

RIO GRANDE TRAIL COMMISSION (RGTC) MEETING

August 29, 2018

**Porter Hall, Wendell Chino Building
Santa Fe, NM**

1:00-3:00 PM

Members Present:

Matthias Sayer, Chair	Secretary, EMNRD
Christy Tafoya, Vice-Chair	State Parks Division, EMNRD
Fernando Martinez	Designee, EMNRD
David Griscom	Designee, Department of Tourism
Shannon Glendenning	Designee, NMDOT
Toner Mitchell	Public Member

Legislators

Representative Armstrong
Senator Steinborn

Members Absent:

Commissioner Kelley	Designee, Economic Development
Commissioner Shije	Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs

Vacant:

Toby Martinez (resigned)	Public Member
Laurie Wearne (resigned)	Public Member
Pete Mattox (resigned)	Public Member
Dana Feldman (resigned)	Public Member

1. Call to Order – The Rio Grande Trail Commission meeting was called to order by Chair Sayer at 1:03 PM.

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

3. Approval of Agenda – Vice-Chair Tafoya notified the commissioners that a few changes were made to the agenda: A presentation by Peter Livingstone with the Southern New Mexico Trail Alliance, and a presentation by John Bailey, Superintendent of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument.

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Chair Sayer asked for a motion to approve the agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Griscom and seconded by Commissioner Glendenning. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes – Chair Sayer asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 12th meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Mitchell and Seconded by Commissioner Griscom. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Update from the Chair - Chair Sayer stated that the BLM is working on planning and NEPA documents to nominate trail segments as Rio Grande Trail within the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. The BLM is also working with the Forest Service on identifying an alignment for a trail that would connect segments of the planned Rio Grande Trail Alignments within the Monument through Forest Service Property. They are also hoping to add some alignments outside monument. The proposed alignments and trailhead at the Red River Fish Hatchery will come before the New Mexico State Game Commission at their next meeting.

Vice-Chair Tafoya is working with the International Boundary and Water Commission on the possibility of adding RGT segments on land they manage. Vice-Chair Tafoya and Rosemary Romero made a presentation to the City of Elephant Butte and are working with them towards Rio Grande Trail designation. They made a similar presentation to the City of Truth or Consequences. The City of Truth or Consequences plans to designate 3 miles of trail. Presentations were also made to the Save our Bosque Task Force and the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District.

Commissioner Shije, Chair McQueen, and Vice-Chair Tafoya have been communicating with tribes and formal government-to-government consultation is taking place. Chair McQueen and Commissioner Shije have been meeting with the Pueblos.

6. Old Business

a. Rio Grande Trail Planning Contractor Update, Alta Planning & Design
Bob Oberdorfer, with Sites Southwest and part of the Alta Planning and Design Team, stated that the contract for the Rio Grande Trail Master Plan has been

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extended. The Virtual Open House will now take place from September 12th to the 25th. They have been working with Commissioner Griscom on the design and content of the open house, and it will be reviewed by EMNRD employees prior to the next meeting.

The Alta Team has been addressing other issues brought up by Senator Steinborn at the last meeting and they are fine-tuning the alignment maps.

Senator Steinborn added that the Southern New Mexico Trail Alliance is launching a month-long expedition starting on September 1st or 2nd. They will be ground-truthing the alignments to provide insight to the Alta Team.

Commissioner Griscom stated that people will be able to follow the hiker's progress and they will be updating to social media frequently.

Chair Sayer stated that they will be discussing this topic more, later in the meeting.

b. Rio Grande Trail Logo

Commissioner Griscom stated that New Mexico Magazine had presented five logo options at the last meeting, which have been whittled down to three, based on comments that were received. Commissioner Griscom described the three logos as they were presented to the Commission and attendees. They all incorporate aspects that could be used in National Scenic Trail signs if the Rio Grande Trail ever had that designation, and the logo could be adjusted accordingly.

Senator Steinborn stated that he had conducted an informal poll, and 67 people voted for the colorful logo with the river and mountains scenery and no one voted for any of the other logos. He added that other long-distance National Scenic Trail signs are inverse with the triangle right side up. There is no proprietary ownership of the right side up triangle and he would like to see that used.

Vice-Chair Tafoya stated that there had been considerable discussion about that topic and people within the National Park Service had expressed some

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concern that if the logo's shape were inverted, people may be under the impression that the Rio Grande Trail was a designated National Scenic Trail.

Commissioner Griscom stated that it was important going into final phase of trail planning that materials are in place in order to develop brand identity. At a minimum, a logo should be in place. What has been presented is malleable and can be adjusted accordingly.

Vice-Chair Tafoya added that signs at state parks have a cut-out where logos can be added if they are changed or need to be replaced.

Chair Sayer stated that people at the federal level did not think it was wise to adopt the same triangle-shaped trail sign as a National Scenic Trail at this time.

Commissioner Griscom added that having the same shape is a perception issue, rather than a legal one, and the National Park Service prefers that the Rio Grande Trail not be confused with a designated National Scenic Trail.

Chair Sayer asked if they encouraged the use of the triangle shape, and Commissioner Griscom responded that it is encouraged after federal designation.

Mr. Oberdorfer noted that in future, Colorado and Texas could create Rio Grande Trail Segments and the logos presented could be retained as a New Mexico-specific Rio Grande Trail logo.

Commissioner Griscom added that the Rio Grande National Heritage Area's director is working with the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage area on connecting the trail to Colorado.

Chair Sayer stated that since there is significant public interest the logo discussion is open to comments from members of the public attending the meeting.

John Bailey stated that people at the BLM indicated a preference for the first option, the cottonwood leaf. Tom Romero with the Rio Grande National Heritage Area thought it might be good to add a mesa to the third option,

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since there are many mesas near the river. Another attendee stated that the third option might be hard to integrate into the National Trail triangle shape, but the first option would be easy to invert. Representative Armstrong stated that the third option had many colors, which will be more expensive to make into signs and printed material.

Chair Sayer asked for a motion to vote on the logos. Commissioner Griscom made a motion to adopt the first option, the cottonwood leaf. The motion was not seconded. Commissioner Glendenning made a motion to adopt the third option. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martinez. The motion passed with Commissioner Griscom opposing.

7. New Business

a. Presentation by Tom Romero of the Rio Grande National Heritage Area.

Mr. Romero presented an informational handout which showed the outline of the National Heritage Area, which included Taos, Rio Arriba and Santa Fe Counties. They work with various entities and have a board that includes members of state and local governments and Pueblos. The Natural Heritage Area includes the headwaters of the Rio Grande and many of the Pueblos in the northern part of the state. The river is a central factor but many of the communities in the Heritage Area are removed from the river. Española is one of the only communities in the Heritage Area that the river runs through. The river acts as a spine connecting the communities on the edges of the river corridor and forming a network.

The Heritage Area members are currently working on many projects and are trying to get people to understand how the Rio Grande Trail could improve the economy and livability of local communities. The organization recently received a Vista Grant and will now have a volunteer who will be conducting outreach to government agencies and communities with the hope of helping community development. The Village of Questa has already benefited from the Rio Grande Trail and the trail will benefit other communities, as well. The City of Española is working on developing trails near the river that would include community walking trails that connect to schools, and other facilities.

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The City's trail planning effort has included communication with Ohkay Owingeh and other Pueblos, which could control trail access to outsiders and provide tours.

The Heritage Area member's efforts will branch out to include Dixon, Peñasco, and other areas. There are also people in Colorado who are very interested in working on trails along the river, too. There is still work to be done and the Heritage Area's board is endorsing working at the community level.

Commissioner Griscom stated that the Heritage Area provides a unique opportunity for the Commission and would be a good way to get community buy-in, and now they have a volunteer to work toward that.

Chair Sayer added that it seems the two primary objectives are to promote New Mexico and the Rio Grande, and secondly, to increase economic development. Community engagement is needed for that. It's important for everyone to be on the same page.

Commissioner Mitchell added that community economic development is one of the points of having the trail. There has been a lot of trail-related activity in the north recently.

Senator Steinborn said that the trail will provide infinite opportunities for recreation, economic development, and tourism. The impact of the Continental Divide Trail on Silver City is a good example of that.

Chair Sayer stated that he had spent time in Yellowstone near the Continental Divide Trail and noticed that it was a big draw to the area.

Representative Armstrong added that the reason the post office still exists in Pie Town is because people who hike the Continental Divide Trail have supplies delivered there and also send mail.

b. Presentation of by Peter Livingstone of the Southern New Mexico Trails Alliance.

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Mr. Livingstone thanked the Commission and stated that recent maps provided by Alta Planning and Design had been big help in planning the hike of the Rio Grande Trail that he plans to start on September 1st. The members of the Trail Alliance have been excited to do a through-hike since the Rio Grande Trail Act was signed by the Governor. They want to help the effort by gathering data. Various people will join the hike along the way, but he is the only one going the full length. He will be recording sites and facilities along the way, including water access, shelter, food supplies (and lack of those things), scenic points, connections, and other amenities.

Commissioner Griscom stated that it would be great to follow progress asked if he would be gathering data to see changes in the elevation profile. Mr. Livingstone responded that he will be recording elevations and geotagging things as a “kml” file, too. Commissioner Griscom added that the Tourism Department could use some of the content he provides on social media to promote Rio Grande Trail.

Senator Steinborn said that people involved in the through-hike have drafted a press release and hoped that the Commission could help promote the hike.

Vice-Chair Tafoya stated that there are areas, such as the Pueblos and through private property, where hikers are not welcomed and wondered how Mr. Livingstone and others were going to address that. Mr. Livingstone replied that some details still needed to be worked out, but he was planning to be on public road through those areas and stated that he would not trespass or do anything illegal.

Chair Sayer asked if he would be starting in the north or south and if people were invited to join him. Mr. Livingstone stated he would start in the north and it would take 20-25 days to hike to the Texas border. Some people would join him along the way.

Senator Steinborn said that the Southern New Mexico Trail Alliance would debrief the Alta Team before the plan was finalized. Mr. Oberdorfer said that they could not re-map the alignment at that point, but they could incorporate a lot of the information into the plan.

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c. Presentation and discussion of proposed trail within the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument.

John Bailey stated that during the next meeting in Taos, on September 25th, the BLM will present trails to be designated as part of the Rio Grande Trail for a ribbon cutting event on October 2nd for the National Trails and Wild Scenic Rivers 50th anniversary celebration. They hope to incorporate 27 miles existing trail.

In the near future, they plan to repair those areas that are currently impassible near the Colorado border. They will release a draft plan and an environmental assessment for the areas from Colorado to the Taos Junction Bridge. From that point on there is not a clear idea of where the trail would go.

There are a few areas where the alignment will still need to be figures out such as the Cebolla Mesa area through Forest Service property. The Forest Service is planning to purchase a bridge that will span the Red River next year. The BLM hopes to develop a design plan for trailheads to include horse needs and also plan for areas near Ute Mountain that could provide access to water.

The BLM has had a number of scoping meetings and have a sense that trail inclusion will be well-received. They have not formally met with Taos Pueblo, but will have formal consultation soon.

The BLM in Colorado prefers to have trail on east side of Rio Grande for biological reasons, but once the trail gets to the Colorado border, there is only private land on the east side, so there would have to be a way to get across the river to the west side at that point. Bighorn lambing season and eagle nesting could each require trail closures for a month or two.

Vice-Chair Tafoya asked if all the alignments presented were existing trail. Mr. Bailey responded that some areas need to be built, but most are existing. Some reroutes are needed through State Land Office land, but they are working on those issues and volunteers have expressed interest in constructing trails in the area.

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Commissioner Mitchell asked if the area from the John Dunn Bridge to Sheep's Crossing had been evaluated on the west side of the river. Mr. Bailey responded that they had, but wildlife concerns make the east side better option. However, there are some existing two-track trails that could potentially be used to avoid culturally sensitive areas and areas of wildlife concern. All possible alignments are subject to change based on public comments and cultural and natural resource concerns.

d. Report from Work Groups

There were no reports from the work groups.

8. Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

9. Future Meeting Date

Chair Sayer stated that next Commission meeting would take place in a location to be determined in Taos. There will also be an event on October 2nd for the 50th anniversary of the National Trails Act. It is a celebration, but there will most likely be a quorum present, so it will technically be a meeting. A motion to hold the next meeting on September 25th in Taos was made by Vice-Chair Tafoya and seconded by Commissioner Martinez. The motion passed unanimously.

10. Adjournment

Chair Sayer asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Vice-Chair Tafoya and seconded by Commissioner Glendenning. The meeting was adjourned at 2:47 pm.