

RIO GRANDE TRAIL COMMISSION (RGTC) MEETING

January 11, 2017

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

NM DOT Anaya Building

Training Rooms 1 & 2

1120 Cerrillos Rd.

Santa Fe, NM 87505

Members Present:

Ken McQueen, Chair	Secretary Designate, EMNRD
Christy Tafoya, Vice-Chair	State Parks Division, EMNRD
Fernando Martinez	Designee, EMNRD
Jessica Griffin	Designee, Department of Transportation
Toner Mitchel	Public Member
Pete Mattox	Public Member
Laurie Wearne	Public Member

Members Absent:

Economic Development Department
Indian Affairs Department
Tourism Department

Vacant:

Toby Martinez (resigned)	Public Member
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Legislators (Advisory Members):

Senator Jeff Steinborn

1. Call to Order – Commission Coordinator, John Busemeyer introduced the new Chair of the Commission, Ken McQueen, who was recently appointed as Secretary for Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. Chair McQueen then asked the members of the Commission and the public to introduce themselves. The Rio Grande Trail Commission meeting was then called to order by the Chair McQueen at 1:05 pm.

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

3. Approval of Agenda – Chair McQueen noted that there was one item to add on to the agenda under “New Business”, which was adding the User Work

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Group to the “Report from Work Groups” item. Chair McQueen asked if there were any other items to add to the agenda. Seeing none, Chair McQueen asked for a motion to approve. Vice-Chair Tafoya moved to approve the agenda and Commissioner Wearne seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes – Chair McQueen asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes. Seeing none, Chair McQueen asked for a motion to approve. Commissioner Martinez moved to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mattox, and the movement was approved unanimously.

5. Adoption of Open Meeting Resolution – Chair McQueen opened the floor to discussion. Commissioner Mattox asked how much notice the resolution required prior to meeting. Vice-Chair Tafoya stated that 10 days were required. Chair McQueen asked for a motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Mitchell moved to approve. Commissioner Wearne seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

6. Discussion of Request for Proposals for the Rio Grande Trail – Chair McQueen asked Judy Kowalski, Design and Development Bureau Chief of State Parks Division, to speak about the request for proposals for the Rio Grande Trail Master Plan and Alignment Study.

Ms. Kowalski informed the attendees and Commission that \$500,000 was approved to fund the study, which would be overseen by the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. The request for proposals was advertised in the Las Cruces Sun News, Albuquerque Journal, Santa Fe New Mexican and had been posted on the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department’s website.

The request for proposals was sent out to 18 potential contractors in New Mexico and out of state. The scope of work was outlined in the grant agreement between the Department of Transportation and the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. There is mandatory pre-proposal meeting on January 19th, so that all of the potential offerors understand all of what will be required for the plan and have the opportunity to ask questions.

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Ms. Kowalski further stated that there will be two phases to the planning process. The first phase is to develop the master plan and the second phase is to identify the preferred trail alignment and alternative alignments. Ms. Kowalski urged members of the working groups to participate in the meeting.

Proposals are due on February 16th. A review committee will be established for the proposals. The criteria for the evaluation are clearly defined in the request for proposals, and reviewers will score them accordingly. Ms. Kowalski asked that any commissioners interested in participating in the evaluation contact her. It is likely that approval of the contract may take some time, and a contractor may be able to start work by late April or early May.

The agreement between Department of Transportation and the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department will expire on December 31, 2018. All work on the study is expected to be done by that time, however extensions to the contract are possible.

Ms. Kowalski asked if there were any questions. Commissioner Mattox asked how the scoring system worked and how the selection committee would evaluate experience. Ms. Kowalski stated that there could be six or seven reviewers and as they review the proposals, distinctions between them and how they answered the questions become clear. Although the evaluation process may be somewhat subjective, it is a fair. The evaluation of experience should be included in their proposal and references are required.

An attendee representing the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District asked if the request for proposals allowed for subcontracting, and Ms. Kowalski indicated that it was allowed, and it is likely that some of the prospective contractors will be comprised of multidisciplinary teams.

Another attendee asked how the alignment will be determined and what criteria will be used. Ms. Kowalski stated that the criteria would likely be determined as the master plan is developed with input from the work groups.

An attendee asked if the scope of work was posted on line, and Ms. Kowalski stated that it was. The attendee then asked when the working groups would

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meet. Vice-Chair Tafoya stated that some groups had already been active while some had not and were waiting for the request for proposals process to commence.

An attendee asked if the criteria in the request for proposals included input from the public, which Ms. Kowalski said it did and encouraged attendees to look at the request for proposals online or contact her with any questions.

Commissioner Mattox asked if there would be any potential contractor from New Mexico submitting a proposal, and Ms. Kowalski indicated that it was likely. Commissioner Mattox also asked if there was any place else the request for proposals was posted besides the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department's website. Ms. Kowalski stated that she wasn't aware of any other place it was posted and added that if anyone was interested in who the 18 potential contractors were that received the request for proposals via email, she could provide a list.

Senator Steinborn stated that long distance trails required more research than shorter trails, so it would be good to have a contractor with this type of experience. Senator Steinborn then asked if anyone had contacted associations affiliated with the Appalachian Trail, Continental Divide Trail, or Pacific Crest Trail, to see if they could provide information concerning contractors.

Ms. Kowalski stated that she spoke to some people about potential vendors who may have long distance trail experience, and the request for proposals was sent to those potential contractors. Ms. Kowalski added that it would be important for the selected contractor to contact organizations affiliated with long distance trails in order to get their input.

Senator Steinborn stated that it would be a good idea to reach out to associations affiliated with long distance trails to make them aware of the Rio Grande Trail planning effort in order to make sure that all options are available to the Commission.

Ms. Kowalski agreed and said that she would send out copies of the request for proposals to those organizations.

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Steve Burns Chavez of the National Park Service added that all long distance National Scenic and Historic Trails have a non-profit trail association affiliated with them, but the administering agency is responsible for planning.

Ms. Kowalski said she would be happy to send Mr. Burns Chavez a list of the vendors she contacted if he or others in the audience cared to review it.

7. Presentation – Chair McQueen then introduced Attila Bality, Outdoor Recreation Planner with the National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program.

Mr. Bality stated that he hoped that the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program would be used as a resource by communities along the Rio Grande Trail corridor and introduced Marcy DeMillion, who came to New Mexico after working with the Park Service in Utah. The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program is able to support any community across the country to help them establish trails. The program consists of staff planners who hope to be a resource to convene different partners in communities and pursue on-the-ground success. The application process is probably the least bureaucratic application possible in the federal government, Mr. Bality stated. The National Park Service looks for specific goals and results listed in the application such as engagement of youth, support of community health, and on-the-ground success. The Park Service also looks at how the planned trail will connect to other trails in different communities.

It is important that collaborative partnerships are in place in order to ensure success and there should be broad based support for these projects, he said. A project should also fit National Park Service’s mission to connect people to outdoors and public lands. A few of the Park Service’s current initiatives are Healthy Parks, Healthy People and engaging youth through citizen science, trail crew work, or through other avenues. The Park Service also takes a look at how everything is connected through a large landscape-scale project. The application process takes place in June and it is important to talk to the National Park Service prior to submitting an application.

One of the recent success stories that the National Park Service has participated in is the Zuni Mountain Trail Network, which is made up of 200

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miles of single-track trails between Gallup and Grants. The Park Service convened cities, counties, non-profits, the Forest Service, and others to help identify trail connections and eight trailheads in the Zuni Mountains. The trail system will continue to build adventure tourism in the area.

The Park Service also helped with planning the Healing Water Trail in Truth or Consequences. They tried to get more people interested in the river by creating a 3-mile trail network that connects to the Truth or Consequences historic district. The trail has a lot of support in the community.

Marcy DeMillion added that the Jordan River Parkway trail in Utah is similar to the RGT but shorter. The National Park Service's involvement started 20 years ago with Utah State Parks. Counties then got interested, and a commission formed and conducted a feasibility study. Ms. DeMillion stated that work occurred in urban and rural settings to increase access to all Americans not just those who visit parks. Legislative money has been matched through the Recreational Trails Program to implement these small trail systems. One of reasons the trail has become a success is through private/public partnerships, which included mining and power companies along the trail system. The trail provides recreation for more than one million people.

The National Park Service has also helped with branding, including adding signs for portals and neighborhood access points, which are very important. All users including families, people looking for exercise, or commuters, should know where they are going on a trail. In order to accomplish this the National Park Service put maps on signs that show both time and distance to different points. All these aspects of a trail should be thought of in advance, rather than during or after the process. A consistent message to the public is vital to the success of the project. Ms. DeMillion urged that people contact her if they would like more information.

Chair McQueen asked if there were any questions from the Commission. Commissioner Wearne noted that the organization that she is affiliated with, Talking Talons, has benefited from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, and it was a very good experience. Commissioner Wearne asked if the representatives from the National Park Service could

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expand on how prescription trails could fit into current and future Rio Grande Trail alignments.

Attila Bality responded that prescription trails are an effort to integrate public health into trails and parks by getting health care providers to prescribe activities to their patients. He expressed hope that prescription trails could connect to communities and to the Rio Grande Trail. Making those connections is very important because proximity to trails increases trail use. Helping park and recreation departments engage in public health initiatives also helps them gain validity from public health organizations such as the Center for Disease Control and the Department of Health, which can provide funding for infrastructure.

Vice-Chair Tafoya stated that she was happy to have National Park Service as a partner through the process and agreed that branding for the trail is important, but at this point is in its infancy right now. Commissioner Mattox agreed that branding is important and informed the Commission that a sign on the La Llorona trail was placed in the wrong location and suggested that there should be a quality control plan in place to make sure that signs are labeled correctly and placed in the right locations. Vice-Chair Tafoya agreed and suggested that the Park Service could help with that.

A meeting attendee asked if anyone had experience in digital mapping and stated that the Galisteo Basin Preserve had an app that showed people where they were going, which is very helpful. Ms. DeMillion responded that digital mapping is gaining in popularity and it is incumbent upon the counties to maintain digital mapping data. Starting this initiative at the onset of a project, rather than after the fact, reduces costs.

Another attendee asked if digital mapping could occur across jurisdictions such as the Bureau of Land Management, Counties, and Municipalities, and the National Park Service representatives indicated that it could. Ms. Kowalski added that signing and branding is in the scope of work for the contractor selected during the request for proposal process.

Mr. Burns Chavez stated that he hopes that the Commission will collaborate with the National Park Service on alignment compatibility. The Camino Real de

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Tierra Adentro Historic Trail parallels Rio Grande Trail and he urged Commission to collaborate with National Park Service on branding and signs through the areas where the two trails align or connect. He also urged the Commission to contact him so that he could share ideas and lessons learned during the planning of multiple National Historic Trails.

Dan Carter with the Southern New Mexico Trail Alliance stressed that consistency in branding and signage is important whether the trail crosses state, federal, or municipal lands. Senator Steinborn added that branding is huge issue and it should be viewed as part of a big tourism draw for the state. Millions of people come to hike long distance trails, such as the Appalachian Trail. Since this is a new trail, coming up with a unique brand and logo will be an important marketing exercise to bring people to the state.

Bon Bagley with the New Mexico Horse Council wondered how the National Park Service was able to provide access, maintenance, and construction along their multi-use trails. She noted that signs should promote trail etiquette along the trails and also should include information about archeological resources in order to draw attention to New Mexico's history, which would enhance user experience on the trail.

8. Unfinished Business – Chair McQueen asked if there were any items to add to the agenda under “Unfinished Business”. Seeing none, Chair McQueen moved on to “New Business”.

7. New Business – Report from Work Groups.

David Certain reported on behalf of the Alignment Work Group. Dr. Certain stated that Aaron Detter, who was Co-Chair of the Alignment Work Group was no longer with Department of Transportation, but Dr. Certain said he would keep in touch with Mr. Detter to see if he is still interested in participating in the work group. Dr. Certain added that people who are interested in participating in the work group could sign up if they are interested in providing input on alternative and preferred alignments. Since the request for proposals has been issued, the Alignment Work Group will meet soon to hear the group's ideas about how to contribute to the overall alignment.

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An attendee asked if there was any time frame in mind for having a meeting. Dr. Certain responded that he would try to make a meeting happen within the next few days before the pre-proposal meeting.

Another attendee asked if Dr. Certain could explain what the Alignment Work Group will do. He responded that he believed the group would bring different perspectives to alignment issues, where the trail will go, and consider what the challenges and opportunities are. Work groups could also research existing trails or submit whatever information they already have to the contractor.

Gina Della Russo was then introduced to represent the Resource Work Group. The group has met a few times and are evaluating what opportunities natural, cultural, recreational, and educational resources might bring to the trail. They will also look at what impacts the trail may have on those resources and make sure that the contractor and others are aware of those impacts. The work group has developed a white paper that stated that they would work with contractor in informal public meetings to find out more about local resources.

They have met twice with local stakeholders such as mountain bikers and horse riders in the Socorro area to look at the 2008 alignment study and how to connect the Rio Grande Trail to spur trails that lead to other resources, such as museums. They are currently a small work group and Ms. Della Russo urged people attending the meeting to sign up if they were interested in being involved.

An attendee asked how people could learn when the meetings take place and Ms. Della Russo stated that the contractor would be responsible for taking care of informing the public. So far the work group has been informing people via email. Vice-Chair Tafoya agreed that notice of work group meetings would be taken care of by the contractor in the future.

Commissioner Mattox was introduced to represent the Design and Management Work Group. Commissioner Mattox stated that the request for proposals was distributed to everyone in the work group. The group did have a couple of concerns. There did not seem to be a good, objective way to assess the potential contractor's past track record of public involvement, which the work group believes is key to the long-term viability of the trail. The second

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concern was that the request for proposals was not very specific about identifying the Rio Grande Trail as a multi-use, multi-modal trail, which matters to the group and should be part of the decision-making process. Commissioner Mattox then asked what the expectation of coordination was between the Commission, work groups, and the contractor and what coordination would look like throughout the planning process.

Vice-Chair Tafoya encouraged Commissioner Mattox to be involved in the request for proposals selection process in order to address his concerns. She stated that at this point it was unclear what the nature of the collaboration would be. Once a contractor is chosen it would be necessary to develop a clear understanding of how they would communicate with the Commission, work groups, and others.

Bruce Hickson, of the US Fish and Wildlife Service asked Commissioner Mattox if he could explain what the responsibilities are of the Design and Management Work Group. Commissioner Mattox stated that the group's goal is to propose standards and guidelines for design and operation of the trail and deal with safety and liability issues. He noted that there is some overlap with those responsibilities and the responsibilities laid out for the contractor in the request for proposals.

Elizabeth Dicharry stated that she wanted to put in good word for the Design and Management Work Group. The chair of the group, Commissioner Mattox, has provided books and information to the group, which has been very valuable.

The Communications Work Group had no report.

Senator Steinborn, representing the Partnership Work Group, reported that Mt. Cristo Rey, which is an 800-foot-tall mountain in southern Dona Ana County is half-owned by the Catholic Church, and half-owned by a non-profit group. The property has trails and paleontological resources and may be a good southern terminus for the Rio Grande Trail. It is currently managed by Insights El Paso, which is interested in donating the property to the State of New Mexico. Senator Steinborn said that he has been in touch with various departments about that prospect and he hopes to have a conversation about a

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donation in the next few days. He noted that it is only a discussion at this point, but acquiring the property could be a unique opportunity for the state.

An attendee asked how financial resources will be made available to manage the trail and who will be responsible upkeep and maintenance. Vice-Chair Tafoya responded that currently the State of New Mexico and the City of Las Cruces are responsible for maintaining the existing trail segments, but it will be important for the contractor to assess what entities will be managing future alignments and how that management will happen. Senator Steinborn added that many long distance trails that have been designated by the federal government have non-profit associations or friends groups affiliated with them and these groups are responsible for maintenance and repairs. Dan Carter with the Southern New Mexico Trail Alliance agreed with Senator Steinborn and added that it was very important to engage those types of groups early in the trail planning stage so that they stay engaged in the process.

Steve Burns Chavez with the National Park Services stated that there are two categories of long distance trail; National Scenic and National Historic Trails. Non-profits affiliated with National Scenic Trails tend to do more on-the-ground work that involves trail building and maintenance, while non-profits associated with National Historic Trails tend to be more like historic societies, although that is beginning to shift as more non-profits associated with National Historic Trails are becoming more involved with establishing the trails on the ground. Senator Steinborn stated that it was a long-term goal for the Rio Grande Trail to get federal recognition. It will also be important for the contractor to be aware of that goal and recognize the differences between the two types of trail.

Marcy DeMillion wanted people to be aware that there is not a great deal of federal funding that goes along with federal trail designation. National Historic Trails currently have some funding associated with them, but it is usually the non-profit groups associated with the trail that do the majority of the fundraising. Ms. DeMillion urged people to contact the National Park Service if they had specific questions regarding designation.

An attendee who introduced himself as an occasional trail volunteer stated that he believed having a trail that stretched from Las Cruces to the Colorado

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border was not realistic. There are huge swaths and land where he said the trail would get no interest. While the Rio Grande Trail may work in places like White Rock, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and a few towns south he believed that it would not be feasible along the length of the state because it's not the same as trails like the Appalachian, Pacific Crest, and Continental Divide Trails. Senator Steinborn pointed out that Arizona has an 800-mile state trail that was recently designated as a National Scenic Trail. He stated that the Rio Grande Trail is an ambitious goal but worthwhile, and everyone one of the trails previously mentioned started off with only a vision.

There was no report from the User Work Group, which is without a chair, but Chair McQueen noted that two people were being considered as co-chairs.

10. Logo Discussion – Vice-Chair Tafoya stated that although there were a few draft logos that were developed previously, it was somewhat premature to present the logos because they did not capturing the many things that the Commission had been talking about over the past year and a half. The Commission will work with the contractor and the user groups in the future to create a logo and branding strategy.

Steve Burns Chavez noted that the National Park Service has a rounded triangle that is used for their National Trails. He stated that in case the Rio Grande Trail becomes a National Scenic Trail, the Commission should consider creating a logo that can be integrated into the one the National Park Service uses. He also urged the Commission to think about how the logo will fit in with the various partnerships and jurisdictions that might use the logo in the future and how the logo will reflect the physical trail itself. Additionally it is important to consider how the logo will be used on signs, letterhead, brochures, and for marketing.

11. Public Comments – Chair McQueen asked for public comments and Tim Rogers, with the Santa Fe Conservation Trust, introduced himself and described the plans for Santa Fe's Grand Unified Trail System. The system is an effort to connect several trails in and around Santa Fe. Several organizations affiliated with the Grand Unified Trail System are interested in how the Rio Grande Trail could be incorporated into the Grand Unified Trail System and many people are very excited about that idea. Mr. Rogers specifically

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mentioned how construction on the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail will begin soon and will eventually reach Diablo Canyon. This stretch would could eventually become an important part if the Grand Unified Trail System, which could have significant overlap with the Rio Grande Trail. Mr. Rogers also mentioned that the acronym for the trail system (GUTS) has not been particularly popular, and there is an effort underway to come up with a new name for the system. Mr. Rogers encouraged attendees to participate in this effort.

Stephen DeWalt of the Santa Fe Fat Tire Society and of Rob and Charlies Bike Shop introduced himself and stated that the mountain biking community is very excited about what is going on and urged the Commission to use the community as a resource for alignment information.

Dierdre Monroe of the American Endurance Riders Conference introduced herself and informed the Commission that she had been mapping trail routes along the Caja del Rio Plateau in the area where the Camino Real Trail will be and offered this map for use by the Commission and work groups.

Mr. Carter stated that recently he had heard people mention that there were not enough trail resources in the southern part of the state and he believed that the Rio Grande Trail would be a great asset and resource to small communities in that area.

Ms. DeMillion added that she could provide data concerning how signs and data on signs increase physical activity.

Steve Burns Chavez noted that National Trail designation does not necessarily come with funding. As Ms. DeMillion previously stated, Historic Trails may receive money but the greater benefit is that designation opens up doors for funding. Recently, millions of dollars have been leveraged in the Kansas City area because of National Historic Trail designation. Senator Steinborn added that the state receives over a million dollars a year from the Recreation Trails Program administered by NMDOT, which could also be a source for funding.

Julie Jacobs stated that she was impressed with the expertise represented at the meeting and wanted to encourage everyone to keep up the good work.

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Chair McQueen asked for any other public comments. Seeing none, he suggested setting a date for the next meeting.

12. Future Meeting Date – Vice-Chair Tafoya suggested April 6th as the next meeting date. The motion to accept April 6th as the next meeting date was made by Commissioner Wearne. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Tafoya. The motion was approved unanimously.

13. Adjournment – A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Mattox. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Tafoya. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 pm.