

Rio Grande Trail Commission

Tuesday, February 15, 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

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

Steve Harris, Rio Grande Restoration – River Ecology Organization Representative

Lancing Adams, New Mexico Tourism Department Designee

Absent:

PoQueen Rivera, Indian Affairs Bureau Designee

1. Call to Order

The Rio Grande Trail Commission meeting was called to order by Chair Leahy at 9:06 AM (MT).

2. Roll Call

Coordinator Rosemary Romero called the roll as reflected above.

3. Approval of Agenda

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

4. Approval of Minutes

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 Navas. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Open Meetings Act Resolution

Chair Leahy introduced Dylan Fuge with ENMRD to discuss the open Meeting Act Resolution. This resolution meets any legal requirements for the Open Meetings Act for prior, current, and future meetings with the Rio Grande Trail Commission. A motion was made by Commissioner Livingstone and seconded by Commissioner Valdez. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Report from the Tribal Relations Subcommittee

Commissioner Rivera was not present to provide an update of the Subcommittee; Rosemary Romero provided a brief update for the committee. Chair Leahy confirmed that a letter would be sent requesting further consultation with tribes on the Rio Grande Trail alignment. In order to keep them apprised of the work of the Commission.

Commissioner Livingstone asked a question regarding trail alignment and tribal lands. Assuming the alignment will not go through tribal lands, how will the highway right of way be affected? Will the trails go along the right of way of the highways, but through tribal lands?

Chair Leahy stated this question will be part of the discussion with tribal partners.

7. Report from the Alignment Subcommittee

Commissioner Cobble reported updates for the alignment subcommittee. The subcommittee met on November 5, 2021. Trail alignments on the northern segments lead by the monument and local trail groups are moving forward. The High Trail alignment through the Sandias will be used as a way to honor tribal considerations. The Socorro area has expressed interest in designating sections of the trails nearby. However, the Elephant Butte Irrigation District water commission is restricting access throughout their property which leads to some concerns with this section of the trail.

MRGCD may be providing a lot of the segments within their jurisdiction. There is a lot of interest in other areas but not a lot of moving forward with designation. Right of way through tribal lands is still a concern with options to go east or west to make connections with possibility to make these connections using the Rail Runner.

8. Report from Infrastructure Subcommittee

Commissioner Livingstone reported updates for the infrastructure subcommittee. The subcommittee investigated existing and preferred alignments and prioritized projects based upon infrastructure needs. \$267,600 was allocated to the Commission to support infrastructure improvements along the trail. Four projects were identified and funds were allocated to the following projects:

1. **City of Albuquerque-** Improved green and blue trail access and signage, shelter and picnic tables through sections for the City and Bernalillo County.
2. **Insights, Sunland Park-** Improved trailhead, including an outdoor classroom, signage, and shade shelter.
3. **City of Sunland Park-** Shelter, trail, signage, and trailhead improvements.
4. **Village of Tijeras-** Trees, native plantings, and improvements around public infrastructure.

Commissioner Livingstone stated funding requests were made in areas with high traffic volume although they are not necessarily the areas of highest need. Grants have been paid out but are still being finalized with Sunland Park and the City of Albuquerque. Most projects will be starting soon and grant agreements start in May.

Commissioner Velasquez wanted to also update the group with information on land acquisitions with NM State Parks in collaboration with the Bureau of Reclamation in expanding the recreational boundaries at Percha Park in Sierra County. This will add one mile to the Rio Grande Trail.

Commissioner Velasquez is anticipating this agreement to be completed by the next Commission meeting. This trail will go along the preferred alignment of the Rio Grande Trail.

9. Logo and Licensing

Dylan Fuge, Legal Counsel to EMNRD, provided an update on the public use of the Rio Grande Trail logo in future wayfinding and trail signage development. He noted the need to develop official Rules of Use, which he will spearhead with support from Chair Leahy and Commissioner Livingstone. Commissioner Livingstone also noted that he has several example photos of signage that he will share.

Commissioner Navas also noted that there is some design guidance provided beginning on page 86 of the Rio Grande Trail Plan and in Appendix B.

10. Public Comment

Comment: Teresa Martinez from the Continental Divide Trail Commission in regards to logo rights. She recommends going with user rights ownership with State Parks as opposed to ownership with the commission. Agency ownership makes it easier to decide terms of use and makes marketing needs with third parties easier. Martinez states the Continental Divide Trail may be able to provide additional information to the commission to help move the process along.

- Response: Chair Leahy thanks Teresa Martinez for her assistance and will reach out.

Question: Regina Dello Russo works with Save Our Bosque in Socorro and would like to designate sections of their trail as part of the Rio Grande Trail and is requesting assistance with this section. Is there any opportunity for capacity building to get agreements and liability paperwork, management agreements, with landowners and jurisdictional agencies? They don't have staff capacity to do this on their own.

- Response: Chair Leahy states the commission is looking into options into building capacity but there aren't any recommendations so far.

Question: Dan Carter would like to check in on the letter he sent to the commission to prioritize providing a staff member dedicated to trail coordination. Is there someone who has been identified?

- Response: Chair Leahy thanks Mr. Carter for his letter and stated they had received this correspondence. The letter was received and reviewed and they are looking into ways they can make this happen.

Comment: Meghan Curry had no comment, there was some confusion with the meeting invite.

Comment: Mike Madden stated the trail alignment subcommittee met in early November. (At the time) Kevin Cobble was not with us and Mr. Madden hasn't heard anything since mid-November. There was an agreement to meet again in January or February but nothing has been scheduled. He would like to reach out to the commission and see whether the commission has any comment or updates.

- Response: Commissioner Livingstone spoke to Kevin Cobble about scheduling another meeting.

Comment: In the meeting chat, Jennifer Owen-White and Gina Dello Russo would like to be invited to the next trail alignment subcommittee meeting.

- Response: They will reach out again with an invite.

11. Future Meeting Dates

The tentative schedule for future Rio Grande Trail Commission meetings are May 17th, August 16th, and October 18th. This was agreeable to the Commissioners.

12. Adjourn

Commissioner Navas made a motion to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Commissioner Valdez. The meeting was adjourned at 9:48 AM.

Meeting Chat

09:27:16 From Axie Navas: Outdoor Recreation Division to Everyone:

The only official logo is page 87 here, right? https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/RioGrandTrail_MasterPlan_FINALwChanges.pdf

09:29:11 From Todd Leahy to Hosts and panelists:

Correct

09:29:38 From Axie Navas: Outdoor Recreation Division to Everyone:

Great, thanks

09:38:52 From Erick Aune to Hosts and panelists:

Could I be added to the email list? Coreen_donnelly@nps.gov . National Park Service - National Trails Office. We Administer El Camino Real NHT. The Santa Fe MPO sent me this meeting link. Aaron Mahr, our Superintendent was attending these meetings, but has asked that I participate moving forward. Thanks!

09:39:17 From Danielle Wilson to Hosts and panelists:

We will add you to the list, Coreen

09:43:20 From Jennifer Owen-White to Everyone:

Kevin- I would like to be invited to the trail alignment meeting when it happens again please

09:44:03 From Danielle Wilson to Hosts and panelists:

We will add you, Jennifer!

09:45:12 From Regina Dello Russo to Everyone:

Kevin, I would also like to be invited to the trail alignment meeting when it happens. Appreciate it. Gina

09:45:33 From Danielle Wilson to Hosts and panelists:

will do, Gina!