

Sierra County Trail group
Meeting Notes
February 20, 2020

Meeting called to order at 1:00 at the Sierra Conservation Plaza, 2101 S Broadway in T or C

Present:

Bill Sallee, Village of Williamsburg
Brent Tanzy, BOR
Maggie Fowler, BOR
Hannah Schechter, BOR
John Masterson, Trail runner
Linda DeMarino, MainStreet
Heidi Hubble, Turner Expeditions
Gina Kelley, Hot Springs Marketing
Merry Jo Fahl, Jornada RC&D
Attila Bality, NPS

ACTION ITEMS

What	Who	When
Vision Homework -Newspaper headline	Everyone	March 15
Review RGT trail evaluation matrix	Everyone	March 15
Develop more specific outreach and engagement schedule	Gina	March 15
Prepare briefing for new City Commission	Merry Jo / Gina / Attila	March 30
Get City participation Commitment	Merry Jo / Attila	ASAP

NEXT MEETING – March 19 @1pm Sierra Soil & Water Conference Room

Rio Grande Trail- Attila provided the group with an overview of the NM Rio Grande Trail Program and how this group can work towards getting this proposed trail added to that program. More information about the Rio Grande Trail can be found here: <http://www.riograndetrailnm.com/> ; <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/ADMIN/riograndetrailcommission.html>

In 2015, state legislation (HB 563) solidified New Mexico’s vision of a 500-mile cross-state recreational trail and established the Rio Grande Trail Commission to oversee its development. In this vision: **The Rio Grande Trail is New Mexico’s cross-state, recreational trail for hiking, biking, and horseback riding along the Rio Grande.** Trail users explore, learn about, and connect with a tapestry of diverse natural habitats, rich history, striking landscapes, and vibrant communities. The trail contributes to cultural and environmental awareness, healthy lifestyles, spiritual growth, and economic prosperity for New Mexico and its visitors.

In a discussion about Trail Alignment Criteria (as established for RGT alignments), the group agreed to modify/create our site specific criteria. The RGT evaluation matrix is attached to these notes. ACTION: review RGT Trail Evaluation Matrix , suggest modifications to Merry Jo. Discussion and agreement to occur at March meeting.

Review of Initial Outreach Activity- Gina, Heidi and Linda provided an overview of what occurred during our initial outreach activity that was held at the “live Long and Prosper” workshop in February. Attila was able to provide materials that we could use for the display. We got some very good comments back. **Describe the comments in this section and include photo**

Develop Vision and Goals – tabled to next meeting.

ACTION: Each Trail Group participant is asked to prepare a “newspaper headline” as a vision and goals conversation starting point. Thinking 7-10 years in the future – what’s the headline say about the trail. Headlines could align with our known themes – economic development, outdoor recreation, river conservation, community health, etc..

Communication Team update- Gina noted that the new Facebook page has shown lots of activity; she also posts items on the Sierra County Tourism FB page. Group discussed future outreach

- Sierra County Health Fair to be held May 16; Gina will coordinate with Sierra County Health Council to set up display
- Group members do displays locally
 - Rotary-Merry Jo Gina
 - 4-H- Merry Jo
 - HSHS Biology Teacher-Merry Jo
 - In Service with teachers
 - Friends of Elephant Butte-speak to Lillis about Friends contacts
 - Others?
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The group agreed to the following activities:

- ✓ Create a spreadsheet of public outreach activities- **Gina will do this.** The information should identify events, meetings, activities, dates and points of contact. A closer review should help us understand if any segments of TorC and Williamsburg are being left out of the trail project conversations.
- ✓ **Communication Team** meet with the HSHS Arts teacher to see if his class can begin development of next display
- ✓ Perhaps establish some sort of long-term display set up in downtown area or Rotary Park
- ✓ Following installation of new City Commissioners, project leaders should brief Mayor/Commission in April

Develop Project Name Criteria- Merry Jo noted that she understood after she had left the last meeting there was quite a bit of discussion regarding a “name” for this trail segment. She reminded the group that this initiative began with a collection of folks from different aspects of the community and it was felt then that this effort would not be a T or C project, a Williamsburg project or a County project but a Community project. She also stated that as this group moved forward with narrowing down a project

name that to consider the marketability of whatever name we come up with. This name should be something that would entice people to pull off the Interstate and go see it or spike their curiosity to see what it was all about.

Bill Sallee stated the Village of Williamsburg is insisting that as part of the Village's overall economic development plan for an area along the Rio Grande that the portion of the trail within their purview be called the Village of Williamsburg segment.

An idea for "The Village Trail emerged as a way to connect archeological pre-history on the east side of the Rio Grande to the historic settlements on the west side of the Rio Grande. Several historical features could be interpreted along this trail including a 1890's water diversion ditch and a mill water wheel.

Other Topics

Discussion moved to some trail management topics including creating a "site stewards" program to monitor historic and pre-historic sites on Bureau of Reclamation lands along the river corridor. The site steward program could also expand onto Bureau of Land Management lands as well.

The Bureau of Reclamation would most likely complete an Environmental Assessment for the trail location.

Many of the slash piles along a proposed trail alignment alternative (on the lower bench) are suitable for burning.

Bureau of Land Management also has programs and resources (range improvement and mine reclamation) funds that could potentially support our work.

Next Meeting

March 19 @ 1pm

Create 1st Draft Vision & Goals

Agree on Trail Evaluation Criteria

Communications Updates

- Project flyer

- Commission briefing

- Community feedback: meetings/ FB, etc

Water trail opportunities

TABLE 2: EVALUATION MATRIX AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

EVALUATION CRITERIA		RATING GUIDE & NUMERIC SCORE		
		GOOD: 9-7	NEUTRAL: 6-4	FAIR/POOR: 3-1
CHARACTER/ AESTHETICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exemplifies vision for Rio Grande Trail Scenery/Views Compatibility with adjacent land uses Proximity to busy roads or other noise generators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panoramic views or vistas to distant landmarks Access to, or views of the river Adjacent to park, open space, or agricultural lands Good separation from noisy roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wooded area typical of bosque; limited views Along a levee, drain, or irrigation facility Passes through commercial/residential areas Along or near low-moderate volume roadway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unpleasant/uninspiring views No relation to river, water, or natural areas Adjacent to industrial/mining areas Along or near a high-volume roadway
CONNECTIVITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides options for connecting to Additional trails Parks Communities Trail-related businesses Other points of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers easy connections to other segments of network Good existing access Potential linkages to nearby destinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circuitous connections Potential access points No notable points of interest nearby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical or jurisdictional limitations make connections to other trail segments difficult Isolated from nearby destinations or points of interest Limited or no potential for developing access points
EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of right-of-way Condition of existing corridor (topography, soils, etc.) Requirements for additional infrastructure (bridges, drainage, major earthwork, etc.) Probable cost of construction Level of public or political support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No additional right-of-way needed Stable soils; gentle topography No need for additional bridges or culverts May be developed with minimal costs; lower than average trail development costs No objections from local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some additional right-of-way may need to be acquired Sandy or rocky soils; rolling or sloping topography Moderate amount of engineering or structures required Costs anticipated to be in line with typical trail construction costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited or no available right-of-way, or utility conflicts within ROW Significant earthwork or structural engineering required (levee needs to be rebuilt, major bridge required, etc.) High costs expected as result of any of the above Neighbors or political leaders are antagonistic toward trail development
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on critical habitat, wetlands, etc. Proximity to known hazardous materials or leaking underground storage tanks Impacts to historic, architectural, and cultural resources, or traditional cultural properties (TCPs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No critical habitat, wetlands, etc. No hazardous materials No adverse effects to National Register of Historic Places-eligible historic/cultural resources or TCPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts to natural and cultural resources can be minimized or mitigated Ineligible cultural resources No known or minimal hazardous materials nearby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for serious impacts and adverse effects with limited possibilities for mitigation with natural resources (critical habitat, wetlands, etc.) and NRHP-eligible cultural resources Known hazardous materials
SAFETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity to roads and vehicular traffic Visibility/perceived sense of isolation Potential physical hazards Ease of access by emergency responders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No road crossings required, or grade-separated crossing options exist; separated from traffic Open area; good visibility No steep slopes or drop-offs; good separation from open water; other potential hazards are easily mitigated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe at-grade road crossings exist or can be implemented with minimal effort; follows or crosses low-volume roadway Wooded or meandering alignment locations with limited visibility but within cellphone service area Moderate hazards may require design solutions to protect users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At-grade road crossings with high traffic and/or limited visibility Isolated areas with poor visibility and no cellphone service Potentially hazardous areas with no cost-effective design solutions
USER ACCOMMODATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible to various user types: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road bikes Off-road/mountain bikes Wheelchairs/strollers Pedestrians Equestrians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single alignment accommodates all users Parallel alignments can accommodate separate uses, all with good connectivity Good potential for trailhead development May not have trailhead potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single facility accommodates some, but not necessarily all, uses Some uses on parallel facilities may have only local access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical conditions limit the ability to provide access for all but one or two user groups without major design interventions