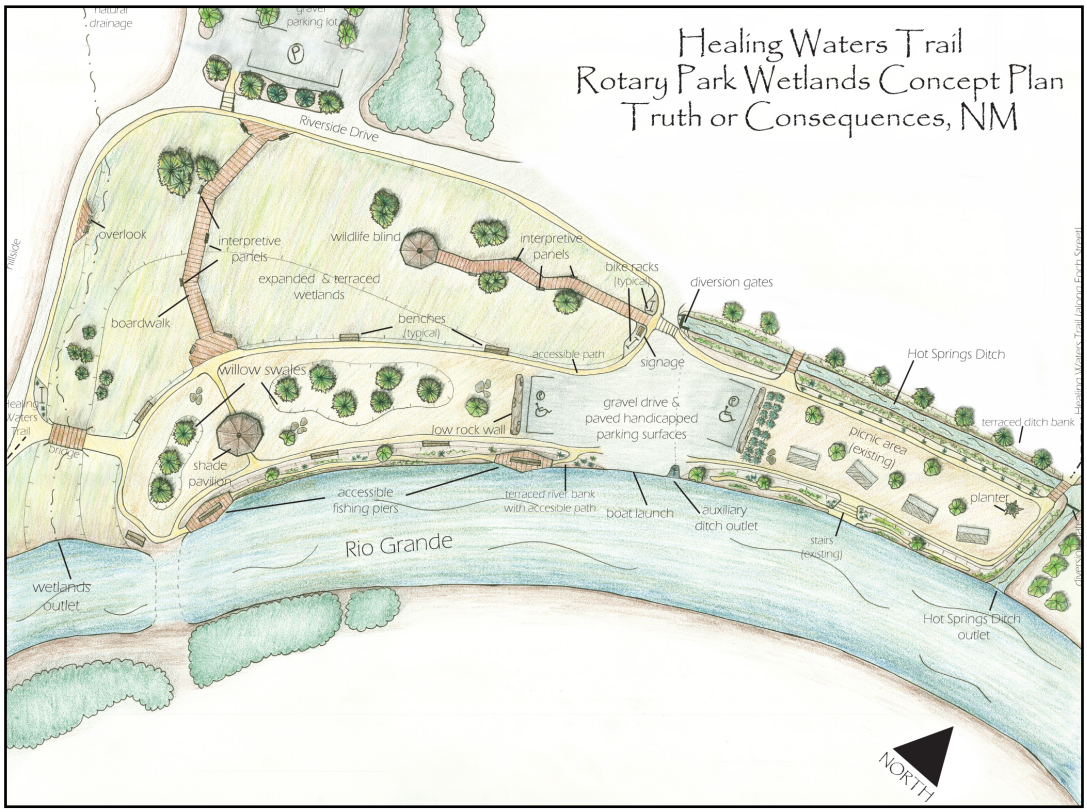
- Expand Rotary Park to better conserve the hot springs wetlands.
- Improve access for and reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles.
- Enhance comfort for park visitors and trail users.
- Create an educational experience for park visitors and trail users.
- Provide for multiple park and trail uses, creating a broadly appealing destination along the Healing Waters Trail.

- Provide connectivity between the Downtown and the Carrie Tingley Mesa segments of the Healing Waters Trail, and connect to the Rio Grande Trail.
- Promote park cleanliness.

As part of the Healing Waters Trail: A Cultural Landscapes Approach to Planning a Semi-Urban Trail System, Truth or Consequences, New Mexico (2009) plan, a concept sketch of improvements to Rotary Park wetlands was developed. All the goals stated above were incorporated into the park concept drawings. Some highlights including terracing the riverbanks to permit overbank flooding, boardwalk into the wetlands, transformation of the hardpacked "parking area" into vegetated swales and expanded wetlands.

In 2021, Turtleback Trails project partners sponsored another Rotary Park wetlands workshop to see if new ideas had emerged since the last workshop. Workshop participants, with little knowledge of the earlier concept sketch, reaffirmed the same ideas. Themes common to all concepts include better pedestrian flow and access, river bank terrace with pathways, river access sites, and expanded wetlands.

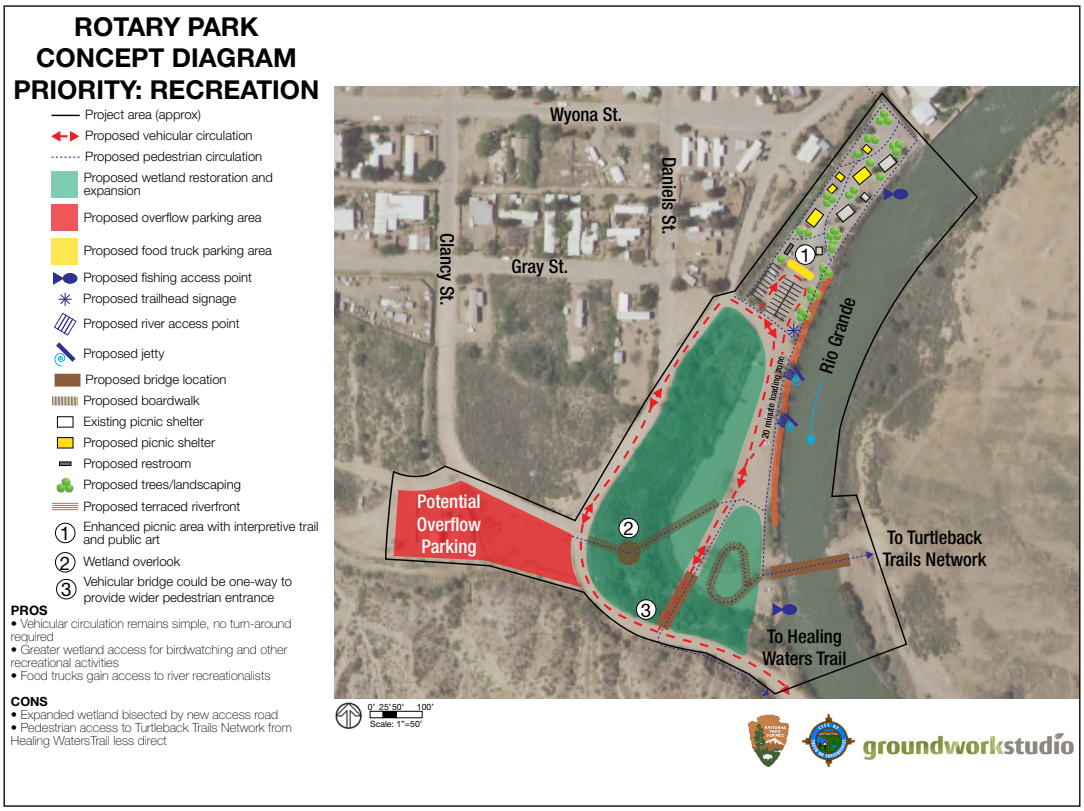
The main difference between the concepts is vehicle flow. The Recreation concept explores the idea of constructing a one-lane vehicle bridge across the wetlands outflow to create controlled vehicle movement, particularly for tubing concessionaires. The Nature concept provides a loop turn-around area, and the 2009 concept eliminates all vehicles from the wetlands area.



Rotary Park Wetlands Concept (2009)



Rotary Park Wetlands Concept Nature (2021)



Rotary Park Wetlands Recreation (2021)

Key Recommendations

- The City of T or C and the Bureau of Reclamation should clarify land ownership issues at the wetlands area. Currently, each entity believes the other is the legal landowner.
- City leaders should adopt a final concept plan for Rotary Park wetlands and pursue funding to develop a master plan with construction and engineering drawings.



06 River Corridor Conservation and Education

Key Issues

- Vehicle flow in wetland area
- Invasive plant species
- Slash piles
- Impact of footbridges on bird species - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should be consulted in the planning of footbridges
- Determine which entities own which portions of land within/around Rotary Park

Background

The conservation of this portion of the Rio Grande has been an important part of the legacy of this community. Prior to the construction of the Elephant Butte Dam, much of the area known as Hot Springs was marshland and swamps. The river was wide and meandered through the area. Construction on the Elephant Butte Dam was completed in 1916 as part of the Rio Grande Project. An international treaty with Mexico in 1906 pledged the delivery of 60,000-acre feet of water to Mexico annually, along with water to Texas. To meet the obligations of that agreement, the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) channeled the Rio Grande for approximately seven miles and must maintain the ability to have a water flow of 5000 cubic feet per second (CFS). Meeting the BOR requirements also creates restrictions on other uses of that portion of the Rio Grande.

Previous efforts of local citizens resulted in the development of a Rio Grande Corridor Task Force Plan, which outlined possible projects along the Rio Grande from Elephant Butte Dam to Williamsburg. The proposed projects included a horse trail from Williamsburg to the Caballo dam, development of a system of trails along the river, designation of a Quality Trout Waters section of the river, and establishment

of a handicap-accessible pier for fishing near Rotary Park in T or C.

Some of those goals were achieved. A horse trail was designated, and signs put in place from the Honda Arroyo to near the Caballo RV park. In 2008 a group of locals developed and constructed the Healing Waters Trail, a three-mile loop trail through the City of T or C. The trail highlights some of the historic buildings within the loop with plaques, and there are interpretive panels along the hillside, along with picnic tables and resting spots. One of the main focuses of the Healing Waters Trail is the continued development of Rotary Park for recreational use and restoration of the wetlands at the south end of the park.

Natural Resources and Concerns

Invasives

The early 1950s saw the influx of non-native plant species, many of which were introduced to help with soil erosion, namely tamarisk (commonly known as salt cedar). This plant has become highly invasive along waterways and began crowding out the native plant community. It also uses considerably more water than native plants. Additionally, salt cedar is a highly flammable plant and its influx within the river ecosystem has created a hazard for wildland fire.

Other non-native invasive plants identified by the NM Department of Agriculture as highest priority for removal include Perennial Pepper Weed, Arundo, Russian Knapweed, Russian Olive, and Tree of Heaven.

Over the years, the Sierra Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) has worked with several state and federal groups on various projects for the treatment/removal of salt cedar. Collaborators on these projects include the BOR, the U.S. Forest Service Collaborative Forest Restoration Program, and the New Mexico Association of Counties Hazardous Fuel Mitigation Program. Various methods have been used in these restoration efforts: pole plantings, deep root plantings, and seeding. Two notable demonstration projects, treating plots of 55 acres and 41.5 acres, have had some degree of success. Treatment and removal of salt cedar and other invasive plants will continue to be an issue along the stretch of the Rio Grande from Elephant Butte Dam to Williamsburg.

There are a variety of ways to treat some of the other invasive plants to help control their growth, but the most effective method is through the use of herbicide application. The Sierra SWCD has an active weed control program and treats invasive plants with a federally approved herbicide which is applied by a certified herbicide applicator.

Wildlife Habitat

From records and visitor reports, there are a number of wildlife species that currently inhabit the area, including:

- **Mammals:** mule deer, racoons, beavers, grey foxes, and skunks (hooded and striped)
- **Birds:** quail, swallows, vermilion flycatchers, kingfishers, turkey vultures, red-tailed hawks, Swainsons hawks, Coopers hawks, bald eagles, golden eagles, mallards, northern pintails, Mexican ducks, gadwalls, American wigeons, blue-winged teals, green-winged teals, cinnamon teals, great blue herons, coots, sandhill cranes, and snow geese
- **Amphibians:** spadefoot toads and bullfrogs (non-native)
- **Fish:** catfish, bluegill, trout, crawfish, and suckers

Flyway

The Rio Grande is the central flyway corridor for a variety of birds and pollinators, many of which use the river corridor as they migrate between summer and winter habitats. There are some concerns that increasing recreational activities could affect wildlife behavior, nesting or habitat. Environmental assessments will address these potential concerns.

Wetlands

The Rotary Park wetlands have potential to be a thriving ecosystem to support, in particular, a variety of bird species. See Chapter 5, Part 3 for more details on restoration and redesign concepts for the wetlands.

Cultural Resources

Archaeological

There are a large number of important archaeological and historic sites within the project study area. One 200 acre site is close to one of the trail corridors. It was occupied by the Mogollon people from about 1175 to 1400 A.D. The large site retains evidence of numerous campfires, suggesting that it may have been used seasonally over a long period of time. The site is important because it can help us understand how the Mogollon adapted to the landscape. The Mogollon people lived in eastern Arizona, southern New Mexico, west Texas, and northern Mexico. They were a farming culture that lived in pit houses and pueblo villages. The Mogollon abandoned the region around A.D. 1450 and may be related to modern Puebloans in the United States Southwest and indigenous people in Mexico. The site is primarily located within lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Reclamation, and it has not been fully inventoried.

Recommendations to protect the site include:

- Routing trails and roads away from the area
- Completing a Phase II Archaeological Survey
- Implementing a Site Stewards program to monitor the site

Historical Mining

A mining boom began in Sierra County soon after prospectors found gold float on the east side of the Mimbres Range in April of 1877. Hillsboro was the center of activity for many years. Even frequent Apache raids could not dampen the enthusiasm of the eager prospectors and miners. Silver was discovered in Lake Valley in 1878, and in 1880 the famous Bridal Chamber mine was discovered and proved to be the richest single ore mine ever found. A single chunk of silver ore was removed, placed on an open flat train car, and traveled to the World's Fair in the early 1900s. In 1879 silver was discovered near Chloride and within six months Chloride grew from a tent camp to a full-fledged town. Hermosa to the south of Chloride attracted prospectors, and the discovery of several mines in that area brought more settlers. The southwestern stage lines linked the railroad at Engle with Cuchillo, Winston

(formerly known as Fairview), and Hermosa. Six million dollars in gold and silver was produced. The main types of ore discovered were gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc. Mining towns sprang up overnight in many locations throughout the area; many of them only lasted a year or so and then faded away.

Farming and Ranching

The Pueblo Indians of New Mexico in pre-Spanish times had a well-developed system of agriculture based on both dry farming and irrigation. Principal crops were corn, beans, squash, native tobacco, and cotton. Chile, wheat, and orchard crops were introduced by the Spanish. Towns were concentrated in the fertile alluvial soil of the valleys of the Rio Grande. Farms suffered even more from devastating floods than from raids by area Indians. By the mid 1800s, farms and farming communities grew in what would later be designated as Sierra County. While farms were developing in the valley, great ranches were beginning to take shape as well. One of the first of these ranches was started by John Martin, a soldier who marched with the California Column to New Mexico during the Civil War. He had dug a deep well in 1867 and struck an underground river on the Jornada del Muerto. Travelers along this old route had sometimes died of thirst. The Armendaris land grant in the eastern side of the Rio Grande was patented in 1878. To the south and west was the John Cross Holdings, which ran from Dona Ana County to the San Marcial, one hundred miles of sunbaked waterless desert hemmed in by the San Andres and the valley of the Rio Grande. During this time the Rio Grande ran down what is now Main Street as far as the Post Office, then south and west, with a large bosque and tule swamp below Broadway and the hill to the Veterans' Home (from the History of Sierra County).

Conservation Goals

Noxious/Invasive Plant Removal

Future restoration efforts should focus primarily on the retreatment of salt cedar and Russian Olive along the Rio Grande in order to increase trail aesthetics, prevent potential future fire events, allow greater access to the river, and promote establishment of native vegetation.

Rotary Park Wetland Restoration

See Chapter 5, Part 3 for details on wetland restoration proposals.

Restore Wildlife Habitat

Restoration and improvement of wildlife habitat is also a major goal of this planning effort. Restoration efforts along this section should include the planting of flowers and shrubs that would create habitat for migrating wildlife. Including nectar plants such as milkweed would benefit many species of pollinators, including monarch butterflies.

Habitat improvements should increase the overall bird population in the area and also increase the chance of rare birds nesting along this portion of the Rio Grande. This project would create many opportunities for bird watching not only during migration, but also during nesting season when species like Mexican ducks, swallows, and vermilion flycatchers are in this area. Bird watching is a multi-million dollar industry, and promoting bird habitat has great potential for economic benefit to the town.

There are no known threatened or endangered species along this stretch of the Rio Grande, but restoration efforts could enhance the wildlife habitat and attract new species, including Southwestern Willow Flycatchers and the Yellow Billed Cuckoo, both of which migrate along the Rio Grande corridor. Given the current recreational activities along this stretch of the river, including tubing, kayaking, fishing and hiking, the addition of items identified in this plan should have a negligible additional impact to those species.

Fish Habitat

Increased fishing opportunities are a recreational benefit of this project. A footbridge spanning the river would bring in anglers as well as bird watchers who could see birds like ospreys diving for fish. BOR management of this stretch of river will impact fishing and fish habitat, specifically as water flow along this portion of the river is decreased or increased to meet water demands from downstream users. Another impact to fish habitat occurs when the BOR conducts a periodic removal

of sediment along this channelized portion of the river in order to maintain the required capacity of 5000 cubic feet per second of water.

Key Recommendations

- Identify potential human-wildlife interactions and plan trails accordingly. Route trails away from potential high conflict areas. Provide signage in areas of potential conflict between people, dogs, and wildlife species. Monitor wildlife encounters for adaptive management.

- Identify wildlife impacts caused by dogs on- or off-leash. In addition to expanding their human's zone of influence, dogs can chase, harass and kill wildlife, or become prey for carnivores. Consider restrictions to dogs if necessary, and leash laws to keep pets safe and minimize impacts to wildlife.

- Some sensitive species, such as amphibians and nesting songbirds, might require minimum buffers. Other species, such as nesting raptors or grouse, usually require buffer distances that range from a quarter to one full mile, or greater.

- Address potential interaction between trail users and hunters with proper signage, notifying all parties of hunting seasons and related safety protocols/precautions.

Interpretive Themes and Education Opportunities

This project has the potential to educate the public in natural resource conservation and the importance of agriculture and its impact on the community. Local historians and affiliated tribal leaders should be consulted to create meaningful stories connecting people to place and landscape.

Interpretive Panels and Signage

All signage should be uniform in design and appearance; each sign should indicate that it is part of this trail system.

Signage should include:

- Trailhead signs at Paseo del Norte, Rotary Park and Williamsburg; possibly including a QR code that gives additional trail information. Include trail map and safety information (snakes, heat and hydration, dog rules/etiquette).
- Mileage markers along the trail
- Interpretive panels
    - River conservation and stewardship
    - Human settlement
    - Wildlife migration
    - Dams and irrigation
    - Fish/bird species

Youth/Community Education

There are a number of educational opportunities that could be developed after the creation of this trail. Programs could incorporate science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) to help students gain hands-on experience.

Possibilities include:



- Establish a small Amphitheater in Ralph Edwards Park adjacent to the river
    - Host informational presentations year-round, especially during high use times



- Have students participate in bird identification and inventories



- Engage the youth and community by having “River Days”



- Have educational activities at the wetland; have students conduct a wetland study



- Promote participating in the University of New Mexico Bosque Ecological Monitoring Program



- Host a “Water Conservation Day”



- Form partnerships with local schools, The Club, churches, and other organizations that serve and organize youth



- Engage the community by asking businesses, youth groups, and other organizations to be responsible for maintenance of sections of the trail



- Encourage community groups to host events for special Celebration Days - (Public Lands Day, Earth Day, Trails Day, etc.)



07 Management, Maintenance, and Stewardship



As the City of T or C and the Village of Williamsburg move forward with the planning, designing, building, and operation of existing and new trails, trailheads, restrooms, signs, and other amenities, local officials should develop appropriate management plans to protect and maintain these important community investments in the long term. Just as the city would appropriate resources, staff time, and/or funding to the maintenance of more traditional recreational areas (such as city parks, open spaces, and playgrounds), trail-based facilities require specific maintenance activity to be successful. Maintenance plans need to be developed to determine what entity will bear maintenance costs and liabilities, how the areas will be regularly serviced, where funding will come from, and how partnerships can be developed. Some of the necessary maintenance issues to consider for trail planning include:

- Regular trail or parking lot grading;
- Trailside litter and weed/invasive species control;
- Trail sign repair and replacement, including damaged signs, missing trail markers, directional stickers, damaged posts, and other vandalism;
- Trailhead maintenance, including regular trash disposal, toilet cleaning and pumping, etc.

Maintenance Agreements

Many of the tasks identified above can be offset by appropriate maintenance agreements or contracts. The documents are publicly adopted and include language identifying partners; partnership goals; each party's obligations, liabilities, and expectations; compensation between parties; and other relevant information. These agreements can exist in many forms; some relevant examples include:

- Agreements between two government agencies, such as the City of Albuquer-

que and the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District to co-manage the Rio Grande Valley State Park
- Agreements between a government agency and a user-group, such as the Carson National Forest and the Enchanted Circle Trails Association.
- Agreements between a government agency and a private business, wherein funds are established to pay for a maintenance service, such as a private contractor emptying trash and waste from parks and recreation facilities.

Trail Adoptions and Sponsorships

Many communities have utilized volunteer adoption and sponsorship programs to provide additional recreational amenities to their communities. This can include opportunities for private funders, including businesses, non-profits, residents, user groups, or other donors, to contribute funds, time, or other resources to help build and maintain parks and trails. Sponsorship programs often include opportunities to purchase or "sponsor" a specific amenity, such as a trailhead kiosk, benches, restrooms, etc. as a part of the initial construction process. Adoption programs often seek to offset long-term maintenance obligations by providing funding, volunteers, or other resources dedicated towards regular upkeep of a trail once it is built. Oftentimes, these programs provide public acknowledgement in the form of signs, plaques, or naming rights to certain adopted or sponsored facilities. This provides opportunities for local residents, businesses, user groups, or others to contribute to their community and help protect the outdoor resources they cherish.

Use or Special Event Permitting Fees

Another way to offset long-term funding obligations can come through planned revenue generation in the form of use or special event fees. This can include overnight camping fees, day use parking fees on city-managed trailheads, multi-day use passes, or the hosting of large special events, such as a regional high school mountain bike competition. These fee structures can be adopted by ordinance as a part of the maintenance plan for individual facilities, but require resources from the community to enforce.

As detailed design/build plans emerge for Turtleback Trails Network elements, trail adoption and sponsorship agreements should be in place before local governments

commit to funding and managing the project. With limited municipal resources, the community must support these projects if they are to become reality.

Signage

- The City of T or C will be responsible for coordinating signage standards, design, and placement. Each local jurisdiction with signage requirements will be responsible for purchase and installation.
- The City of T or C will be responsible for creating an inventory of signs using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to manage the inventory. Project partners could help populate the inventory.
- The City of T or C will be responsible for coordinating annual inspections of signage. Project partners would complete the inspections.

Proposed management responsibilities

River Access Sites

Agency/Entity	*City of T or C*	*Village of Williamsburg*	*Bureau of Reclamation*	*BOR Permittee or Concessionaire*
Sites to manage:	*Mescal Canyon river access* *Ralph Edwards river access* *Rotary Park river access*	*Williamsburg river access*	*Seco Creek river access*	*Paseo del Rio river access* *Hwy 51 Bridge river access*

Trail Elements

Agency/Entity	*City of T or C*	*Village of Williamsburg*	*Bureau of Reclamation*	*BOR Permittee or Concessionaire*
Sites to manage:	*Pedestrian bridge in Rotary Park* *RGT segment along A005 from Fish Hatchery to Rotary Park* *Multi-use path-way from Rotary Park to Ralph Edwards Park on Rio Vista "easement"*	*Pedestrian bridge in Village of Williamsburg*	*RGT segment along A005 from Rotary Park to Williamsburg including 1.2 mile riverside route*	*Backcountry trails across the river*

Stewardship

- Develop a Sponsorship or Gift Catalog for site improvements. This could include elements like signage, river ramp construction, trail amenities like benches or shade structures.
- Establish an "Adopt-A-Trail" program where schools, local organizations and businesses could adopt a section of trail, a river access area or other features of the Turtleback Trails Network. Adopters would be trained and recognized for their community efforts.
- Sierra County Tourism would lead and coordinate stewardship efforts for the Turtleback Trails Network. Other organizations to include are Jornada SWCD and T or C MainStreet.



08 Federal Coordination

Many of the proposed improvements for river access and trails development will require approval from the federal government. The river access projects and the multi-use trail connecting Rotary Park to the Village of Williamsburg are within the jurisdictions of the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers. The adventure trails along the flanks of Turtleback Mountain fall into the Bureau of Land Management's jurisdiction. Before the federal agencies issue permits for project implementation, federal compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Clean Water Act (CWA) is necessary. Project sponsors are usually responsible for completing compliance reviews.

Under NEPA, the applicants can be expected to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Section 106 requires federal agencies to consider the effects of projects they carry out, approve, or fund on historic properties. Federal agencies must do the following:

- gather information to decide which properties in the area that may be affected by the project are listed, or are eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places (referred to as "historic properties");
- determine how those historic properties might be affected;
- explore measures to avoid or reduce harm ("adverse effect") to historic properties; and
- reach agreement with the State Historic Preservation Officer / Tribal Historic Preservation Officer on such measures to resolve any adverse effects.

The archaeological sites located within the study area and the Hot Springs Historical District will trigger the Section 106 review.

Under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, Federal agencies must consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) when any action the agency carries out, funds, or authorizes (such as through a permit) may affect a listed endangered or threatened species or designated critical habitat. In the early stages of project

planning, Federal agencies can request technical assistance from the Service. Discussions between the two agencies may include what types of listed species may occur in the proposed action area, and what effect the proposed action(s) may have on those species.

Pedestrian bridges, riverbank terracing, wetlands projects, river access site hardening and jetties impact the waters of the United States. Therefore, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act establishes a program to regulate the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including wetlands. Several nationwide permits may ease the burden of compliance including: NWP #13 Bank Stabilization; NWP #42 Recreational Facilities; and NWP #36 Boat Ramps.

Turtleback Trails Network & Federal Compliance

Turtleback Trails Plan

Proposed Elements requiring compliance through BLM, BOR, COE

BLM

- Designate 60+ miles of trails

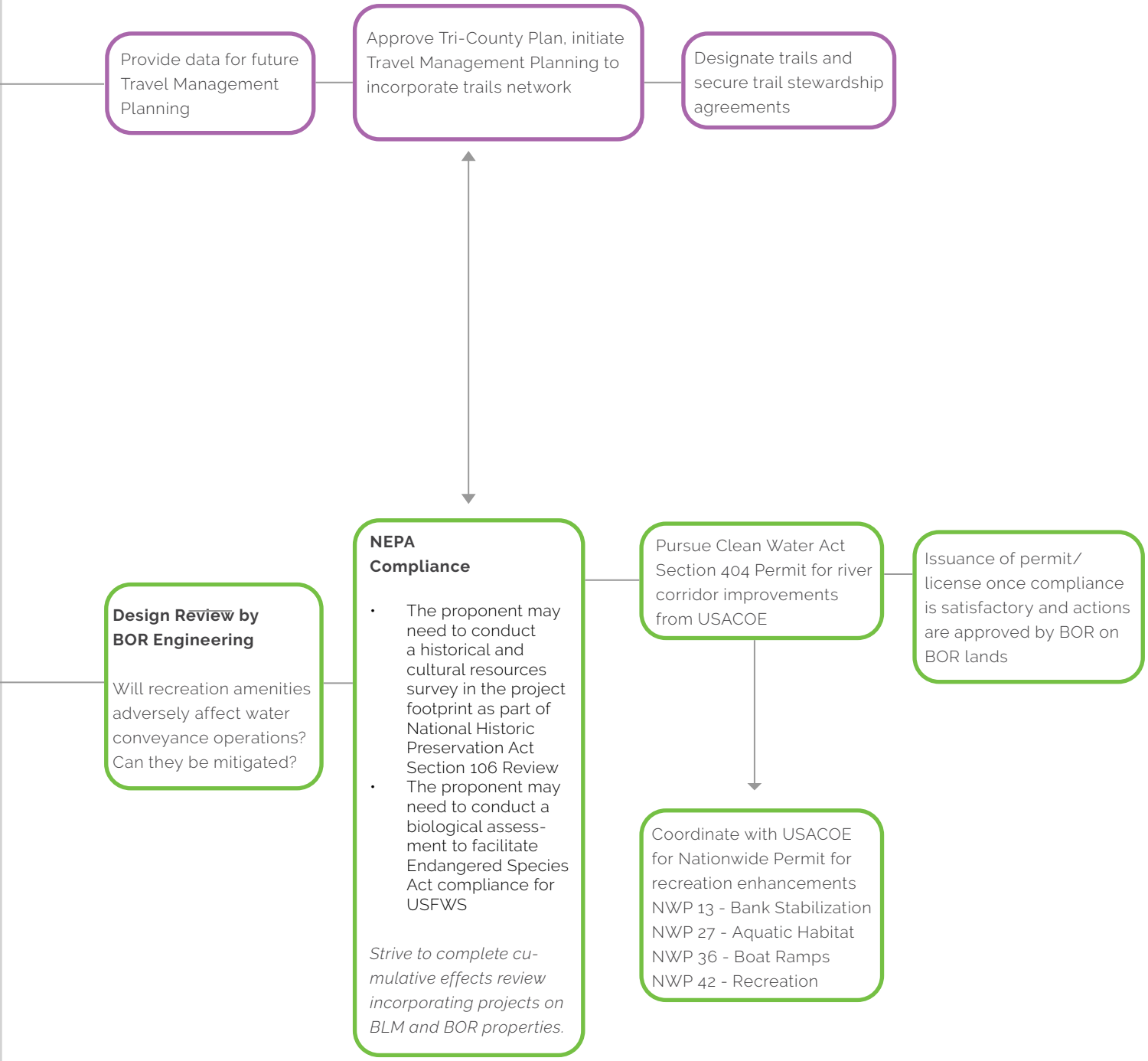
BOR/COE

- Improve river access at six locations including non-motorized ramps, parking, signage, jetties
- Develop 1.2 miles of riverside trail on southside of river (river left)
- Expand Rotary Park wetlands, add 1/2 acre
- Terrace 400' of riverbank adjacent to Rotary Park wetlands.
- Construct 2-3 pedestrian bridges crossing Rio Grande.
- Replace dirt dam with permanent structure allowing boat and fish passage.

Assess road/route conditions: singletrack, double track, sustainable or not sustainable

Initiate Permit/Concessions Request with BOR

The request should include project description, locations, features, timing, maps, specifications and other relevant information


Provide data for future Travel Management Planning
Approve Tri-County Plan, initiate Travel Management Planning to incorporate trails network
Designate trails and secure trail stewardship agreements
Design Review by BOR Engineering
Will recreation amenities adversely affect water conveyance operations? Can they be mitigated?
NEPA Compliance
The proponent may need to conduct a historical and cultural resources survey in the project footprint as part of National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Review
The proponent may need to conduct a biological assessment to facilitate Endangered Species Act compliance for USFWS
Strive to complete cumulative effects review incorporating projects on BLM and BOR properties.
Pursue Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit for river corridor improvements from USACOE
Issuance of permit/ license once compliance is satisfactory and actions are approved by BOR on BOR lands
Coordinate with USACOE for Nationwide Permit for recreation enhancements
NWP 13 - Bank Stabilization
NWP 27 - Aquatic Habitat
NWP 36 - Boat Ramps
NWP 42 - Recreation

Appendices

Appendix A: Community input from chalkboards in Rotary Park

The following table summarizes the community input received from chalkboards installed in Rotary Park and Williamsburg. A series of questions were posted on the chalkboards, and anonymous community members left responses.

DATE	QUESTION
7/30/20-8/3/20	Where should be put a footbridge?
8/5/20-8/14/20	What should the bridge/trail be named?
8/18/20-8/24/20	How can the bridge help local businesses?
8/25/20-9/9/20	What are your hopes for this trail?

	RESPONSES
	Williamsburg Ralph Edwards Park; At the Rock Dam; down by where the hot water flows into river, where there are good hiking trails on the other side; make them wheelchair accessible and docks for fishing
	The Ripple, Fasttrack, Rio Bridge, Turtlefish Bridge, RioEast Bridge, Community Bridge, Yellow Park Bridge, Float Bridge, Friendship Trail, Via Del Rio, Jornada de Verdad, Wander Bridge, R.G. Trail Bridge, Yvonne Trail Bridge, Beaver Crossing, Puente del rio Grande, Tranquil waters trail, Troll Crossing, Hot Springs Crossing, Raymonds Heights, Rio Linda Vista, The FareWell Bridge,Turtleback crossing, Hot Springs Crossing, Bumble Bee Crossing, TigerShark Crossing, Being Rose Bridge, Tigers Bridge
	More Tourists would use the bridge (so they can bring more covid), Hospital, pharmacy, not here great
	Trail of blessing, wide enough for bikes and people and dogs. ADA compliant bridge and observation platforms/surfaces for fishing, birding, meditating, exercise, Great job guys! Close to Nature! That people keep it clean and do not litter! Trash cans through out? Signs that say NO LITTERING, Blessed be, BENCHES, Be Kind, Lets do it, Benches for looking at river flow

9/9/20-9/28/20	How could trails/bridges impact plants, animals, and history along the river?
9/28/20-10/15/20	What positive impact will this project have on our community?
10/16/20-11/1/20	How can we improve river experiences for visitors and residents?
November 2020	How should we address trash dumping along the trail?
March 2021	What is the most exciting part of this project for you?
April 2021	How should we improve this park?

	Positive impact: Provide info panels along the trails that identify bird life in our zone, migration paths, etc. Learn about the water management/conservation; If you emulate the CCC you'll have all your answers; There may be little additional on any sensitive native species, since river channelization and open cattle ranching are already allowed, if habitat could be restored along the trail, maybe that could be a net positive impact. Native History. Light pollution, (What's up with Riverbend's light show? Really what condos have been made to love. Nice Bikes! disturbing the birds, connection. native plants, green the desert.
	It might inspire people to love earth more, It will give all of us more recreational opportunities, I've been coming here for years and have never been to the otherside, more hiking and biking = longer visits yes! People might exercise more, Connect ALL hiking trails EB-HW Trail, More people connecting with nature, if they keep it clean, economic development for entrepreneurs,
	Pollution warnings for littering with jail times or fines. Pick up trash if you see it. Reestablish the Wetlands. Keep it clean! Any way to rake out the waterweeds? (It's good for fish!) looks nasty and it's hard to fish. NO MORE CEMENT! Paved ramp for kayak/Tubing launch Connect all the hiking trails! VOTE! Do not vote for either, Sierra County TorC Families. Give them more shade, make benches to watch the river, plant trees that have food, more trash cans, food trucks and music
	Stop takeout from McD, Circle K, and Sonic!, bring a bag, place bins at the entrance and exit, do not pave road along the river, environmental impact study needs done first, asphalt leaching into river, restore habitat, friendly signage, place dumpsters at each end until it rectifies, pick up trash you see, properly dispose of syringes, please!, volunteer pick up days, prosecute
	getting something new in town, more opportunity to explore, calming nervous system = connection with spirit & self & people, having a beautiful, nice quality smooth biking walking trail for exercise, maybe a cleanup of beer bottles and needles when finished, bring people neighbors together as brothers and sisters, having a spot to play in nature
	get rid of salt cedar and tumbleweeds, decent toilets, leave it alone, smells like poop, when should this project begin? Never!

May 2021	What improvements would help kayaks and tubes?
June 2021	What amenities would you like to see here at Rotary Park?
July 2021	In ONE word, this park should be_____?

	more beer, no retail riverwalk, no riverwalk!, we need a bridge, sewage treatment smells bad, stop sending all our water to Texas, clean up after your dog, love what you are doing
	a bridge to the other side, more edible native plant species, shade trees, splash pad/park, more shade, more trees should be planted, overflowing trash, defecating teens :(, boat ramp, bathrooms, trees
	weed-free river embankment with built up rock work and trees!, clean up after your dog - poop-free, shady, fun, green

Appendix B: Sample boating ordinance

ARTICLE III. - BOATING REGULATIONS ON CARLSBAD CITY LAKE

Sec. 36-61. - Operation generally.
It shall be unlawful for any person operating a boat or vessel to violate any of the rules and regulations hereinafter set forth relating to the use, operation and equipment of boats or vessels on the city lake located in the Pecos River within the city limits or in any manner using such city lake for recreation or other purposes in violation of such rules and regulations set forth in this article.
(Code 1974, § 24-1)

Sec. 36-62. - Applicability of state regulations.
Where not otherwise provided in this article, the provisions of the state Boat Act shall apply to the city lake. Any person who shall violate any of the provisions of the state Boat Act shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished as provided in *section 1-6* of this Code.
(Code 1974, § 24-3)

Appendix C: New Mexico Recreational Use Statute

NEW MEXICO STATUTES ANNOTATED
CHAPTER 17: GAME AND FISH
ARTICLE 4: PROPAGATION OF FISH AND GAME

§ 17-4-7. Liability of landowner permitting persons to hunt, fish or use lands for recreation; duty of care; exceptions

A. Any owner, lessee or person in control of lands who, without charge or other consideration, other than a consideration paid to said landowner by the state, the federal government or any other governmental agency, grants permission to any person or group to use his lands for the purpose of hunting, fishing, trapping, camping, hiking, sightseeing or any other recreational use does not thereby:
(1) extend any assurance that the premises are safe for each purpose; or
(2) assume any duty of care to keep such lands safe for entry or use; or
(3) assume responsibility or liability for any injury or damage to, or caused by,

such person or group;
(4) assume any greater responsibility, duty of care or liability to such person or group, than if such permission had not been granted and such person or group were trespassers.

B. This section shall not limit the liability of any landowner, lessee or person in control of lands which may otherwise exist by law for injuries to any person granted permission to hunt, fish, trap, camp, hike, sightsee or use the land for recreation in exchange for a consideration, other than a consideration paid to said landowner by the state, the federal government or any other governmental agency.

HISTORY: 1953 Comp., § 53-4-5.1, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 6, § 1.

Appendix D: Ramp Designs



Concrete Ramps

- Concrete ramps may be used as launches by themselves or in combination with floating launches, piers, bridges, dock abutments, bulkheads, and rock cribs. If the ramp connects to a floating launch using a bridge, a hinged metal transfer plate will allow an easier transition.
- Concrete must be installed in dry conditions. The area must be totally clear of water when any portion of the ramp extends beneath the surface of the water.

The underwater area may need to be dried out with a cofferdam, a watertight enclosure that is temporarily used to pump water out of an area during construction. If lime is used in this process, it must be managed carefully so it does not enter the water where it can pose a danger to riparian species.

- Pre-cast concrete planks and panels should only be used in bodies of water with little to no current. Pre-cast slabs are heavy and must be placed using lifting equipment. Reinforced concrete is often used for underwater sections of the pre-cast ramp.

Concrete Ramps: Materials

Surface finish, including corrugated concrete, rock salt, or exposed aggregate may be applied to concrete to increase traction or improve its appearance. One popular finish uses 1" by 1" V-grooves formed at a 60-degree angle to the centerline. V-grooves should not be used on launches that serve wheelchair use as they are difficult to travel over/on when driving a wheelchair.

Concrete Ramps: Variations and Specifications

- The width and thickness of concrete ramps vary, but cast-in-place ramps are typically 6" to 8" thick and use rebar reinforcement.
- Ramps can be cast-in-place or composed of connected pre-cast slabs, planks, or panels.
- Can cover concrete with a layer of synthetic matting or even 'AstroTurf' to protect sensitive boats.
- Important elements are using a downstream pointing departure angle of 30 to 45 degrees, and hard-surfacing for anything below the frequent flood elevation (where permanent vegetation ceases). This allows skid steers to find a bottom in high-sediment areas, and helps projects in high-scour areas withstand the force of the water. It also creates an eddy just downstream of the launch at all flows, which makes it easier for the user.

Concrete Ramps: Advantages

- Provides the most stable, sturdy surface for launching.
- Durable and not subject to rot or rust .

- Easy to shape and work with, adaptable to slope needs; minimal additional construction needed.
- Can be relatively inexpensive to construct.
- Relatively low maintenance (depending on sedimentation levels); easy and inexpensive to repair.
- Used to help mitigate erosion or assist with vegetative restoration.
- Their noticeable presence can assist paddlers with locating take-outs from the river.
- Can be surfaced aesthetically with materials such as river rocks, fieldstones, or salt finishing.

Concrete Ramps: Disadvantages

- Can cause damage to riparian ecology, preventing growth of vegetation and impacting habitats.
- Surface can be slippery, especially when muddy or wet (corrugated concrete, rock salt, or exposed aggregate on the surface can provide effective traction).
- Coffer damming may be required for installation (will increase the cost and complexity of project).
- Can be damaged or crack easily due to freezing and thawing conditions.
- Usually not aesthetically "pleasing,".
- Construction vehicles, if needed during installation, will have a heavy impact on your site.
- Potential lime deposit down river during construction.

Stair Launch Designs



Wooden Stairs

- Large stones or timber used to build natural stairs can create excellent access along steep banks.
- Staircases composed of timber steps may be cost effective alternatives to concrete when working with a launch site along a steep shoreline.



Concrete Stairs

- Concrete stairs are particularly effective in providing access along steep shorelines. They are durable and easily maintained.

Wooden Stairs

Wooden Stairs: Materials

- Timber, typically pressure-treated (review environmental issues of chemically-treated wood).
- Reinforcement bars, rebar.
- Soil, gravel, or "road base" (mixture of rough soil and class 6 gravel), used as fill.
- Retaining walls, rip-rap (as needed).

Wooden Stairs: Design Variations and Specifications

- Stairs may be constructed as boxes built on top of one another, ascending a slope, to help reinforce an eroding bank.
- The launch area at the base of the stairs needs protection from excessive currents in order to prevent undercutting; large rocks or a vegetative buffer may be used.
- Launch area at base of stairs should provide consistent access to the water, during changing water levels; surface should be sturdy and able to withstand varying flows.

- Handrails are most effective when they are 24" to 32" above the height of the steps; it is important that they not be too high or low for paddlers to be able to use.

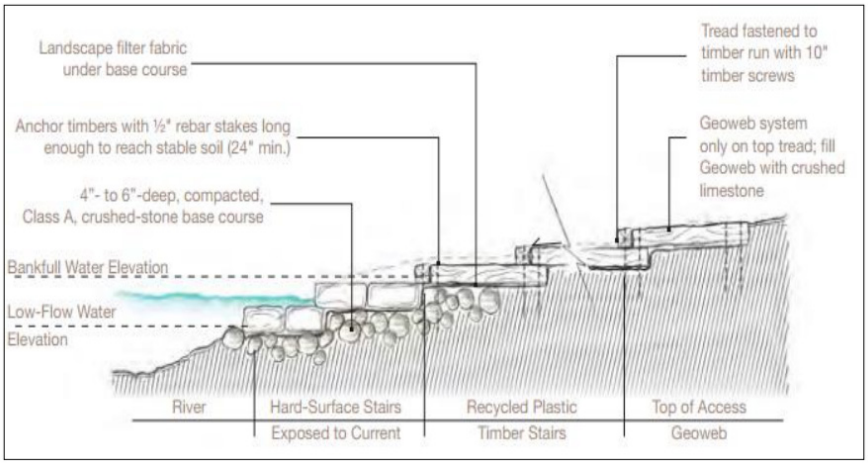
Wooden Stairs: Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages

- Allows paddlers easier access from a steep or eroding shoreline.
- Aesthetically pleasing and less disruptive to natural shoreline than concrete.
- May be easily and inexpensively repaired, if damaged.

Disadvantages

- Not accessible to all.
- Installation may be costly and may require alteration to shoreline.
- May be susceptible to undercutting.
- May require maintenance as stairs age and weather.



Concrete Stairs

Concrete stairs are particularly effective in providing access along steep shorelines. They are durable and easily maintained and may be used in areas where water levels change dramatically, as they are likely to withstand currents and offer access at a range of water levels.

Concrete Stairs: Materials

Concrete can provide a level and lasting access point. Once a bank is prepared to accommodate the stair dimensions (which may require some digging out with equipment, such as a backhoe), a concrete foundation is created, which can be poured into molds reinforced with rebar or metal (left). A less expensive option can be built using pre-molded concrete slabs for the steps supported laterally by rocks found on site (right).





Concrete Stairs: Variations and Specifications

- If steps are tapered in width as they descend to the water, the bottom steps should not be too narrow. Paddlers need at least 5' and preferably 6' to 12' for launching.
- Handrails may be needed to provide additional support to paddlers where shorelines are excessively steep. They may not be needed in areas with shorter distances to the water or on less dramatic slopes.
- Installing a 4' to 8' staging platform at the bottom of concrete steps can be useful to paddlers. This may serve as a place where kayakers can get into their boats, put on their spray skirts, and slide into the water.

Concrete Stairs: Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages

- Provide effective solutions to a steep slope or eroding bank.
- May be more aesthetically pleasing than concrete ramps or mats.

- Can be combined with boat slides to provide easy transport of boats to water.
- Require relatively little maintenance; durable.

Disadvantages

- Are not as easily accessible as concrete ramps or other launch types.
- Can be expensive.
- Not accessible to all.
- May require use of heavy equipment for preparation of bank before installation.
- Long-term maintenance must be done by hand, which may be unrealistic for some
- Inappropriate for high-scour or high-sediment-deposition setting, or where debris is likely to damage stairs.

Docks / Piers (Floating Or Fixed)

Docks / Piers

- Pier structures can be used independently as launches or in combination with other structures. They can span marshes or shallow areas to enable launching in water of sufficient depth.
- In some cases, "approach pads" or walkway structures are designed to enable access to the launch itself. Structures are composed of a deck and frame, which always stand above water level, and are supported by piers.

Floating

- Floating launches are structures that are not built into the bottom of the water body. Typically composed of a deck, frame, and floats, they are anchored to the shore. Paddlers launch from the deck, which is supported by the frame, while the floats beneath the frame provide buoyancy. Anchoring devices help to stabilize the launch and protect it from the elements. Pile guides are often used, allowing launches to adjust to changing water levels while keeping their decks horizontal and steady. When floating launches attach to connecting structures with varying heights (e.g., gangways), pile guides can help to maintain a relatively small cross slope, making launches more likely to be accessible to paddlers with disabilities.

- Floating launches are most effective when used on water with little debris and minimal exposure to strong currents or waves. In general, they can withstand flow rates up to 0.25 feet per second. Floating launches should be removed and secured during flooding or high flow events, and unless they are specifically designed to endure ice formation, they should be removed before freezing occurs.

Appendix E: Trail Scoring

	Visitor Experience	Character/ Aesthetics	Environmental/ Cultural Issues	Ease of Implementation/ Construction	User Accommodation/ Accessibility	Total
upper	2	2	1	2	1	**8**
lower	3	3	3	2	2	**13**
hybrid	2	2	1	2	1	**8**

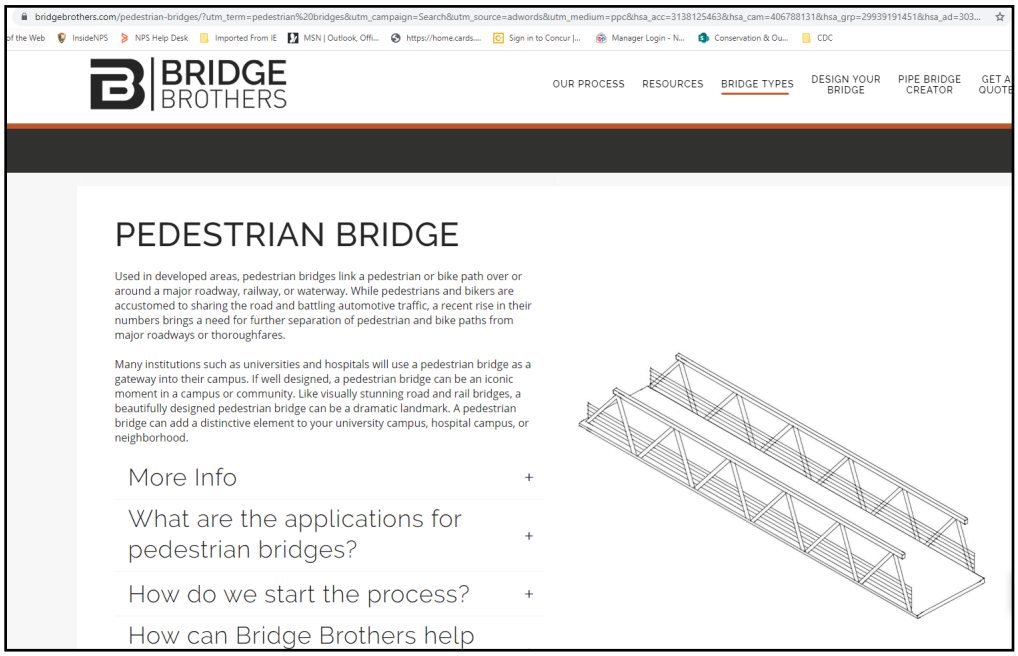
1 - Poor
2 - Fair
3 - Good

Notes:

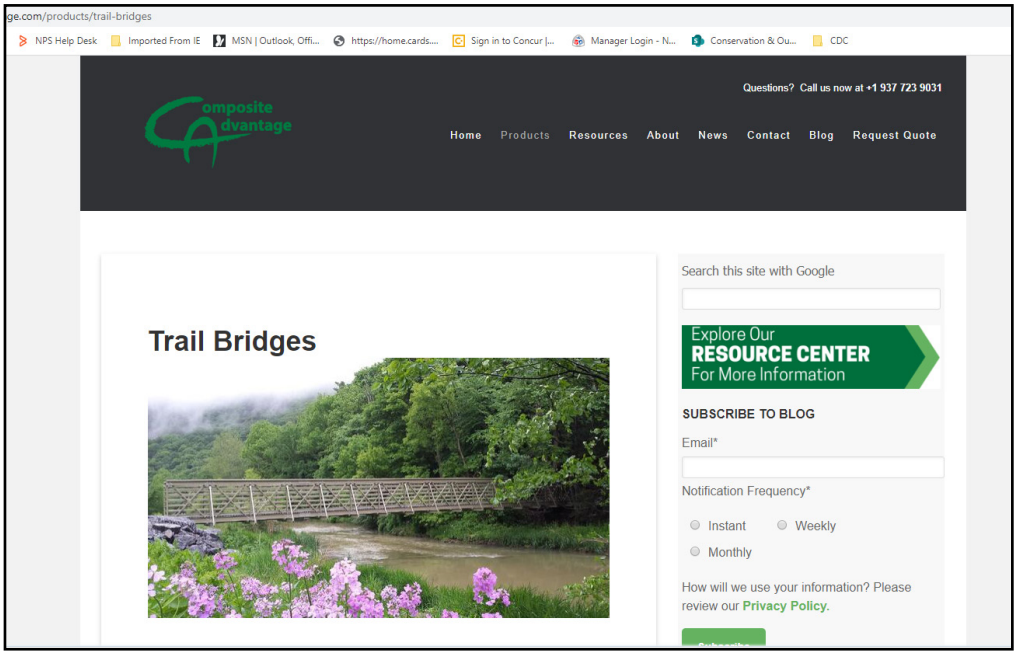
- any upper bench option is more likely to encounter vehicles and sensitive historic sites
- lower bench more likely to offer shade
- upper bench will never work for a wheelchair

Appendix F: Pedestrian Bridge Resources

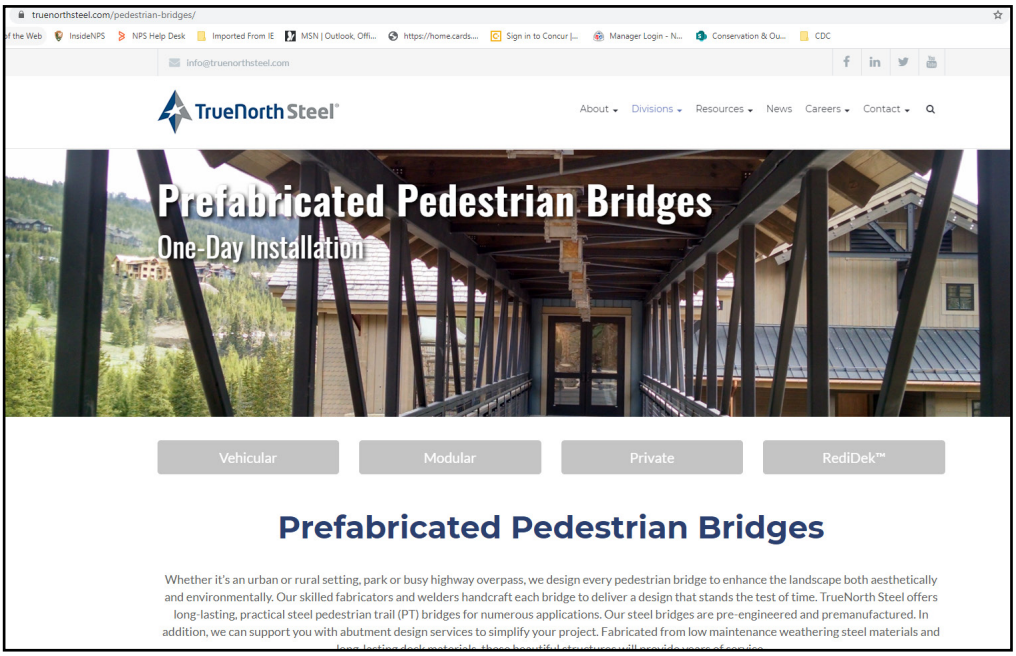
Pre-Fab Bridge Companies



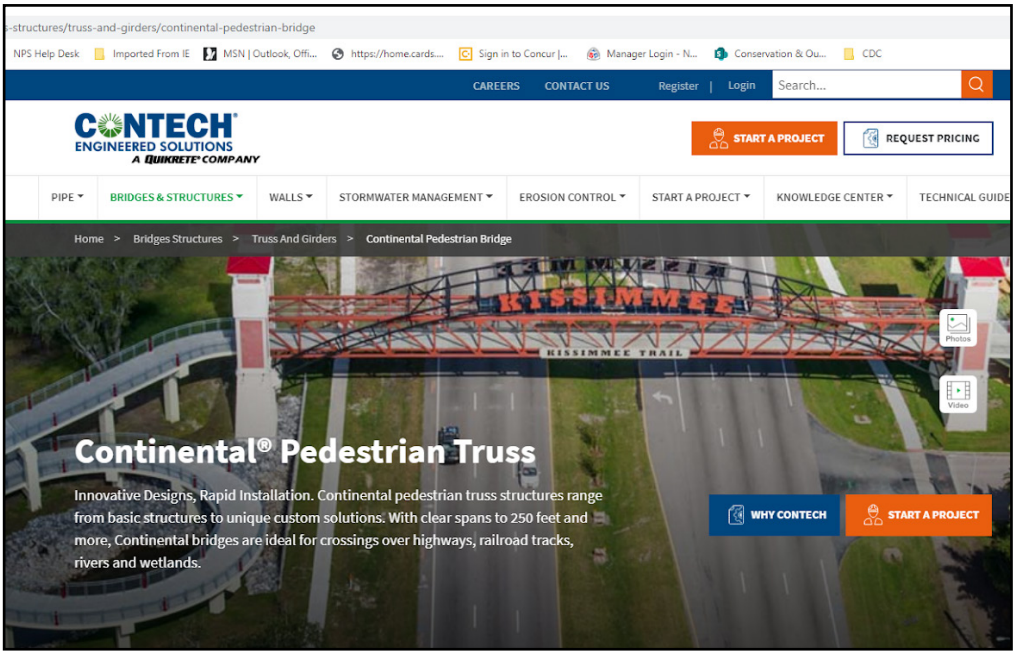
https://bridgebrothers.com/pedestrian-bridges/



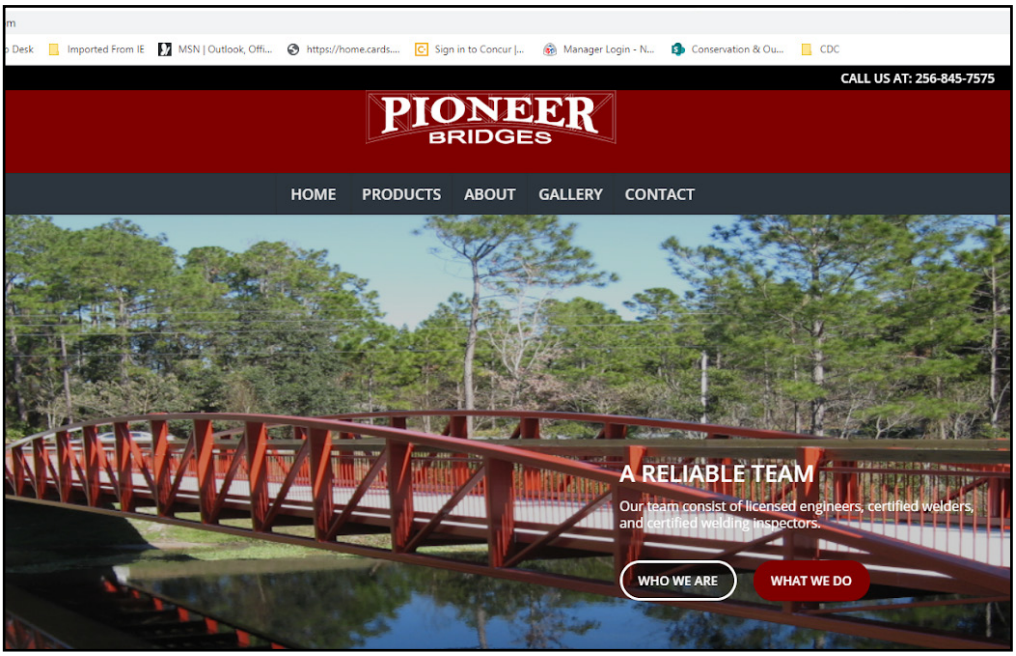
https://www.compositeadvantage.com/products/trail-bridges



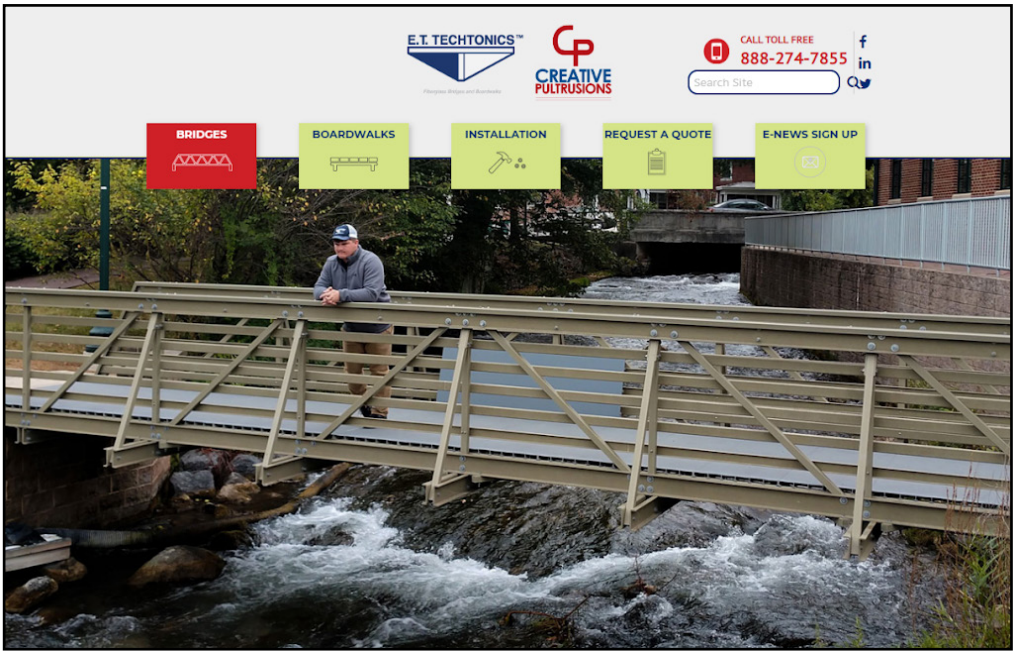
https://truenorthsteel.com/pedestrian-bridges/



https://www.conteches.com/bridges-structures/truss-and-girders/continental-pedestrian-bridge



https://pioneerbridges.com/



https://www.ettechtonics.com/bridges/

Appendix G: Resources for Implementation

Prepare to Launch: A Guide for Assessing, Designing and Building Launch Sites for Carry-in Watercraft

Prepare to launch! April 2018 Update Final by River Management Society - Issuu

Rio Grande Trail Master Plan: *RioGrandTrail_MasterPlan_FINALwChanges.pdf (nm.gov)*

Trail Towns: *Trail Towns | Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (railstotrails.org)*

Accessible Boat Launches: *Kayak & Canoe Launches for Sale | EZ Dock (ez-dock.com)*

Grants & Funding:

Stateside Land & Water Conservation Fund
The Land & Water Conservation Fund - State Parks (nm.gov)

Eligible project applicants include state government agencies; local government agencies (municipal and county); tribal governments; public school districts; public community colleges and universities;

soil and water conservation districts; land grants; and other political subdivisions. Applicants must initially demonstrate the following to be eligible to submit: need for the project based on New Mexico's SCORP priorities for outdoor recreation; documentation of significant public involvement in the selection and planning of projects; adequate contract performance for past LWCF awards (see below);

possess sufficient title and adequate legal control of the property to be within the LWCF boundary area in order to provide reasonable assurances that a conversion pursuant to the LWCF Act (54 U.S.C. § 200305(f)(3)) will not occur without its knowledge, State review, and NPS decision; and evidence of the ability to supply the 50% match.

Eligible projects may include but are not limited to: acquisition of land to be used for outdoor recreation; development of sports and playfields such as playgrounds, ball fields, court facilities, and golf courses; hiking, biking, equestrian, and motorized trails; picnic area development; campground development; amphitheaters, wetlands; fishing and boating facilities such as ramps and docks; development of support facilities including circulation roads, fencing, lighting, utility and sanitary systems, parking areas, restroom buildings, and landscaping for the project area;

New Mexico Recreation Trails Program
Active Transportation and Recreational Programs | NMDOT
Call for Projects May 2024

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a Federal reimbursement program and provides funding to eligible entities within New Mexico to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized uses. These Federal funds benefit recreationists who enjoy hiking, bicycling, in-line skating, equestrianism, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, off-road motorcycling, all-terrain vehicle riding, and off-road four-wheel driving.

NM Outdoor Equity Fund
Award Range $1500-20,000
New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division (nmoutside.com)
Grant Cycle Opened May 2 – June 30 2022

The Outdoor Equity Fund (OEF) was created to ensure equitable access to the outdoors for all youth. The grant supports transformative outdoor experiences that foster stewardship and respect for New Mexico's lands, waters, and cultural heritage. Eligible Applicants: Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations; municipalities; counties; nonprofits; K-12 schools/districts; colleges/universities. Recreation Access: Applicant must have a well developed written plan to engage low-income youth in nature-based outdoor recreation activities. Participants: Serve a population where at least 40% are low-income youth up to age 18. Education: Applicant must include some type of education plan on the climate and environment. 1:1 match for urban applicants required; 2:1 match for rural applicants required. In-kind and/or cash accepted.

NM Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant
Award Range $99,000-$500,000
2022 Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant Guide (newmexico.gov)
Applications accepted on a rolling basis starting March 1, 2022 through December 2022

This grant invests in conservation-minded shovel-ready projects that are open to the public, increase access to outdoor opportunities, and demonstrate a clear economic benefit to the community through improved quality of live, better public health outcomes, and/or increased tourism.

Eligible Applicants: Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations; Municipalities; Counties; Non-profits; Public preschools/schools/districts; Colleges/Universities; Soil and water conservation districts; Acequia and land grant associations. Economic Impact: Project must show demonstrable benefit to the local community, either by attracting and retaining residents or attracting visitors. Recreation Access: The project must be open for public use. Note: Projects on tribal lands are eligible and do not have to be open to the general public, but should be open to tribal members.

America the Beautiful Challenge 2022 Request for Proposals
America the Beautiful Challenge 2022 Request for Proposals | NFWF
Implementation Grants $1million-$5 million

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), through anticipated cooperative agreements from the Department of the Interior (DOI), Department of Defense (DoD), and the Department of Agriculture's U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), is pleased to announce the launch of the America the Beautiful Challenge (ATBC) 2022 Request for Proposals (RFP).

Project Focus Implementation projects that include land acquisition ok Implementation projects that address the program priorities on public, Tribal, and/or private lands. Partnerships with NGOs and localities through subawards are encouraged. Program Priorities: Benefit At-Risk Fish, Wildlife and Plant Species Expand Habitat Connectivity Provide a Range of Ecosystem Services Strengthen Ecosystem and Community Resilience, Expand Public and Community Access to Nature. Engage Local Communities Support Tribally Led Conservation and Restoration Priorities

Contribute to Local or Tribal Economies Contribute to Workforce Development.

NM Rural Tourism Rural Pathway Program
Award Amount $50,000
Rural Pathway Resources (newmexico.org)
Grant Cycle open July 1, 2022 through May 1, 2023

Project types include but are not limited to: venues, experiences, services, tourism trails & interpretation, infrastructure, and tour development. TOURISM TRAILS & INTERPRETATION: Thematic trail connecting several towns, highlighting a shared regional tradition, history, product, practice, landscape, etc; Farm/food trail highlighting local/regional foodscapes, food products, and cuisines; Regional road trip map; Historical trail with interpretive elements; Dark Skies interpretation; Archaeological site interpretation. Eligible expenses include but are not limited to: hard costs (e.g., infrastructure, upgrades, technology, tools, right-of-way, land costs, etc.); soft costs (e.g., feasibility assessments, consulting services, planning and design, etc.); marketing and outreach; third-party contract services. This grant requires a 1:1 match from an eligible fiscal agent, Cash matches are preferred, but in-kind and monetary donations may also be eligible up to a certain percentage of the total match.

NM Tourism Clean & Beautiful Program
Average Award Amount in FY22 $15,000
New Mexico Tourism Department Clean and Beautiful

The purpose of the New Mexico "Litter Control and Beautification Act," NMSA 1978, § 67-16-1 et seq., is to accomplish litter control by vesting in the New Mexico Tourism Department (Department) the authority to eliminate litter from the state to the maximum practical extent. The Department shall aid in establishing a statewide Keep America Beautiful Program through the New Mexico Clean and Beautiful Grant Program to end littering, improve recycling, and beautify New Mexico communities. All New Mexico municipalities, counties, and Tribal Governments in good standing with New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department are eligible for funding. Improving green spaces through sustainable park design and maximizing sustainable landscaping in communities and empowering youth are eligible funding expenditures.

International Mountain Bicycling Association Trail Accelerator Grants
Award Range is $5,000-$30,000
Trail Accelerator Grants | IMBA

Local, municipal, state, or federal government agencies, and 501(c)(3) nonprofits that actively manage parks and trails may apply. This can include land managers, chambers of commerce/economic development departments, community health organizations, land trusts/conservancies, etc. Types of eligible projects include: Projects that serve mountain bikers as the primary users, though multi-purpose human-powered trail uses are viable as well; Projects that will result in a visible and substantial increase in access, improved mountain bike experiences, and greater community benefit; Projects where the Trail Accelerator grant stands to leverage additional resources to ensure the success of the project; Projects that promote community development, volunteer recruitment, new rider development, youth riding, and engaging marginalized community members. Higher preference will be given to projects that demonstrate a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Rails To Trails Conservancy Trail Grants
Trail Grants | Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (railstotrails.org)

Through our Trail Grants Program, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) emphasizes strategic investments that support significant regional and community trail development goals. Many of our funded projects are small in scope and scale and can be hard to finance within traditional funding streams. These projects are essential to building, maintaining and managing the trails that so many of us love and that communities rely upon for recreation, transportation and economic vitality. Through these relatively small investments, we are able to help complete and connect trails, improve the trail user experience and support local organizations dedicated to new and existing trails across the country.

AARP Community Challenge
Average Award is $11,500
AARP Community Challenge
FY 2023 cycle opens in January 2023

The AARP Community Challenge provides small grants to fund quick-action

projects that can help communities become more livable for people of all ages. This year, applications will be accepted for projects to improve public spaces, housing, transportation and civic engagement; support diversity, equity and inclusion; build engagement for programs under new federal laws; and pursue innovative ideas that support people age 50 or older.

AARP will prioritize projects that support residents age 50 or over, are inclusive, address disparities, directly engage volunteers and aim to achieve one or more of the following outcome areas: Create vibrant Public Places that improve open spaces, parks and access to other amenities; Deliver a range of Transportation and Mobility options that increase connectivity, walkability, bikeability, wayfinding, access to transportation options and roadway improvements

America Walks Community Change Grants
Community Change Grants - America Walks

The Community Change Grant program supports the growing network of advocates, organizations, and agencies working to advance walkability. Grants are awarded to innovative, engaging, and inclusive programs and projects that create change and opportunity for walking and movement at the community level. Applications for grants open in the fall and are awarded for the full calendar year following.

PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program
Award Amount up to $10,000
Grant Guidelines | PeopleForBikes

The PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program supports bicycle infrastructure projects and targeted advocacy initiatives that make it easier and safer for people of all ages and abilities to ride. PeopleForBikes accepts grant applications from non-profit organizations with a focus on bicycling, active transportation, or community development; from city or county agencies or departments and from state or federal agencies working locally. PeopleForBikes focuses most grant funds on bicycle infrastructure projects, such as: Bike paths, lanes, trails and bridges; Mountain bike facilities; Bike parks and pump tracks; BMX facilities; End-of-trip facilities such as bike racks, bike parking, bike repair stations and bike storage.

We also fund some advocacy projects, such as: Programs that transform city streets, such as Ciclovías or Open Streets Days; Campaigns to increase investment in bicycle infrastructure. PeopleForBikes will fund engineering and design work, construction costs including materials, labor and equipment rental and reasonable volunteer support costs. For advocacy projects, we will fund staffing that is directly related to accomplishing the goals of the initiative.

American Trails The Trail Fund
Award Range $5,000 -$10,000
Apply for The Trail Fund - American Trails
FY 2023 cycle opens Spring 2023

The Trail Fund is a collaborative program of American Trails (a private 501(c)(3) charitable organization) launching in 2022 with a generous gift of $50,000 from the Ford Corporation and other partners. The grant will support grants for trail maintenance, research, and stewardship training all across the country, serving all types of trail users. The amount of funding available and number of grants we can offer will vary year by year, pending funding.

Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program
Award Range $20,000-$50,000
Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program | NFWF
FY 2023 Call for Project January 2023

The Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program seeks to develop community capacity to sustain local natural resources for future generations by providing modest financial assistance to diverse local partnerships for wetland, forest, riparian and coastal habitat restoration, stormwater management, outreach and stewardship with a particular focus on water quality, watersheds and the habitats they support. All projects must have: On-the-ground activities such as wetland, river or coastal habitat restoration and/or targeted green infrastructure creation and monitoring; Community partners united to achieve ecological and educational outcomes; Integrated education, outreach and training into the restoration project through broad community engagement activities or participation and integration with K-12 environmental curriculum; Measurable ecological, educational and community benefits.

New Mexico River Stewardship Program
Award Range $500,000 - $2,300,000
The New Mexico River Stewardship Program (nm.gov)

The goal of the River Stewardship Program is to fund projects that enhance the health of rivers by addressing the root causes of poor water quality and stream habitat. The objectives of the River Stewardship Program include:

Enhancing the economic benefits of healthy river systems, such as improved opportunities to hunt, fish, float and view wildlife.

Restoring or maintaining the hydrology of streams and rivers to better handle overbank flows and reduce flooding downstream.

Providing match required to leverage federal grants, ensuring that New Mexico continues to receive these funds.

Sport Fish Restoration Act
Grant Program Summary (state.nm.us)

Restoring, conserving, and managing and enhancing sport fish and providing for public use and benefit from these resources. Sport fish are limited to aquatic, gill breathing, vertebrate animals, bearing paired fins and having material value for sport or recreation.

Enhancing the public's understanding of water resources and aquatic life forms and assisting them in developing responsible attitudes toward the aquatic environment.

Appendix H: Letters of Support

Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway, Inc.

P O Box 1072 • 301 S Foch St • Truth or Consequences, New Mexico 87901
Phone (575) 894-1968

March 8, 2023

Truth or Consequences City Commission
505 Sims St.
Truth or Consequences, NM 87901

Dear Honorable Mayor Forrister, Mayor Pro-Tem Hechler, and Commissioners Fahl, Mitchell and Harrelson:

The Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway strongly supports the Turtleback Trails Network Plan that has been developed by a steering committee comprised of T or C residents and business owners.

On a daily basis, visitors come into our Visitor Center asking for information on walking, running & hiking trails. Over the past several years travelers to T or C have trended toward younger and more active adults who are looking for outdoor recreation. As it stands now, we have very little to offer these visitors. The implementation of this trail plan would go a long way toward attracting outdoor recreation enthusiasts to Truth or Consequences.

Thank you for your consideration,

G L Kelley

Gina Kelley
Executive Director

Village Of Williamsburg
PO Box 150 / 309 Veater St.
Williamsburg, NM 87942
Phone: (575) 894-6385/Fax: (575) 894-0466
www.villageofwilliamsburg.com

March 10, 2023

Amanda Forrister, Mayor
City of Truth or Consequences, NM 87901

The Village of Williamsburg supports the Turtleback Trail Plan concept for recreational trails and the potential for economic development and health benefits for our citizens.

Thank you,

Deb Stubblefield, Mayor
Village of Williamsburg
Cell: 575-740-4968
Email: mayor@villageofwilliamsburg.com

Debbie Stubblefield
Majorie Powey, Mayor Pro-tem
William Frazier, Trustee
Misty G. Gustin, Trustee
Guillermo "Spike" Hernandez Trustee
Amanda B. Cardona, Clerk/Treasurer
Alison Rashedi , Deputy Clerk/ Code Enforcement

Sierra County
Extension Service
PO Box 631
Truth or Consequences, NM
87901
Phone: 575-894-2375
Fax: 575-894-4445

CLOVERLEAF

Your Source for 4-H News and Events

Cooperative Extension Service - New Mexico State University - U.S. Department of Agriculture

TO: City of Truth or Consequences Commission
DATE: March 13, 2023
RE: Turtleback Trails Network

On behalf of the Sierra County Cooperative Extension Office, we are writing to express our support of the Turtleback Trails Network. We are excited to support the planning committee and commit to providing the backing needed to make it a successful effort.

Sierra County Extension focuses on helping people through educational programs in the areas of agriculture, community and economic development, 4-H youth development, Natural Resources and Family and Consumer Sciences.

In order to capitalize on the success of these focus areas, collaboration within the community and various stakeholders is essential. It is crucial for leaders and those with a vision to work hard at providing opportunities to youth and our community members. The Turtleback Trail has the ability to do just that.

The Cooperative Extension Service looks forward to working with the planning committee to provide educational opportunities conservation, recreation and economic development.

Best Regards,

Sara Marta

Sara Marta
Sierra County Cooperative Extension Agriculture Agent and Program Director

New Mexico State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and educator.
NMSU and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Albuquerque Area Office
555 Broadway NE, Suite 100
Albuquerque, NM 87102-2352

IN REPLY REFER TO:
ALB-616
2.3.3.12

VIA U.S. MAIL AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

Ms. Angela Torres
City Clerk,
505 Sims St
Truth of Consequences, NM 87901
aatorres@torcnm.org

Subject: Turtleback Trails Network Master Plan, Sierra County, New Mexico

Dear Ms. Torres:

Thank you for sending us the Turtleback Trails Network Master Plan for review. Bureau of Reclamation's Recreation Program Policy guides Albuquerque Area Office (AAO) to give full consideration for the inclusion of outdoor recreation opportunities in project planning that is commensurate with public needs and Reclamation responsibilities, objectives, and authorities. Furthermore, AAO uses effective approaches in managing Reclamation's land and water recreation resources in cooperation with non-Federal and Federal partners. Reclamation continues to seek non-Federal partners to manage recreation on its lands, which include the river area from Fish Hatchery to the Caballo Lake State Park northern boundary.

Where Reclamation has land ownership interests, we require a licensing process for evaluation and approval of activities, including associated compliance and permits. We appreciate the early outreach efforts over the last few years, and we are willing to continue working with the Sierra County communities on the proposed projects to help navigate that process. Compliance and permitting includes any authorizations that may be required under the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and National Environmental Policy Act.

Reclamation does have authorization for maintenance of the Rio Grande from Fish Hatchery, just south of Elephant Butte Dam, to Caballo Reservoir under the Rio Grande Project Congressional Authorization (Act of February 25, 1905, ch 798, 33 Stat. 814). Maintenance work by Reclamation is intended to ensure the river channel can effectively pass the mean annual peak flows and to maintain the project facilities.

Because the location of the river put-in/take-out sites, pedestrian trail between Williamsburg and Truth or Consequences, and the footbridges, as currently presented, fall within the Rio Grande floodplain, Reclamation wishes to inform the city that it could be impacted directly by peak river

flow and/or riverbank erosion and indirectly by river management work from Fish Hatchery to Caballo Reservoir.

If you have any questions, please contact Hannah Schechter at (505) 362-2877 or email hschechter@usbr.gov. Individuals who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunications relay services.

Sincerely,

Digitally signed by JENNIFER FALER
Date: 2023.03.13 12:22:36 -06'00'

Jennifer Faler, P.E.
Area Manager

Torres, Angela

From: Christy LaFont <lafontfamily@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 13, 2023 3:58 PM
To: Torres, Angela
Subject: Support for the Turtleback Trails Network Plan

Categories: Agenda Items

Hi there, I just wanted to send my support for the well-researched and very much needed Turtleback Trails Network Plan that will be in front of the City Commision next week. I think that this improvement to our trails network will open opportunities for our local community and our visitors to enjoy the beautiful natural resources that Sierra County is home to. As outlined in the Plan, the Trails network would encourage more conscientious use of our outdoor spaces both for education as well as recreation. This would benefit all ages in our community, and offer our visitors more "to do", which results in longer stays and ultimately brings funds into our local businesses. While we have the funds to make improvements to many aspects of our community I would ask that the accessibility of our outdoor spaces not be ignored, but become part of our overall improvement plan and this proposal is a huge step in that direction. Thank you for your consideration.

Christy LaFont

Torres, Angela

From: Marianne Blaue <marianne@torc.beer>
Sent: Monday, March 13, 2023 5:21 PM
To: Torres, Angela
Subject: Public comment, plz vote yes to support Turtleback Trails Network Plan

Categories: Agenda Items

Hi Commissioners,
Please vote yes to approve the Turtleback Trails Network Plan - it would be a wonderful way to provide more "things to do" for kids in our community and help them get OUTSIDE doing things (rather than drugs). It would be a great quality of life addition for residents who live here exactly because they love the rural, rugged beauty of the area and the outdoors. It extends an already beloved trail system, the healing waters trail, that leads up on the mesa to our wonderful growing veteran's home and memorial, and it is supported by many related groups in town. As a mother and resident, I'm really excited about expanding these trails for our community!! Thank you for your consideration! - Marianne Blaue, mother of Hank, 3yrs old

Cheers,

Marianne Blaue
CEO/Owner
Truth or Consequences Brewing Co.
TORC.BEER
INSTAGRAM
FACEBOOK

SIERRA VISTA HOSPITAL AND CLINICS

March 10, 2023

City of Truth or Consequences

To: Mayor, Amanda Forrister
Mayor Pro-Tem, Rolf Hechler
Commissioner Mitchell
Commissioner Fahl
Commissioner Harrelson

Greetings All,

As the CEO of Sierra Vista Hospital, I am keenly aware of the health benefits derived from outdoor recreation. This includes physical health, emotional health, and behavioral health. If laughter is the best medicine, outdoor exercise and recreation is certainly the next best medicine.

Sierra Vista Hospital fully supports the Turtleback Trails Network in their effort to provide improved outdoor recreation opportunities, river access and the development of trails here in Sierra County.

Our priority at Sierra Vista Hospital is to be a trusted partner providing a modern, sustainable Healthcare system for all through the provision of health services, leadership, and collaboration.

Adopting and implementing the Turtleback Trails Network plan supports our goals and vision for our community and supports a healthy lifestyle.

Respectfully,

Frank Corcoran, CEO
Sierra Vista Hospital

800 East 9th Avenue, Truth or Consequences, NM 87901 | 575-894-2111 | FAX: 575-894-7659 | Website: svhnm.org

Torres, Angela

From: robert sanchezlangston <robert.sanchezlangston@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 14, 2023 8:29 AM
To: Torres, Angela
Subject: Economic Development and support of Turtleback Trails Plan
Attachments: 26346.jpeg

Categories: Agenda Items

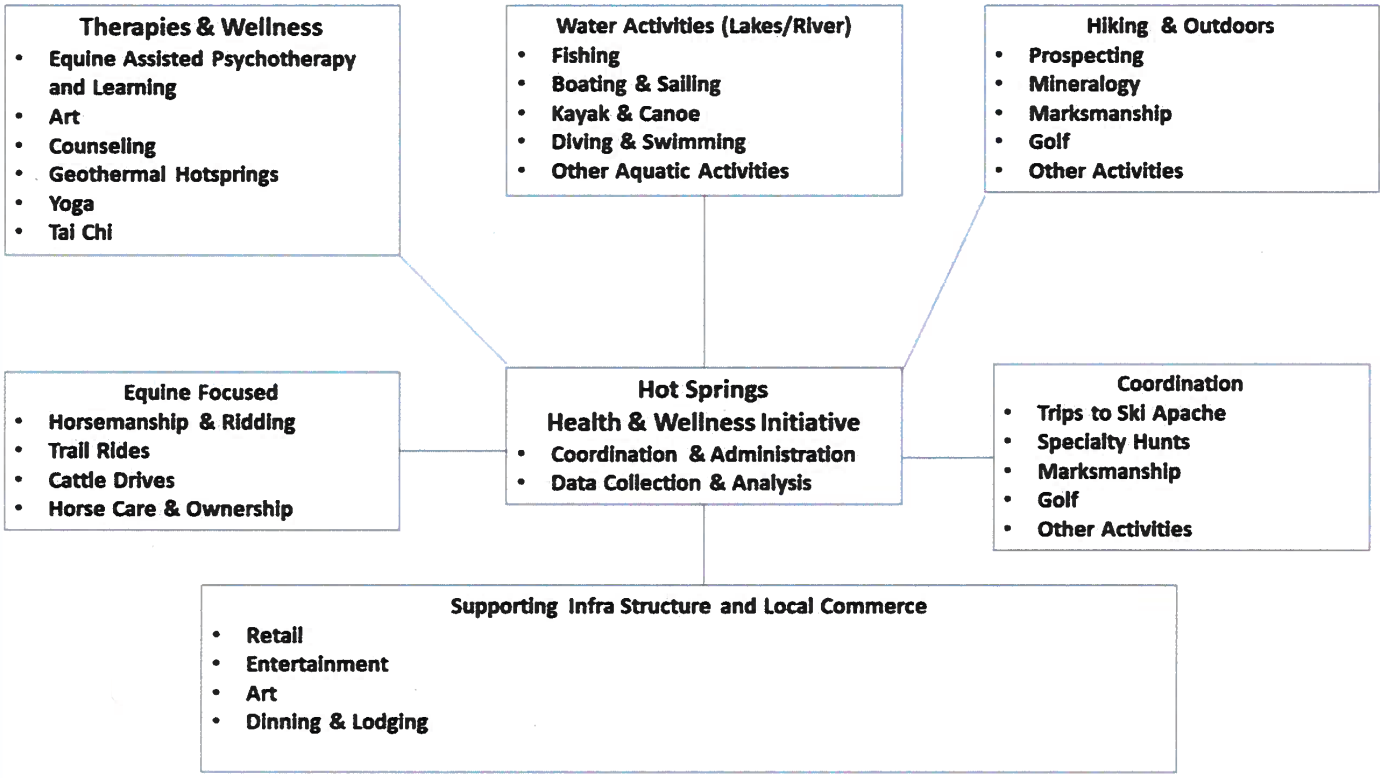
I would like to voice my support for the Turtle Back Trails Plan (TBTP). I will not regurgitate the obvious reasons for supporting this development but I would like to emphasize how it ties to the overall economic development of this area.

I believe our community shows great potential for becoming the Health and Wellness Mecca of the Southwest. Please see the attached chart for an example of the conceptualization of this economic and health/wellness focus. The TBTP fits right in to this type of thinking.

Various health/welfare and recreational programs can be developed and marketed to various customer groups (e.g., military/veterans, human service agencies/nonprofits and corporate retreats/team building) in order to continuously draw individuals and groups to our area to participate in these unique opportunities and contribute to our local economy.

Sincerely,

Robert Sanchez Langston, BSW MSW
Sergeant First Class, United States Army (Retired)


Therapies & Wellness
• Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Learning
• Art
• Counseling
• Geothermal Hotsprings
• Yoga
• Tai Chi
Water Activities (Lakes/River)
• Fishing
• Boating & Sailing
• Kayak & Canoe
• Diving & Swimming
• Other Aquatic Activities
Hiking & Outdoors
• Prospecting
• Mineralogy
• Marksmanship
• Golf
• Other Activities
Equine Focused
• Horsemanship & Ridding
• Trail Rides
• Cattle Drives
• Horse Care & Ownership
Hot Springs
Health & Wellness Initiative
• Coordination & Administration
• Data Collection & Analysis
Coordination
• Trips to Ski Apache
• Specialty Hunts
• Marksmanship
• Golf
• Other Activities
Supporting Infra Structure and Local Commerce
• Retail
• Entertainment
• Art
• Dinning & Lodging

Torres, Angela

From: Lynnette Mondello <Lynn@morningstarsports.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 14, 2023 8:40 AM
To: Torres, Angela
Subject: Turtleback Trail Plan

Categories: Agenda Items

Hello

We would like to voice our support for the Turtleback Trail Plan.
My husband and I made a loop around Colorado one year. We had brought along our bicycles as we were determined to try out the "riverwalks" in all of the towns where we stopped. We were not disappointed! Every evening when we stopped driving for the day we were able to get out and ride on a multi-use path along a river. Some where longer than others, but all were very enjoyable and many other people were out enjoying the paths along with us. Locals as well as tourists, families with strollers, seniors, and more.
These trails not only bring quality of life to the local community they also add to the activities that tourists can enjoy. Quality of life is important to bringing new residents to our community. Young professionals are looking for places to relocate to start their families in small communities. However, many of them are looking for outdoor amenities.
The Trail Plan would also enhance tourism in our community. Many people come into our store, Morning Star Outfitters in Truth or Consequences, asking about hiking and biking trails. Having more for tourists to do will keep them in town longer and will influence their decision to come back and tell other people about the area.
Helping to build the Rio Grande Trail through New Mexico is also an exciting addition to this project. There are many thru hikers every year that hike the long trails in our country. In Silver City we see 300 – 500 Continental Divide hikers every year.

Please consider this project as an asset to our community – for health, quality of life and an untapped addition to tourism.

Sincerely,

Rocky and Lynn Mondello

MORNING STAR
809 N Bullard St
Silver City, NM 88061
575-388-3191
lynn@morningstarsports.com

Torres, Angela

From: Luba Hoffman <satrn4lulu@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 14, 2023 10:06 AM
To: Torres, Angela
Subject: The Turtleback Trails Network Plan

Categories: Agenda Items

I'm writing in regard to the Turtleback Trails Network Plan. As a resident of Sierra County and an outdoor/nature enthusiast, I'm super excited about this addition to our community. Over the last couple years, working in hospitality in TorC, the most common questions I receive from visitors relate to interest in outdoor activities. Providing more access and opportunities for outdoor activities will draw many more return guests and support the in-flow and growth of revenue to our community.

Thank you for reading and your consideration when it comes to support of this valuable addition to Sierra County.

Sincerely,
Luba Hoffman
505-219-9295



March 13, 2023

Angela Torres, City Clerk
City of Truth or Consequences
505 Sims
Truth of Consequences, NM 87901

The Outdoor Recreation Division works to ensure that all New Mexicans gain from the public health, environmental and economic benefits of sustainable outdoor recreation. We measure success by measuring impacts to sustainable economic development, conservation and access, equity, education and the health and wellness of our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for the Turtleback Trails Network Master Plan. This exciting venture is precisely the type of planning effort we are enthusiastic to champion and support. We appreciate the incorporation of values from other planning efforts: the New Mexico State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, the Rio Grande Trail Master Plan, and T or C's Comprehensive Plan.

We know that access to recreational trails has positive affects on communities. And when a region looks closely at their needs, collects community input and filters that through the expertise of talented professional system planners such as Atilla Bality, Outdoor Recreation Planner with the National Park Service, you are setting a foundation for success.

To be more specific about the positive impacts of sustainable trail system development on communities:

- Access to trails makes communities more attractive places to live. When considering where to move, home buyers rank walking and biking paths as one of the most important features of a deciding to move to a new community.
- Trails provide low or no-cost recreation to families relative to many other recreational and travel options, or services provided by government.
- Trail systems boost spending at local businesses. Communities along trails benefit from the influx of visitors going to restaurants, snack shops and other retail establishments. On longer trails, hotels, bed and breakfasts, and outdoor outfitters benefit.
- Trails influence business location and relocation decisions. Companies often choose to locate in communities that offer a high level of amenities to employees as a means of attracting and retaining top-level workers. Trails can make communities attractive to businesses looking to

expand or relocate both because of the amenities they offer to employees and the opportunities they offer to cater to trail visitors.

- Trails reduce medical costs by encouraging exercise and other healthy outdoor activities. A more physically active community is a more vital community.
- Trails can revitalize depressed areas, creating a demand for space in what were once vacant buildings.
- Trails provide transportation options and cut fuel expenses, offering reliable means of transportation for short distance trips. Nearly half of all car trips are less than 3 miles and more than a quarter are one mile or less.
- Trails increase tax revenues in the communities in which they are located. These benefits generally produce positive economic return on the money invested into trail projects.

Beyond all these documented justifications, access to trails and recreational infrastructure are part of the human experience and part of our history in New Mexico. From ancient trade routes and roads radiating from the thousand-year-old Puebloan ruins at Chaco Canyon, to the Camino Real and Spanish Trails linking our colonial ancestors to the larger world, to the trails we hike, ride horses and motos and bike today, trails always take us somewhere new, keep us healthy and sane, and keep us excited for what's around the next bend.

I am happy to write this letter of support and look forward to working with your community in my capacity with the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division.

Carl Colonius
Outdoor Recreation Division
Economic Development Department

Torres, Angela

From: Stacy Hoyt <stacymae508@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 14, 2023 12:05 PM
To: Torres, Angela
Subject: Turtleback trails network plan

Categories: Agenda Items

Greetings from T or C, NM

My name is Stacy Hoyt and I moved here in July, 2022. I am a fan of the Turtleback trails network plan!

Some specifics for me to add my vote for: I would like to see a bridge at Rotary Park and south of Williamsburg that could accommodate one SxS at a time for seasonal use when river crossing is not possible d/t high water. This would allow trail access on both sides of I-25 without taking SxS's on the roads. I would not want it to be for overland vehicles and traditional road vehicles. They can easily get to the other access points.

My husband and I own a Polaris Adventures outfitter business that opens in April for tours and rentals. Staying off the pavement is important to the experience for our renters. Given the type of business that we own, we want to provide the best experiences possible for our tourists but also our residents. This trail system would add to the over all experience allowing those who drive SxS to get out and hike for a bit too.

I would also appreciate designation and labeling of trails that are for foot traffic only. We chose SxS because of the accessibility to the beauty that surrounds us. We are not able to run or hike long distances because of back injuries and chronic pain. We also do not want to 'dust out' anyone hiking. Marking shared trails will remind us to be aware of pedestrians and to keep the dust down.

Before I moved here I always thought of NM as a state that was meant for outdoor activities and and for art. It would be sad if either of those went away for lack of access. It is so hard to get to the other side of the river when the water is high for hikers who may not have the ability to drive all the way to the Turtleback parking area.

I am hoping that this plan gets approved and acted on ASAP.

Thank you,
Stacy Hoyt
T or C Guided Tours
http://WWW.TorCguidedtours.com
575-894-3100



PO Box 1072, 301 S Foch St
Truth or Consequences, NM 87901
575-894-1968

March 13, 2023

City of Truth or Consequences

Honorable Mayor, Amanda Forrister, Mayor Pro Tem Hechler, Commissioner Mitchell, Commissioner Fahl, Commissioner Harrelson,

The Sierra County Recreation and Tourism Board supports and participates in the planning of the Turtleback Trail Network Project. Outdoor exercise, access to nature, along with recreational trail opportunities will bring more visitors to Truth or Consequences. (Increase Lodgers Tax & GRT). We promote Truth or Consequences as a Wellness Destination. City of Truth or Consequences New Mexico: Hot Springs, Cool Town! (sierracountynewmexico.info). The Turtleback Trail Network will provide additional new outdoor recreation opportunities for local Citizens and Visitors. These opportunities include hiking, walking, running, mountain biking, fishing, rafting, kayaking, birding, etc. Outdoor Recreation aids in mental health and a healthy lifestyle. Get Outdoors! - Sierra County New Mexico

Hiking & Walking Trails near Truth or Consequences & Elephant Butte NM (sierracountynewmexico.info)

Respectfully,

Kim Skinner

Kim Skinner

Chairman

Sierra County Recreation & Tourism Advisory Board

www.sierracountynm.info

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Las Cruces District Office
1800 Marquess Street
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88005
https://www.blm.gov/new-mexico

In Reply Refer To:
8100 (NML03120)

Ms. Angela Torres
City Clerk
505 Sims St
Truth or Consequences, NM 87901
aatorres@torcnm.org

Subject: Turtleback Trails Network Master Plan, Sierra County, New Mexico

Dear Ms. Torres,

Thank you for including the Bureau of Land Management-Las Cruces District Office in the review process of the Turtleback Trails Network Master Plan. The BLM plans for recreation and visitor services to address issues, concerns, and potential recreational opportunities identified by BLM staff, other agencies, organizations, or the general public. Decisions on the allocation of resources to reach recreation management goals and objectives are documented in land use plans and land use plan amendments.

This area in Sierra County, New Mexico falls within the land use planning area of the Tri-County Resource Management Plan that is currently in development. Once Tri-County is completed and signed, a travel and transportation inventory and management plan for the area must be done. The inventory and plan would identify all existing routes and trails, evaluate them, and that data would be used to help establish a long term, sustainable, multimodal network of routes and trails on BLM lands in Sierra County. Through this route designation process, the BLM would rely on public input for consideration into these decisions, like the proposal put forth in the Turtleback Trails Network Master Plan.

The Bureau of Land Management Las Cruces District Office appreciate the outreach efforts over the last few years, and we are willing to continue working with the Sierra County communities on the proposed projects and to help navigate these processes.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Stephen Haynes, Outdoor Recreational Planner, at (575) 525-4338 or by email at jhaynes@blm.gov.

Sincerely,

Shannon Hardy, Acting

David L. Wallace
Assistant District Manager
Division of Multi-Resources

cc: Attila Bailey- National Park Service Rivers, Trails, & Community Assistance Program

Torres, Angela

From: James Prendamano <james@prereal.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 14, 2023 4:09 PM
To: Torres, Angela
Subject: Letter of Support for Turtleback Trails Network Plan

Categories: Agenda Items

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing to you in support of the Turtleback Trails Network Plan as an interested party in the economic growth and development of Truth or Consequences, Williamsburg and Sierra County as a whole. We have made significant investments throughout the county including Sierra Del Rio Golf Course, many residential assets as well as a variety of hospitality and commercial properties. It is critical that we leverage every opportunity to provide and establish connectivity to nature and its immense benefits.Utilizing the county's natural beauty and landscape is a tool unique to this community and should be expanded upon. A top priority for success is significant Economic Development throughout the entire county working to increase tourism and create revenue opportunities for local businesses and increase job opportunities for locals. Improvements to river recreation infrastructure, park improvements, and pedestrian bridges to help the community access public lands. Outdoor Recreation infrastructure is a fundamental part of the overall Economic development landscape and would help to make the community healthier and more connected to nature overall .

Thank you for taking time to consider my stance on the Turtleback Trails Network Plan. I look forward to seeing this community thrive.

--
Keepin it "PreReal"
James Prendamano
Broker
CEO/Owner
PreReal
Prendamano Real Estate, Inc.
7448 Amboy Road
Staten Island, NY 10307
c. 917.417.9233
o. 718.200.7799
www.prereal.com



*Please note my new email address James@PreReal.com

*Information obtained from sellers, landlords and various sources. All information should be independently verified and is subject to errors and omissions.

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Torres, Angela

From: Jim Apodaca <topo363@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 14, 2023 8:39 PM
To: Torres, Angela
Subject: Support for more trails and outdoor recreation in T or C

Categories: Agenda Items

Good evening,

I wanted to voice my support for increasing outdoor recreation opportunities and trails in Sierra County. I am an avid running and look forward to more trails to run and walk on. My family including three kids love to mountain bike trails and hike as well. We do float the river and enjoy the parks. If I can help in any way, I am the Recreation Specialist for the Black Range Ranger District on the Gila National Forest in T or C. Please don't hesitate to reach out.

Thank you,
Jim Apodaca
575-740-2996

Sent from my iPhone

South Central
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
District 7

Members

NM State Representative
Raymundo Lara

Doña Ana County

City of Las Cruces

City of Sunland Park

City of Anthony

City of Socorro

Socorro County

City of Truth or Consequences

Sierra County

Town of Mesilla

Village of Hatch

Village of Magdalena

Village of Williamsburg

City of Elephant Butte

Lower Rio Grande Public
Water Works Authority

San Antonio Mutual Domestic
Water Consumer Association

Doña Ana Mutual Domestic
Water Consumer Association

Anthony Water & Sanitation
District

Jornada Resource
Conservation &
Development District

March 15, 2023

RE: Turtleback Trails Network

To whom it may concern,

The South Central Council of Governments supports the Turtleback Trails Network. We believe the intent of this project, to support Outdoor Recreation, Health, Economic Development & Tourism, Conservation & Education and Stewardship, will increase the strength and resiliency in our communities.

We support the effort to make improvements and increase access to the Rio Grande for pedestrians and believe this project will complement and improve the economic growth of the community. Should you have any questions please do no hesitate to contact me.

We look forward to working with you as this project proceeds.

Sincerely,

Jay Armijo
South Central Council of Governments
Executive Director

Main Office
P.O. Box 1072
600 Hwy. 195, Suite B & C
Elephant Butte, NM 87935
Phone: 575-744-4857
Fax: 575-744-5021

Jay Armijo, Executive Director
Email: jarmijo@sccog-nm.com
Website: www.sccog-nm.com

Mesilla Office
P.O. Box 297
2231 Avenida de Mesilla
Mesilla, NM 88046-0297
Email: tigoolsby@sccog-nm.com
Ph: 575-524-3262 Ext. 110

March 13, 2023

Angela Torres, City Clerk
City of Truth or Consequences
505 Sims
Truth of Consequences, NM 87901

The Outdoor Recreation Division works to ensure that all New Mexicans gain from the public health, environmental and economic benefits of sustainable outdoor recreation. We measure success by measuring impacts to sustainable economic development, conservation and access, equity, education and the health and wellness of our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for the Turtleback Trails Network Master Plan. This exciting venture is precisely the type of planning effort we are enthusiastic to champion and support. We appreciate the incorporation of values from other planning efforts: the New Mexico State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, the Rio Grande Trail Master Plan, and T or C's Comprehensive Plan.

We know that access to recreational trails has positive affects on communities. And when a region looks closely at their needs, collects community input and filters that through the expertise of talented professional system planners such as Atilla Bality, Outdoor Recreation Planner with the National Park Service, you are setting a foundation for success.

To be more specific about the positive impacts of sustainable trail system development on communities:

- Access to trails makes communities more attractive places to live. When considering where to move, home buyers rank walking and biking paths as one of the most important features of a deciding to move to a new community.
- Trails provide low or no-cost recreation to families relative to many other recreational and travel options, or services provided by government.
- Trail systems boost spending at local businesses. Communities along trails benefit from the influx of visitors going to restaurants, snack shops and other retail establishments. On longer trails, hotels, bed and breakfasts, and outdoor outfitters benefit.
- Trails influence business location and relocation decisions. Companies often choose to locate in communities that offer a high level of amenities to employees as a means of attracting and retaining top-level workers. Trails can make communities attractive to businesses looking to

expand or relocate both because of the amenities they offer to employees and the opportunities they offer to cater to trail visitors.

- Trails reduce medical costs by encouraging exercise and other healthy outdoor activities. A more physically active community is a more vital community.
- Trails can revitalize depressed areas, creating a demand for space in what were once vacant buildings.
- Trails provide transportation options and cut fuel expenses, offering reliable means of transportation for short distance trips. Nearly half of all car trips are less than 3 miles and more than a quarter are one mile or less.
- Trails increase tax revenues in the communities in which they are located. These benefits generally produce positive economic return on the money invested into trail projects.

Beyond all these documented justifications, access to trails and recreational infrastructure are part of the human experience and part of our history in New Mexico. From ancient trade routes and roads radiating from the thousand-year-old Puebloan ruins at Chaco Canyon, to the Camino Real and Spanish Trails linking our colonial ancestors to the larger world, to the trails we hike, ride horses and motos and bike today, trails always take us somewhere new, keep us healthy and sane, and keep us excited for what's around the next bend.

I am happy to write this letter of support and look forward to working with your community in my capacity with the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division.

Carl Colonius
Outdoor Recreation Division
Economic Development Department

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Albuquerque Area Office
555 Broadway NE, Suite 100
Albuquerque, NM 87102-2352

IN REPLY REFER TO:
ALB-616
2.3.3.12

VIA U.S. MAIL AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

Ms. Angela Torres
City Clerk,
505 Sims St
Truth of Consequences, NM 87901
aatorres@torcnm.org

Subject: Turtleback Trails Network Master Plan, Sierra County, New Mexico

Dear Ms. Torres:

Thank you for sending us the Turtleback Trails Network Master Plan for review. Bureau of Reclamation's Recreation Program Policy guides Albuquerque Area Office (AAO) to give full consideration for the inclusion of outdoor recreation opportunities in project planning that is commensurate with public needs and Reclamation responsibilities, objectives, and authorities. Furthermore, AAO uses effective approaches in managing Reclamation's land and water recreation resources in cooperation with non-Federal and Federal partners. Reclamation continues to seek non-Federal partners to manage recreation on its lands, which include the river area from Fish Hatchery to the Caballo Lake State Park northern boundary.

Where Reclamation has land ownership interests, we require a licensing process for evaluation and approval of activities, including associated compliance and permits. We appreciate the early outreach efforts over the last few years, and we are willing to continue working with the Sierra County communities on the proposed projects to help navigate that process. Compliance and permitting includes any authorizations that may be required under the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and National Environmental Policy Act.

Reclamation does have authorization for maintenance of the Rio Grande from Fish Hatchery, just south of Elephant Butte Dam, to Caballo Reservoir under the Rio Grande Project Congressional Authorization (Act of February 25, 1905, ch 798, 33 Stat. 814). Maintenance work by Reclamation is intended to ensure the river channel can effectively pass the mean annual peak flows and to maintain the project facilities.

Because the location of the river put-in/take-out sites, pedestrian trail between Williamsburg and Truth or Consequences, and the footbridges, as currently presented, fall within the Rio Grande floodplain, Reclamation wishes to inform the city that it could be impacted directly by peak river

flow and/or riverbank erosion and indirectly by river management work from Fish Hatchery to Caballo Reservoir.

If you have any questions, please contact Hannah Schechter at (505) 362-2877 or email hschechter@usbr.gov. Individuals who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunications relay services.

Sincerely,

Digitally signed by JENNIFER FALER
Date: 2023.03.13 12:22:36 -06'00'

Jennifer Faler, P.E.
Area Manager

Sierra Soil and Water Conservation District

2101 South Broadway – Truth or Consequences, NM 87901 – Phone (575) 894-2212

March 13, 2023

Attention: Mayor, Amanda Forrister

To Whom It May Concern:

The Sierra Soil & Water Conservation District writes this letter in support of trail development and outdoor recreation opportunities in Sierra County. We support efforts to control and eradicate invasive species, (such as Salt Cedar), and promote education to the public about responsible conservation practices.

While we do support the idea of this local project, we adamantly oppose the SCORP goal regarding the acquisition of private land for conservation easements, and/or protection through legislation.

Sincerely,

Willard Hall

Willard Hall, Chairman



