

Turtleback Trails Network  
 Steering Committee Mtg Via TEAMS  
 September 14, 2021  
 Group Memory <https://youtu.be/I5Eu-Fo-aQA>

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Participants: Attila Bality, Merry Jo Fahl, Mayor Stubblefield, Kim Skinner, OJ Hechler, Hannah Schechter, Alana Holland, John Masterson

Agenda:

- i. Project Updates
- ii. Rotary Park design workshop and how to determine ways to move forward
- iii. Management, Maintenance and Stewardship components
- iv. Action items from last meeting on Plan outline and Work plan
- v. Report on subcommittee work
  - a. Communication team-Kim Skinner/John Masterson
  - b. Trail committee- John Masterson
  - c. River committee-
  - d. Conservation (including wildlife) & Education Committee-Travis Day
- vi. Review Today's actions
- vii. Next meeting- ( one month)

ACTION ITEMS

What	Who	When
Establish Google Photos folder for project related pictures including photo inventory	John – create folder Travis – upload SWCD project photos	September 30
Establish and share TTN Plan document in Google Docs. Upload content into respective document sections	John – create document & share link Attila – Share most current plan outline Everyone -upload content	September 22
Share MRG Econ Dev Plan	Kim	completed
Follow up conversation with Boating Officer Chris Bolen about local ordinances mirroring the NM Boating Act	OJ	October 15
Conversations with TorC newspaper about a “community conversation” insert about Rotary Park design alternatives	Merry Jo talk to Frances	September 22
Print additional vision brochures	OJ will check about City funding	September 22
Distribute project brochures at City Hall for distribution to city leaders and key city officials	John	completed

Management & maintenance discussion with City, County, Village, SWCD	Merry Jo, Attila	October 30
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**Updates:**

- The Village of Williamsburg delivered letters to nine affiliated tribal nations informing them of the Turtleback Trails Network and inviting them to let us know about any potential concerns they may have. White Mtn Apache, Isleta del Sur and the Hopi Tribe have responded. The Hopi Tribe requests more information.  
(ACTION: Provide Hopi letter to BOR Public Affairs /Archaeologist for appropriate response. Merry Jo, Attila)
- The NPS is convening federal officials from BOR, BLM and Army Corps of Engineers to outline the federal coordination tasks for eventual project implementation. A flowchart is suggested to illustrate tasks and timeline so local government officials understand the process.
- John M. and Attila are scheduling a phone conversation with Mitch Brown, Rio Vista Land Holdings to brief him on the project and how it complements/affects his development plans.

**Rotary Park Design Workshop**

- Groundwork Studio has prepared two conceptual alternatives for community consideration. The themes are Nature vs. Recreation. Community notes, social pinpoint and the precedent boards have been delivered to the City and NPS. Currently, the information is found here: [FBTCloud](#)
- What strategies should we pursue to get broader community consensus on a preferred alternative. Ideas for consideration include:
  - o Individual outreach to neighbors and key stakeholders (Who will do this?)
  - o Feature article in local newspapers
    - ACTION: Merry Jo will reach out to Frances about feature article



**Review Action Items on Plan Outline/Workplan**

- SCSWCD is completing photo inventory . It's suggested we create a Google Photo Drive to upload photos to. Anyone can add photos to Google Photo Drive.
  - o ACTION: John M. to set up Google Photo Album

- Oj is reviewing 2016-2020 SCORP Document. Several goals and objectives align with our project
- The Turtleback Trails Network project supports key goals and objectives in TorC Comprehensive Plan 2014 including
  - o Community Services Implementation Strategy 1.4 working with BOR on river access ramps
  - o Supporting the completion of the Healing Waters Trail Network
- The Sierra County Comprehensive Plan references tourism and the Tourism Board.
- The Middle Rio Grande Economic Development Board has language complimentary to Turtleback Trails Network. ACTION: Kim to send documents to steering Committee.
- Travis Day has reached out to Armendaris Ranch manager about informal trails crossing ranch lands to access Caballo Cone. We are awaiting a response.

#### Sub-Committee Reports

##### Communications

- Website content: The City provided a template for a project webpage within the City's Parks and Recreation webpage. The communications working group is being asked to help populate the site
- A Google Doc will be created for the Plan Outline. Steering Committee members can add content to the document. ACTION: John M. to establish Google Doc and share with group.
- Our Vision and Ideas brochure is almost distributed. Copies should be delivered to City officials and commissioners. ACTION completed by John M. Additional printing would be valuable. OJ will ask if City can print or the Sierra County Lodgers Tax could cover printing costs.
- Volunteers from the Geronimo Trail VC regularly distribute brochures to businesses in our communities. Copies of our brochure could also be distributed to business owners/managers so they are aware of the Turtleback Trails Network project.
- John placed some project brochures at Rotary Park and displayed on the Community Board in front of TorC Brewery.

##### Trails Working Group

The Trails Working Group completed an assessment of a new trail segment

- Due to the topology of the riverbank area, there are three general options for establishment of a walking trail from Rotary Park to Williamsburg. 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.
1. Lower Bench - below 4240', which some residents call "the flats", existing dirt/sand road follows the riverbank closely (within 100') for most of the study area.
    - o 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.
    - o The area can become muddy during rains.
    - o A trail that closely followed the riverbank would offer ample wildlife viewing and fishing opportunities.
  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.
    - o Federal officials have cautioned against new trails on the mesa due to the existence of nearby fragile historical sites.
    - o 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.
- 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.

Scoring the three options on likely User Experience, Aesthetics, Ease of Implementation, User Accommodation, and Cultural/Historical, the lower bench is the preferred alternative. 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 historic sites. Scoring Spreadsheet for decision making found here: [Turtle Mountain Trail Network Scoring - Google Sheets](#)

#### River Access Working Group

- Following the discussion with the TorC Police Chief, the NPS began exploring how other communities have enforced the NM Boating Act, since municipalities don't have authority to enforce the Act's provisions. Communities such as Carlsbad and Ruidoso have passed local ordinances that mirror the Boating Act. NPS is reaching out to Farmington, NM as well.
  - ACTION: OJ will continue conversations with Elephant Butte Boating Officer.
- The City is working with local contractors to present us some "ballpark" costs to install sustainable launch ramps. We're asking them to explore steps and ramp alternatives to include double railings that would allow canoes and kayaks to be slid down the rails, protecting the boats and safer for users.
- Issues that should be addressed include quiet zones and permit system. Technically the Bureau of Reclamation issues permits for commercial uses. Both topics need group conversation.

#### Conservation & Education Working Group

No report

#### Stewardship Discussion

Majority of discussion tabled for separate meeting. Some of today's conversation mentioned:

- Identifying if there is a need for a coalition or alliance of groups and individuals that want to see Turtleback Trails Network succeed.
- Could we develop a sponsorship/gift catalog for certain elements of the project. How would this be managed?
- Should we explore Adopt-A-Trail or Adopt-A-Launch programs?

For Management and Maintenance discussion, the City, County, Village, SWCD, Merry Jo and Attila should coordinate a discussion. Local government will have to have a key role in project management.

Meeting Ended