



**New Mexico Trail Commission Meeting  
March 14, 2018**

agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Martinez and seconded by Commissioner Griscom. The motion passed unanimously.

**5. Approval of Minutes** – Chair McQueen asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Martinez and was seconded by Commissioner Glendenning. The motion passed unanimously.

**3. Update from the Chair**

Chair McQueen thanked Heather MacCurdy, Superintendent of Rio Grande Nature Center State Park, and Sarah Wood, State Park’s Central Regional Manager, for hosting the meeting. Chair McQueen gave a brief background on the Rio Grande Trail welcomed the new members of the Legislative Advisory Committee; Senator Sander Rue, Representative Gail Armstrong, and Representative Bobby Gonzales. Chair McQueen stated that leading up to the meeting, Vice-Chair Tafoya met with Mike Hammond of the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, US Fish and Wildlife Service staff, the friends group for the Valle del Oro National Wildlife Refuge, and Albuquerque Chief of Operations, Lawrence Real, who designated Dave Simon as the City’s point person for discussions concerning the trail.

Chair McQueen and Commissioner Shije sent out tribal consultation letters to all of the Pueblos in October and sent out new letters last week due to changes in administrations. There have been discussions with the BLM concerning the trail and representatives from that agency will present during the meeting.

**4. Old Business**

**a. Rio Grande Trail Planning Contractor Update, Alta Planning & Design**

Chair McQueen introduced Mike Rose of Alta Planning and Design. Mr. Rose reviewed the overall schedule of the Rio Grande Trail planning project. Mr. Rose also showed results from a virtual open house that people filled out online in November and December, 2017. The open house was intended to inform people of the planning process and also gather data and feedback. Almost half of the respondents were over 55 and represented 125 zip codes around the country. Male/female divide was about even.

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Some of the key takeaways from the open house were:

Most people were familiar with long distance trails and were willing to travel to visit them; most people thought access to nature was the most valuable attribute that the trail would provide; many people planned to use the trails for multiple forms of recreation; most participants were interested in historic and cultural tours as well as wildlife experiences along the trail; and campsites and showers/bathrooms were viewed as necessary provisions along the trail.

Mr. Rose also reviewed the vision statement for the Rio Grande Trail, the planning document's graphic identity, and path types that may be found along the trail.

Mr. Rose introduced Bob Oberdorfer with Sites Southwest who is part of the Alta Planning team. Mr. Oberdorfer reviewed trail alignments that were assessed in 2006 and 2008 and showed attendees how those alignments were scored and altered during the current planning process. Mr. Oberdorfer went on to show the new potential alignments in the northern portion of the state including some alignments that are along State Highway 14 and various routes through Santa Fe and Rio Arriba Counties.

Mr. Rose stated that creating a non-profit arm of the trail would be beneficial to the Commission. A non-profit could help drive the project, collaborate with multiple stakeholders, help raise funds, find volunteers and recruit volunteers. A non-profit could also connect agencies to other groups and can provide consistency as administrations change.

Chair McQueen then directed the commissioners to tab A in the meeting booklet about the creation of a non-profit for the trail.

Senator Rue asked what the process would be to create a non-profit. Chair McQueen answered that the Commission could probably create a non-profit on its own, but the larger question is how much coordination with the legislature would be needed. Senator Rue suggested that the Commission look into the issue soon so that process could move forward.

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Representative Gonzales asked how trail nomination would work through a place like Embudo, which is a historical registered site. Mr. Oberdorfer stated that its standing should not affect the trail as long as no structures are touched but working with the land owner would be necessary.

Commissioner Glendenning stated that the current agreement between EMNRD and NMDOT expires in the beginning of September, so it may be necessary to extend the agreement if Alta Planning and Design works on the plan past that date. The Commissioner added that Recreation Trails Program funds could be available to help establish the trail but non-profits cannot be recipients of those funds.

Commissioner Feldman stated that she supported the creation of a non-profit.

Commissioner Griscom asked if there were other business models that other long-distance trails have used to obtain funding. Mr. Rose responded that the Colorado Trail is a good example of using a 501(c)(3) to obtain funding and a work around to obtain funding would be for a municipality or other public entity to apply for funding and for the non-profit to ask if the creation of a non-profit would support the development of the application. Chair McQueen stated that EMNRD's legal staff could explore the matter in more detail.

**5. New Business**

**a. Rio Grande del Norte National Monument Trails – Nomination for Designation**

John Bailey, Manager of the BLM's Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, said that he believes staff at the Monument will be engaged in the Rio Grande Trail for the next several years. Six trails in the Monument are being nominated for inclusion in the trail system. The trail segments total 26.5 miles and include the West Rim Trail, which has existed for 25 years and ends at the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge. This area is visited by around 250,000 to 300,000 people annually. The trail is nine miles long. It does not have many amenities but there are some campgrounds and restrooms near the south end.

The other segment up for nomination is the River Trail within the Wild Rivers area of the Monument. The Village of Questa is nearby, and they want to be gateway community for the Monument, trails, and wilderness. The Village of

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Questa is working on a trail from the Village to Red River and down to Rio Grande. The River Trail is right along the river but some of it is not able to be designated because it needs to be rerouted. The BLM is trying to replace the Red River bridge. Funding has been secured for survey and design work for the bridge and donors may contribute to bridge building. The River Trail connects to the Little Arsenic and Big Arsenic Trails, which are also included for nomination.

The trail is strongly supported by BLM staff. The project plan and environmental assessment will hopefully be done by September. This will include public and tribal consultation.

The Las Vistas de Questa trail is also up for nomination. The trail leads to Questa. Some other trail segments will hopefully be up for nomination in some future, which may include some two-track trail, which would hopefully happen by October. Mr. Bailey then showed letters of recommendation for the trail segments from BLM staff.

Chair McQueen asked if there was any significance for October concerning trails. Mr. Bailey responded that the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Historic Trails Act and the Wild Rivers Act will occur in October.

Representative Gonzales asked if El Aguaje Trail near Red River would be included. Mr. Bailey responded that it could be.

Senator Rue asked if there would be a way to identify these trails as to the difficulty and other notifications such as appropriate uses and closures. Mr. Bailey responded that the BLM currently provides some of that information on maps.

Bon Bagley with the New Mexico Horse Council wondered what provisions were being made for equestrians, particularly in regard to the proposed bridge. Mr. Bailey responded that the proposed bridge would be accessible to equestrians and most trails are open to horses and more amenities and details would be explored as part of the project plan.

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Senator Rue asks what ADA requirements exist for the trail. Mr. Bailey replied that they would try to make the trail as accessible as possible. Several miles would probably be accessible.

Chair McQueen thanked Mr. Bailey and his staff for all of their efforts with regard to a nomination of 26.5 miles of trail in the Rio Grande del Norte Monument as part of the Rio Grande Trail.

Chair McQueen noted that the possibility of adding the nominated trail segments to the Rio Grande Trail had been explored and discussed during the Rio Grande Trail Commission meeting in October, in Taos, and there had been opportunity for public comment during that meeting and the subsequent meeting in January, in Santa Fe.

Chair McQueen asked for a motion to recommend the nominated 26.5 miles of Rio Grande del Norte National Monument Trails as Rio Grande Trail. A motion was made by Commissioner Cloutier and seconded by Commissioner Griscom. The motion passed unanimously.

**b. Report from Work Groups**

Alignment Work Group-

David Certain, Chair of the Alignment Work Group, stated that the group had been working with the Alta Planning and Design team and met with the contractor earlier to look at problem areas along potential alignments and potential solutions to the problem areas.

Vice-Chair Tafoya added that members of the Alignment Work Group also reviewed and scored the new Rio Grande Trail alignments within the Monument.

User Work Group - No updates.

Design and Management Work Group- No updates.

Communications Work Group-

David Griscom, Chair of the User Work Group, stated that it was time to start thinking about logos and the group has proposed to develop a series of logos

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in conjunction with New Mexico Magazine and the Department of Tourism for the Commission to vote on. Senator Rue suggested developing more public awareness of the trail and suggested involving the public in the process of developing the logo, which could raise public awareness. Representative Gonzales suggested that students could possibly be involved. An audience member participating via phone suggested that pueblos be involved in the process, as well.

Interagency Work Group-

Vice-Chair Tafoya stated that work group leader Senator Steinborn was not able to attend the meeting and may have more to add in the future. She and Chair McQueen had been reaching out to several stakeholders and Rosemary Romero, with the Alta Planning team has also been reaching out to people. Ms. Romero stated that she had been working on outreach to many agencies including the Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments. Counties and cities along the Rio Grande corridor will be consulted with next.

**6. Additional Update from Chair**

Chair McQueen informed the commissioners and attendees that there are some segments of trail within the Rio Grande National Monument that are on land under jurisdiction of the State Land Office. The BLM and State Land Office are currently working on a trade for these properties, which could take a few years. Chair McQueen suggested to the Commission that they explore seeking a Right-of-Way agreement with the Land Office, which would allow the BLM to designate other trails within the Monument. The cost could be in the range of \$30,000-\$35,000, based on the length of the segments and a five-year term.

**7. Public Comment**

Susan Brewster, a touring cyclist, stated that there are a lot of considerations concerning the trail for distance cyclists compared to other users. Knowing where basic amenities are, such as water, food, and resting places, are essential and would encourage distance cyclists to travel further. For example, it would be nice to know where there's water that can be filtered, and if there are tent camping sites.

Bob Smith, a Bernalillo resident, wondered what opportunities there are to create a continuous trail through the northern part of the state. Chair

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McQueen stated that the Commission had reached out to the Pueblos, and at this point, they have not shown interest in participating. Involvement in the trail is voluntary, and if they are not interested in having the trail through their lands, there are many other opportunities elsewhere.

Linda Rumpf from the City of Albuquerque suggested creating a Facebook page, YouTube videos and using other social media platforms to create awareness of the trail. Commissioner Griscom replied that there is a website and members of the Commission are exploring the possibility of using the Department of Tourism's Facebook page.

Aryn LaBrake, with Friends of the Valle de Oro, thanked members of the Commission and the Alta Planning team for being in touch with them and added that she had information concerning scoping for a bridge near the south end of the Refuge and invited people to contact her if they wanted more information.

Mark Mitchell, the former Governor and current Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Pueblos of Tesuque, asked if the commission has considered looking into potential impacts to the Pueblos, and noted that the trail could impact traditional cultural places outside of Pueblo boundaries. These places need to remain intact. He also wondered if the Commission has contacted the All Pueblo Council of Governors and what the tribal consultation process has been.

Commissioner Shije responded that they had sent letters to all of the tribal leaders in October to whether they would or would not be interested in participating in the trail. They received a few responses, and none were interested in participating, but they did encourage the Commission to keep them informed. Last month the Commission sent out more letters to the new tribal leaders. The Commission is aware of the cultural sensitivity involved and the many issues that having trail through their lands could raise. Commissioner Shije asked if Mr. Mitchell would recommend meeting with the All Pueblos Council of Governors. Mr. Mitchell responded that it would be beneficial. Ms. Romero added that she and Commission members met with the Eight Northern Pueblos in the Fall and they suggested coming back to them. They also presented to the Intertribal Resource Advisory Committee.



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Ben Chavarria, the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer with Santa Clara Pueblo, recommended that the Commission also meet separately with the Pueblos since they each would have their own concerns and traditional cultural places beyond the lands they are currently residing in, such as the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument which has cultural ties with Santa Clara Pueblo.

An attendee suggested reaching out to people in Silver City who are involved in the bicycling races in the area to see what recommendations they may have. Another attendee suggested contacting Adventure Cycling or visiting the organization's website to obtain maps of the area and other information.

**8. Future Meeting Date**

Chair McQueen suggested a future meeting date of June 12<sup>th</sup> in Las Cruces.

**9. Motion to Adjourn**

Chair McQueen asked for a motion to adjourn. Commission Griscom made the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Cloutier. The meeting was adjourned at 2:41 pm.