

RIO GRANDE TRAIL COMMISSION (RGTC) MEETING
September 22, 2016
1:30 PM – 3:30 PM
Village of Corrales Council/Municipal Chambers
4324 Corrales Road

Members Present:

Christy Tafoya, Chair	Director, State Parks Division, EMNRD
Rebecca Latham, Vice Chair	Tourism Department
Fernando Martinez	Designee, EMNRD
Kelly Zunie	Indian Affairs Department
Aaron Detter	Designee, Transportation Department
Pete Mattox	Southern New Mexico Trail Coalition
Laurie Wearne	Director, Talking Talons Program
Toner Mitchell	Trout Unlimited
Dana Feldman	Public Member

Members Absent:

Economic Development Department

Vacant:

(Toby Martinez-resigned) Public Member

Legislators (Advisory Members):

Representative Jeff Steinborn

1. Call to Order – The Rio Grande Trail Commission (RGTC) meeting was called to order by the Chair, Christy Tafoya at 1:32 pm.

2. Roll Call – Commission Coordinator Cathy Fernandez called the roll as reflected above.

Mayor Scott Kominiak welcomed the Rio Grande Trail Commission (RGTC) to Corrales, also known as the “Horse Capital of New Mexico.” Mayor Kominiak commented that this was a very timely meeting as the community is in the process of revamping the Corrales Trails Master Plan.

Bon Bagley, from the Board of Directors of the New Mexico Horse Council and a member of the Equestrian Advisory Commission Council also welcomed the commission and pointed out the new “Welcome to Corrales” and “Horse

New Mexico Trail Commission Meeting
Thursday, September 22, 2016

Capital of New Mexico” signage located at the entrances to the village. Ms. Bagley expressed her thanks to other members of the Equestrian Council and community for their participation and help in hosting the RGTC. Ms. Bagley invited everyone to visit the local restaurants, visit a gallery or shop along the main road.

Sandy Rasmussen, Executive Director of Corrales Main Street and Fire Chief Anthony Martinez also welcomed the commission.

3. Approval of Agenda:

Chair Tafoya called for comments on the agenda. Seeing none from commissioners, Chair Tafoya modified the section “New Business” to include the resignation of Commissioner Toby Martinez. Commissioner Wearne moved to approve the agenda as modified. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mattox and the motion was unanimously approved.

4. Approval of Minutes:

Chair Tafoya asked for comments or revisions to the May meeting minutes. Seeing none, Commissioner Detter moved to approve the May minutes, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Wearne and the motion was unanimously approved.

5. Old Business:

Update On Recreational Trail Program Funds for Rio Grande Trail Plan – Chair Tafoya reported that federal funding from New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) will be coming to Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) to update the southern piece of the 2008 plan and to begin working on the northern segment which would be from Belen to the Colorado Border.

- Commissioner Detter added that NMDOT recently entered into an agreement with EMNRD and the next task will be to begin work on the Request for Proposals (RFP). He commented that the two agencies collaborated to develop the scope of work section in the RFP.
- Dr. David Certain discussed the timeline and commented that funding is critical to ensure the plan proceeds as planned. As soon as they receive notice to proceed from NMDOT, the RFP process will begin. According to Dr. Certain, the scope covers alignment, natural and cultural resource issues,

**New Mexico Trail Commission Meeting
Thursday, September 22, 2016**

economic benefits of the trail and other items and due to the broad scope, this will be a long-term planning project. Dr. Certain clarified the RFP will include a requirement for the contractor to refer back to the 2008 plan and identify anything that is still meaningful. Once the RFP is issued and a contractor is hired, the commission should start to see some work product.

- Chair Tafoya commented that there will be ongoing outreach throughout the process to various stakeholders. She emphasized the voluntary nature of the process and reminded the audience of the 22 miles of existing trail segments within the New Mexico State Parks system designated by Governor Martinez.

Questions/Comments:

- Commissioner Mattox asked if the scope of work will include a multi-use trail. Commissioner Detter responded that the term multi-user is referenced throughout the scope of work.
- Commissioner Latham asked for the total grant award amount, and Commissioner Detter responded that the total award from the Recreational Trails Program is \$500,000 with about \$427,000 in federal funds or 85.44 percent and EMNRD providing a match of \$73,000 or 15 percent.
- Representative Steinborn thanked NMDOT for the funds committed to the RGT effort and asked if there is a public outreach component included in the RFP. Dr. David Certain responded that the consultant will be able to incorporate past planning documents, notes taken during public comment in 2008 as well as other findings plus input from new public meetings.
- Commissioner Mattox asked if the scope of work is a public document. Chair Tafoya responded that it will be made public through the public notice process required by State Purchasing in compliance with the Procurement Code and it will be posted on the RGT website.

6. New Business:

a. Resignation of Commissioner Toby Martinez

Chair Tafoya read Commissioner Toby Martinez' resignation letter dated September 13, 2016 into the record and thanked him for his participation as a commissioner and chair of the User Work Group.

b. City of Las Cruces Resolution to Designate Rio Grande Trail

Chair Tafoya referred commissioners to Tabs A and B, which are a draft of the Las Cruces resolution with a map and a copy of the law establishing the

New Mexico Trail Commission Meeting
Thursday, September 22, 2016

RGTC. Chair Tafoya referred members to Tab B, the enabling legislation in an effort to provide context to the discussion of the Las Cruces resolution. Chair Tafoya highlighted some of the specific duties of the commission pertinent to the discussion. Starting on page 4 of Section 1, Subsection E, item 2, allows the commission to “define and recommend path routes of the Rio Grande Trail that shall be contiguous where possible and include only land that is expressly authorized by the owner, including Indian nations, tribes or pueblos, for inclusion in the Rio Grande Trail and not be acquired by eminent domain.” Then on page 6 of Section 1, Subsection E, item 15 requires the RGTC to hold public meetings to solicit public input and allow for a written comment period prior to making any final decisions. Chair Tafoya noted the meeting today serves as the public input. On page 6 of Section 1, Subsection E, item 16 allows the commission “to make a final decision based on all factors, including public comments and environmental impacts, and the Secretary of Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department shall describe and publish any variance from commission recommendations on the website.” Page 6 of Section 1, Subsection E, item 17 allows the commission, to the extent feasible, selection of existing trails for the route of the Rio Grande Trail.

Chair Tafoya then asked Representative Steinborn to discuss the resolution.

Representative Steinborn began by referencing the signed version of the resolution which he distributed, versus the draft that was included in the binders. Representative Steinborn emphasized the plan was always to incorporate existing trails into the Rio Grande Trail. In Las Cruces, there are 4.5 miles of a multi-use trail along the Rio Grande called the La Llorona Trail. Representative Steinborn worked with Las Cruces city councilors on a resolution that supports the designation of the 4.5 mile segment of the La Llorona Trail as part of the Rio Grande Trail. The resolution passed unanimously on September 5, 2016.

Questions/Comments:

- Commissioner Detter asked about the character of the trail. Representative Steinborn responded as well as a member of the audience, that it is asphalt for 4 miles then permeable concrete on the remainder. The path is completely maintained by the City of Las Cruces.

New Mexico Trail Commission Meeting
Thursday, September 22, 2016

- Members from the audience raised questions about specifics regarding how much of the trail is concrete and questions regarding bridges and accessibility by equestrians. Representative Steinborn responded that he believed that the majority of the trail is concrete. In terms of use for equestrians, that would require further research. Representative Steinborn believes that most equestrians use the levy roads.
- Commissioner Mattox commented that this segment of the trail will serve as a nice trial to test how to incorporate multi-use users in the RGT trail.
- Representative Steinborn commented that different jurisdictions would need to work together to figure out what is best for each community.
- Commissioner Wearne asked about the width of the trail and its consistency with the concrete and the dirt part of the trail. Representative Steinborn responded that the width is consistent throughout the segment and committed to getting more information on the technical specifications.
- Chair Tafoya referred commissioners to the handout provided of the 2008 report which specifically refers to the La Llorona Trail and includes a map and some specifications. The 2008 assessment was environmental and thus was really looking at vegetation and cultural resources versus when people get on and off the trail.
- Commissioner Detter commented about the multi-use concept. The two issues are: trail design and legal use of the trail. He noted there will be some public right of way, possibly easement issues and different segments will accommodate different users.
- Chair Tafoya would like the environmental piece to be evaluated by EMNRD staff. Staff could go back and take a look at the environmental/cultural impacts from 2008. Also, Chair Tafoya would like to post this proposal on the RGTC website to receive written public comment. Chair Tafoya suggested a special meeting next month specifically for this issue.
- Chair Tafoya then opened the discussion up to the audience.
- Steven Burns Chavez from the audience commented that he wants to work with the RGTC to see how this segment can align with the El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historical Trail.

c. Report from Work Groups

Alignment Work Group – The alignment work group Chair David Certain reported they will be meeting more frequently now that funding is in place. There will be plenty of opportunities for public input. The alignment

New Mexico Trail Commission Meeting
Thursday, September 22, 2016

component is central to the entire planning process and this is the majority of the work for the contractor.

User Work Group – Commissioner Toby Martinez has resigned so the commission will need a new chair.

Resource Work Group – Work group chair Gina Dello Russo could not attend but Commissioner Wearne reported that the group met in Socorro but has not met since and is waiting for the contractor to be in place to begin to assist and work on outreach and data gathering which was outlined in the group’s strategy developed this spring. Gina Dello Russo attended the meetings of the Middle Rio Grande Economic Development Association in Socorro during which the group discussed the vision of the Rio Grande Trail in the area. The meetings were well attended by biking and hiking advocates. At the second meeting, the group reviewed trail alignment maps and requested the maps and accompanying report be posted on the RGTC website. Participants at the meeting know there will be future opportunities to discuss trail alignment and potential impact.

Design and Management Work Group – Commissioner Pete Mattox reported that he has a “dream team” made up of back country horsemen, long distance bicyclists and other advocates. All are in agreement that specificity of trail is the key issue. Commissioner Mattox stressed the importance of being specific and concrete about what multi-modal means to this commission moving forward.

Communications Work Group – Commissioner Latham reported that she now has more information to communicate and will reach out to work group members for future meetings. They can now communicate the 22 miles of the existing trail and the public notice on La Llorona designation.

Interagency Work Group – Commissioner Zunie and Representative Steinborn are working independently on efforts with various jurisdictions. Once the consultant is hired they can more aggressively reach out. Commissioner Zunie acknowledged tribal leadership in the audience. She intends to keep inviting tribal leadership to the work group meetings as well as RGTC meetings. At the June 1, 2016 work group meeting, she reported on the process and status of work by the commission to date. The primary purpose of the meeting was to inform and secondly, it was to convey the importance of the tribal voice. Many in attendance were not in support of the RGT going through tribal lands because of the sacred lands and potential hikers that are pottery hunting. Many tribes would like to

**New Mexico Trail Commission Meeting
Thursday, September 22, 2016**

keep certain lands sacred and untouched. She reminded tribal leaders and representatives that this is a voluntary effort and encouraged them to participate if they are in favor or not in favor, either way participation ensures their voice is heard.

7. Public Comment:

- Governor Nicholas Garcia commented about his use of trails in the Corrales area while on horseback along the Rio Grande in the early 2000's when he observed areas near the river full of trash. He thought it was terrible to see trash near the beautiful river and wondered if it has been cleaned. Commissioner Latham responded that the Tourism Department administers the New Mexico Clean and Beautiful Program and just awarded \$700,000 to community groups to support clean-up efforts. Keeping New Mexico clean and beautiful will also be a focus of the New Mexico True program. Commissioner Latham commented that tribes are eligible to apply for grant funding. Commissioner Detter commented that as more segments are designated as part of the RGT, more communities will have more opportunities to keep trails clean and beautiful such as Friends of the Rio Grande Trail. Commissioner Mattox commented that a good example of community clean-up efforts is Cruceno Clean-Up, a local non-profit organization in Las Cruces.
- Bon Bagley added that the conservancy has done a good job of clean-up along the Rio Grande in the north valley. She also added that any community should call back-country horsemen to help with clean-up efforts, especially packing trash out of areas where vehicles can't enter.
- Don Boyd encouraged the commission to develop a list of stakeholders to provide the contractor once someone is hired. He added that it is much easier to do this at the beginning of the planning stage rather than later. Chair Tafoya responded that the commission coordinator is keeping a list of all stakeholders and encouraged the audience to provide contact information.
- George Garrison asked about the status of the piece of property discussed at the January meeting by Insights El Paso. Representative Steinborn discussed the legislation that was passed in January 2016 asking various stakeholders to work together on options for acquiring the property at Mount Cristo Rey. According to Representative Steinborn, all parties have been talking and Chair Tafoya will be making the trip to look at the sight in the near future.

New Mexico Trail Commission Meeting
Thursday, September 22, 2016

- A member of the audience asked if there has been any discussion regarding branding and logos for the RGT. Chair Tafoya responded that there is a sign template and drafts of a logo. Chair Tafoya will share with the commission again before the next meeting. She will also share them with the public through the RGTC website.
- Steve Burns Chavez commented about how he is struck by the overlap and potential for collaboration with the El Camino Real De Tierra Adentro Trail and wonders what would be the best way to coordinate state trails with international trails. He asked if there could there be a focused meeting that only looks at what each effort is doing to include alignment, coordination with tribes, logos and signage. Chair Tafoya responded that she values the relationship with the national park service but believes the commission needs more information in terms of the nuts and bolts and what the national park service is doing. Representative Steinborn mentioned that the legislation says the commission “shall coordinate and collaborate with the national park service’s historic trails project for the El Camino Real historic trail” and encourages Mr. Burns Chavez to start work with the groups and be an active participant when the contractor comes on board. He is hopeful that the various efforts are not stepping on one another’s toes but rather are working to maximize opportunities.
- Steven Verchinsky asked about opportunities to have lodging for hikers along the trail such as hostels, hotels and other amenities. Chair Tafoya responded that the commission will be working with Economic Development and Tourism Departments to ensure hikers on the trail know where to eat and stay.

8. Future Meeting Date:

Chair Tafoya opened the discussion by recommending the next meeting possibly in mid-October. No action was necessary.

9. Adjournment:

Chair Tafoya asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:10 pm. Commissioner Zunie moved to adjourn and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Latham.

Commissioners were invited to participate in an optional tour of the Romero Road entrance to the multi-use Bosque trails.