

# Rio Grande Trail Commission

Tuesday, May 17, 2022

Zoom Webinar

Meeting Minutes

## Members Present:

Deputy Secretary Todd Leahy, ENMRD, Chair

Toby Velasquez, ENMRD, State Parks Division Representative

Alexandra Navas, Economic Development Department, Outdoor Recreation Division

Peter Livingstone, Southern NM Trails – Trail Management Agency Representative

Jerry P. Valdez, Department of Transportation Designee

Lancing Adams, New Mexico Tourism Department Designee

## Absent:

Steve Harris, Rio Grande Restoration – River Ecology Organization Representative

Kevin Cobble, Friends of Bosque del Apache – Bird Ecology Organization

Lynn Trujillo, Secretary of Indian Affairs

### 1. Call to Order—Chair

Chair Leahy called the Rio Grande Trail Commission Meeting to order at 9:07 AM (MT).

### 2. Introduction of new Commission member Secretary of Indian Affairs Lynn Trujillo

Chair Leahy introduced new Commissioner Lynn Trujillo, Secretary of Indian Affairs. Commissioner Trujillo was unable to be present for this meeting.

### 3. Roll Call – Rosemary Romero

Coordinator Rosemary Romero called the roll as reflected above.

### 4. Approval of Agenda (Action Required)

5. Chair Leahy requested a motion to approve the meeting agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Livingstone and seconded by Commissioner Valdez. The motion passed unanimously.

### 6. Approval of Minutes (Action Required)

Chair Leahy requested a motion to approve the minutes from the previous Commission meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Livingstone and seconded by Commissioner Valdez. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Presentation: RGT Master Plan Recommendations – Rosemary Romero

Rosemary Romero provided a brief presentation about the Rio Grande Trail Master Plan, with a focus on the recommendations. This included the recommendation to create a nonprofit to manage the trail, similar to the Continental Divide Trail nonprofit. Ms. Romero also highlighted the importance of communication with Tribes, as outlined in the RGT Master Plan.

Commissioner Livingstone noted that a nonprofit would provide needed support, including staff for future mapping, assisting with the designation process and marketing and legal assistance. Chair Leahy added that funding is one of the biggest issues to consider.

8. Designation and Interim Designation Application Process – Robert Oberdorfer

Robert Oberdorfer provided a presentation about the draft process and application for trail designation. He noted that sections are highlighted where input is needed, particularly with regards to terminology and how/where applications should be submitted.

Chair Leahy indicated that the Commissioners should review and provide feedback before the next Commission Meeting. During the next Meeting (scheduled for August 16), he recommended that approval of this process and application be an action item.

9. Report from the Infrastructure subcommittee – Commissioner Livingstone

Commissioner Livingstone provided highlights from the Infrastructure Subcommittee, which met on Friday, March 25. He mentioned the Trails+ grants, which have \$7 million in funding this year and applications are being reviewed on a rolling basis.

Commissioner Navas said that the Outdoor Recreation Division has junior bill funding (\$100,000) for technical assistance to communities wanting to develop trails. This funding could also help to seed a nonprofit for the RGT. The Division is working on an RFP and hope to have this out in July, though it will take a few months to get a contract in place. She mentioned that she would involve State Parks and Sites Southwest in developing the RFP. Commissioner Navas also noted that there is also \$50,000 for planning, which the Division will look at after the contractor for the \$100,000 is in place.

10. Report from the Trail Alignment subcommittee – Commissioner Livingstone

Commissioner Livingstone also provided the update from the Trail Alignment Subcommittee in Commissioner Cobble's absence. This subcommittee met on Monday, April 11 and they expect to schedule another subcommittee meeting in July, focusing on draft designation process.

This subcommittee also discussed the desire for flexibility in trail locations and alignment. They will work to involve agencies, local government, and trail nonprofits in working through details of the trail, contractual details with owners and agencies.

With regards to land management, the IBWC has a recreational leasing program that local government or agencies will need to work with them to apply for in areas owned by IBWC. This is a new program that was not in place when the RGT Master Plan was prepared.

Gina Dello Russo with Save Our Bosque Socorro, provided an update on the efforts to designate trail segments in Socorro. They are having a meeting with management agencies (MRGCD, City and County of Socorro, et al.) to discuss liability, safety, and maintenance this Friday and a public event in June to talk about the opportunities for trail designation more broadly.

Chair Leahy noted that these discussions of legal issues are for segments considered to be easy, and we have not yet started to deal with more difficult segments.

#### 11. Report from the Tribal Relations subcommittee — Rosemary Romero

Rosemary Romero provided an update from the Tribal Relations Subcommittee. She highlighted that they have been doing outreach and keeping tribes informed. She met with the Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council, provided a presentation about RGT, and made it clear that there are no alignments on tribal land, though we are open to answering questions about the process.

Commissioner Livingston responded that there are beautiful options for parallel paths or paths around the tribal lands—Santa Fe National Forest, Sandia Mountains. Public road right-of-way roads through Pueblo lands may be another possibility. Chair Leahy noted that it really depends on the Pueblo - some are willing to discuss, some are not willing to discuss. Initial answer is maybe, but it depends on where and which tribal government.

#### 12. Public Comment

Comment: Tom Phillips - Access to info on the Rio Grande Trail info must be made accessible and transparent to the public. I would recommend that the Commission's webpage be updated regularly. Current one at <https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/riograndetrailcommission/rgtcmeetings/> doesn't show this meeting nor the agenda. Wants more promotion to the public to get more information out with links to meeting and agenda.

Response: The support team will work to make sure the website is up-to-date, and review marketing and communications processes to make sure information about upcoming meetings is available to all who wish to join.

Comment: Christopher Marsh - Are you aware of the BOLT Act (Biking on Long-Distance Trails) in US Congress. It may provide for funds on Federal lands. Act is sponsored by our senators, has passed committee. Intent is to support biking on long distance trails on public lands, can be a source of funding for the trail.

Response: Commissioner Navas - This is now part of omnibus package of legislation for outdoor recreation infrastructure. <https://bikepacking.com/news/bolt-act-long-distance-bike-trails/>

Comment: Ed DiBello – Noted that the Commission and Rio Grande Trail process have lost momentum, particularly with the change in administrations at the state level. A foundation or nonprofit would provide essential support to keep this work moving.

Comment: Carl Colonius – Provided an update on Enchanted Circle Trail Association, who is preparing the bridge-to-bridge trail segment (6.7 miles) in Taos County with funding from DOI/BLM. This will be a mid-level contour trail to connect these crossing points, with completed mapping. They've hired a wildlife biologist and archaeology survey teams to help with environmental analysis, which should be complete by September. They are also working on a trail from Horse Thief Mesa System, in collaboration with SF National Forest. This will include some historic routes, which will be mapped; shape files will be presented to the National Forest Service.

Rosemary Romero suggested the Commission discuss the creation of a subcommittee that would look into the formation of a nonprofit. She would like to meet before the August Commission meeting and report out on ideas then. Chair Leahy asked for interest in early-stage brainstorming. Rosemary will support. Chair Leahy requested Commissioner Velasquez to participate because of his experience with Friends Parks groups around the state. Commissioner Livingstone also volunteered to support.

### 13. Future Meeting Dates (August 16, October 18)

At the August Commission meeting, the application process will be an action item.

### 14. Adjourn

Commissioner Livingstone moved to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Valdez seconded it. The meeting adjourned at 10:08 AM (MT).

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## Meeting Chat

09:30:54 From Dani Wilson to Hosts and panelists:

I will send out a copy of the draft designation process and application after the meeting

09:36:43 From Axie Navas - Outdoor Recreation Division to Everyone:

[www.NMOutside.com](http://www.NMOutside.com) >> more info on Trails+

09:54:07 From Tom Phillips to Everyone:

I can't seem to activate microphone, but do want to share my public comment. Access to info on the Rio Grande Trail info I would recommend that the commissioner's webpage be updated. Current one at <https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/riograndetrailcommission/rgtcmeetings/> doesn't show this meeting nor the agenda.

09:56:04 From Christopher Marsh to Hosts and panelists:

Are you aware of the BOLT Act (Biking on Long-Distance Trails) in US Congress. It may provide for funds on Federal lands.

10:01:41 From Axie Navas - Outdoor Recreation Division to Everyone:  
Included within the new Outdoor Recreation Act package

10:02:08 From Christopher Marsh to Hosts and panelists:  
<https://bikepacking.com/news/bolt-act-long-distance-bike-trails/>