

State of New Mexico
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor

Sarah Cottrell Propst
Cabinet Secretary

Todd E. Leahy, JD, PhD
Deputy Cabinet Secretary

Toby Velasquez, Director
State Parks Division



New Mexico State Parks Advisory Board Meeting
Tuesday, September 26, 2023 @ 11:00 AM

Cerrillos Hills State Park
37 Main Street, Cerrillos, NM 87010 and via Webex

1. Call to Order

Chair Connealy called the Parks Advisory Board (Board) meeting to order at 11:04 a.m.

2. Roll Call

Director Toby Velasquez called roll.

- Board Member(s) Absent:
 - Stephanie Bestelmeyer
- Board Members Present:
 - ✓ Selena Connealy, Chair
 - ✓ Judith Polich, Vice Chair
 - ✓ Patricia Walsh, Member
 - ✓ Rodney Paris, Member
 - ✓ CJ Wiegel, Member
 - ✓ Thomas Garcia, Member
 - ✓ Eileen Everett, Member
 - ✓ Patrick Killen, Member

3. Approval of Agenda

Chair Connealy invited a motion to approve the agenda as drafted. Member Garcia made a motion and Member Weigel seconded. All Board members voted in favor of approving the agenda as drafted.

4. Approval of Minutes

Chair Connealy invited a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Member Killen made a motion and Member Everett seconded. All Board members voted in favor of approving the minutes as amended.

5. Director's Report

a. Introduction of Bureau, Region, and Park Staff

Director Toby Velasquez welcomed everyone to Cerrillos Hills State. Director Velasquez was happy to introduce his leadership team to the Board and gave the floor to division staff to provide more details on themselves and their positions and duties within the agency. The presentations were in order as follows:

- i. Cerrillos Hills State Park - Park Manager Peter Lipscomb: Mr. Lipscomb provided an overview and described that the Park has been in operation for 15 years. The Park has a lot to offer and there is a lot to learn, it's a powerhouse for education. Mr. Lipscomb prides himself on the education programs they have to offer and hopes to bring back more educational programs that have been lost since the pandemic. Mr. Lipscomb spoke about the history of mining in the park and about the trail system. Mr. Lipscomb detailed that the current visitor center was an old house and in 2012 was remodeled. It is the hosting ground for many events including State Park meetings and, since the Park now has the infrastructure for better connectivity, it is a great space to bring community interests to this public space.

Chair Connealy asked how many visitors and how many staff members are located at the park. Mr. Lipscomb stated he is the sole full-time staff member, has two seasonal temporary positions, and that visitation has grown substantially since the end of the pandemic.

Regarding the increase in visitation, Vice Chair Judith Polich asked how many more staff members are needed at the park. Mr. Lipscomb stated there have been strategic discussions and actions to establish a Regional Interpretive Ranger and a Park Technician at the Park in fiscal year 2025.

- ii. Central Region Manager – Region Manager Cheryl Kolls: Ms. Kolls was happy to talk about the seven (7) state parks she oversees. Ms. Kolls emphasized how delighted she is to support Cerrillos Hills, Hyde Memorial, Manzano Mountains, Pecos Canyon, Rio Grande Nature Center, Storrie Lake, and Villanueva State Parks. She stated that she manages one of the oldest state parks and the newest state park, as well. Many great things are going on in each park. Hyde Memorial State Park may be the first state park that is operating solely off grid via a solar microgrid. Ms. Kolls mentioned that at Manzano Mountains State Park, there will soon be a unique opportunity for visitors to use a track chair which is designed to take people with certain disabilities around the trails that they otherwise wouldn't have been able to on their own, giving them the opportunity to see the beautiful mountain views. Education is a central component for this region. RGNC is a hub for education hosting 240 classrooms and 6100 students. Many Design and Development projects are underway or planned for parks in this region.

Member Everett asked about visitation and if our State Parks data was any different when compared to other public land data. Ms. Kolls mentioned that across our nation and state outdoor interests and activities have increased significantly.

- iii. Design and Development Bureau - Bureau Chief Colleen Baker: Ms. Baker stated she has been with the division for three (3) years and gave a brief description of her team and what they all do. Ms. Baker shared that this bureau oversees all the construction projects going on within parks. Ms. Baker emphasized that planning for funding is essential, and it takes millions of dollars each year to make sure state parks have running water, bathrooms and showers that work. Ms. Baker stated that in FY23 \$14

million dollars in major repairs were invested or set aside. Ms. Baker and her team are always planning for future projects with a particular focus on customer satisfaction. Ms. Baker introduced Division Planner Joey Fleming; he oversees various aspects of division planning.

Co-chair Judith Polich asked if Joey could expand on what those outdoor activities might be. Mr. Fleming stated that they will be things like park framework and management planning. To do so, however, policy and certain permission need to back these ideas up and funding as well. Member Rodney Paris asked about the Quality-of-Life grants and if we get those funds. Bureau Chief Baker stated it would be good to investigate those grants and Member Paris stated that there is potential in extending those funds from the Quality-of-Life grants.

- iv. Program Support Bureau - Bureau Chief Dr. Robert Stokes: Dr. Stokes oversees five (5) primary programs starting with Business Enterprise. He explained that the Business Enterprise Coordinator coordinates with other entities, organizations, and businesses to bring in income to the system. One of those businesses being Reserve America (Aspira). Others consist of concessions, using contracts or permits that build financial partnerships by allowing small businesses to operate within the system. Dr. Stokes described businesses like fishing guides, food trucks, sporting goods etc. Dr. Stokes discussed the Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program as another one of his bureau's major programs. LWCF is money administered through the U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service. A grant of approximately \$3 million a year is designated to our state to keep outdoor recreational programs thriving. One main goal is to keep our communities involved in outdoor recreation and related activities. Dr. Stokes also detailed the division volunteer program which helps coordinate park volunteers, friend's groups, and other external volunteer or non-profit partners.

Member Killen asked if there is any plan for stateside funding to be implemented though the state. Dr. Stokes reinsured that LWCF funds are ongoing. Member Pat Walsh asked about the Kids in Parks funds and if they are available for teachers. Bureau Chief Stokes explained that the Professional Service Agreement (PSA) was still being negotiated. Director Velasquez stated that the contractual issue delaying the PSA is that we cannot make payment to our program contractor until services are rendered.

- v. Marketing Bureau – Manager Wendy Mason: Ms. Mason described that with the help of her Marketing Assistant Manager, Joshua Bobic, the new campaign slogan, and logo is “Vámonos! Let's Go New Mexico!” Ms. Mason discussed the importance of marketing state parks, sharing stories and knowledge. Marketing is not at all just Facebook and Website. All that entails in our Marketing is amazing. Marketing provides all the details that are going on in each of the 35 different parks. Marketing oversees so much, any and everything pertaining to marketing such as advertising, working with our local news departments like KRQE, radio stations like I-heart radio, also billboards, signs, the list goes on and on. A big part is the design of our Facebook page and our EMNRD website where all our information is given. Also, Facebook provides an open platform for our communities and customers giving us feedback on what we can do to improve certain things or suggestions that could help the overall improvement of our parks. Soon Wendy Mason will be on the KRQE live New Mexico Living show to talk about our parks. It will be very insightful to let our people know what is going on with New Mexico State Parks. A big part of all of this is the procurement of funds and ensuring our Marketing department has the budget to secure these major projects.

Chair Connealy asked if there is anything the Board could offer as far as the media

goes. Wendy Mason stated that, of course, getting our message out there always helps. It would be an opportunity for our board members to be able to speak about their experience at our parks and give their political knowledge. One big goal is getting the message out on recruitment. We are hiring, we need people to know that now is the time to apply for New Mexico State Parks' jobs. Member Walsh suggested all the parks should have their own Facebook page. It will be something to evaluate further due to existing department policy and procedures. Member Everett suggested having a workshop regarding marketing and media.

- vi. Administrative Services Bureau - Bureau Chief Miche Garcia: Ms. Garcia primarily supports human resources and her team that handles budget, financing, procurement, property disposal, fleet, and utilities. Ms. Garcia emphasized how this bureau is essential to supporting financial business and region and park staff across the system.

Member Rodney Paris provided reference to professional development courses that could be options for division staff with administrative financial duties.

- vii. Field Operations Bureau – Bureau Chief Jared Langenegger: Mr. Langenegger explained that he works very closely with all region managers and administrators to ensure all operational aspects are running efficiently. Mr. Langenegger stated that the system has (5) regional offices (Santa Fe, Aztec, Tucumcari, Dona Ana, Roswell) assigned to support (35) state parks. Mr. Langenegger described the focus and importance of ensuring that division policy and procedures are reviewed and up to date to provide division staff with proper reference and guidance. Mr. Langenegger is also working closely with the other bureaus daily. Mr. Langenegger explained that a primary duty for his position to be effective is extensive travel to meet with region and park staff in the field. Mr. Langenegger described the current initiative to replace vehicles in the field at a cost of approximately \$1.5 million with ARPA funds.

- viii. Law Enforcement & Boating Safety Bureau – Bureau Chief Manny Overby: Mr. Overby gave a brief overview of his staff starting with Ofc. Scott Chalmers, The Boating Safety Coordinator. Ofc. Chalmers provides boating safety classes, and he is very knowledgeable about boating laws and rules. Ofc. William Perdue is our law enforcement coordinator and supports all park rangers with initial and ongoing testing, evaluations, and training needs. Mr. Overby emphasized that the law enforcement program is essential in the protection of resources and sustaining the safety of our customers and staff. Mr. Overby stated it is also very costly to provide the tools and training necessary to support our park rangers. Communication is a big part of the tools our officers need when they are out in the field, they need to rely on their resources: radios, body cams, vehicles, defensive equipment, etc. Ofc. Perdue was in attendance and provided a brief statement on how he helps as the coordinator. Ofc. Perdue prides himself on being a park ranger and believes it is important to have professional standards. Mr. Overby mentioned that the division will take an active role in hosting the International Boating Safety Summit in Albuquerque in April 2024.

b. State Parks Fees Study Update

Director Velasquez stated he has one update. The fee study is officially at the Governor's office, and we are waiting approval to continue this work.

Chair Connealy and Vice Chair Polich thanked Director Velasquez and all division staff for their work. Chair Connealy requested a motion to take a lunch break, there was a motion by Member Killen, and Member Everett seconded. All members voted in supporting the motion at 2:07 p.m.

After lunch, Chair Connealy called the meeting to order at 2:23 p.m.

6. President's Report and Committee Reports

a. Parks Advisory Board Member Recruitment

Chair Connealy stated that there are two available spots for new board members. Administrative Services Bureau Chief Miche Garcia informed the group that she reached out to Dr. Matthew Martinez who is interested in learning more. Chair Connealy and Ms. Garcia agreed to exchange contact information so that Chair Connealy could reach out to Dr. Martinez.

b. Committee Reports

- i. Climate Change: Vice-Chair Juith Polich and Member Killen have been working on displays to put up in our park and Member Pat Walsh and Peter Lipscomb are having a workshop with a few other at the RGNC in the last week of October.
- ii. Outdoor Classrooms: Member Eileen Everett stated there was not a lot to report. Director Velasquez did speak about some changes that will be happening for outdoor recreation.
- iii. Law Enforcement: Law enforcement is not an active committee.
- iv. Public/Private Partnerships. Member Patrick Killen did not have an update.
- v. Closing Discussion: A discussion was held amongst the Board Members about what other committees the board could possibly support.

7. Closing Discussion

a. New Business

- None.

b. Next Meeting Date

- The Board discussed and agreed on planning their next meeting for December 6, 2023, in Santa Fe at the State Parks Division conference room.


8. Public Comment

- None.

9. Adjournment

- Chair Connealy requested a motion to adjourn. Member Garcia made a motion to adjourn; it was seconded by Member Killen. All Board members voted in approval, motion carried, and the Board meeting was adjourned at 2:44 p.m.

APPROVED:


Chair Selena Connealy

DATE:

12/6/23