

Recreation User Group
Meeting 21
September 11, 2019
MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting Attendees

Representative	Organization
John Bricker	Tonto Recreation Alliance (TRAL)
Rick Smith	TRAL
Kevin Patterson	TRAL
Jim Schenck	LOST & Superior Community Working Group
Elizabeth Butler	Friends of Tonto/Equestrian
Mila Besich	Mayor, Town of Superior
Todd Pryor	Manager, Town of Superior
Charlie Goff	Superstition Area Land Trust
Sheryl Cormack	Tonto National Forest (TNF)
Rick Schonfeld	WestLand Resources
John Godec	Godec, Randall & Associates (GRA)
Debra Duerr	GRA

Welcome and Introductions

John Godec welcomed everyone and said that the TRAL representatives have a proposal that they would like to discuss with the group.

Update on Status of Planning for Forest Service Route 4 Reroute for IMRYS

Representatives of Tonto Recreation Alliance have been meeting with the Imerys company to determine if there is a way to provide continued access across Imerys private mine property, now that they have decided to expand mining in this area. The affected route is Forest Road 4, a heavily traveled road, that would be cut off across private property. A two-pronged approach is being taken to resolve this conflict. The Forest Service is working to identify an alternative routing of FR4 as a long-term solution. Meanwhile, TRAL is attempting to negotiate a temporary way to allow access on the existing road by working with Imerys to develop signage and travel restrictions that would serve to keep the public out of restricted mining areas. TRAL members wanted to review their suggestions with RUG. Proposed signs were shown and discussed. RUG members liked these ideas but wanted to confirm that nonmotorized access will be allowed. TRAL offered to confirm this with Imerys.

Discussion of RUG Comments on DEIS

RUG members discussed whether and what comments they might want to submit regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Resolution Copper Project and Land Exchange. Comments are due to the Forest Service by November 7. Based on this conversation,

the group facilitators will draft comments for review by the RUG. Three areas of interest were explored:

Funding for the RUG Plan

It was pointed out that the DEIS says the RUG plan will be funded by a local nonprofit organization with possible contributions by Resolution. The RUG had understood that Resolution had agreed to establish a fund to support construction and maintenance of the trail system, and RUG members felt that it is critical to confirm that initial base funding is available. Hesston Klenk of Resolution told the group that the Forest Service has raised an issue of “parity” in mitigation measures, and some are concerned about funding for 50 miles of trails when said only 7 miles of trails at Oak Flat will be affected. Klenk confirmed that there will definitely be funding, but the amount has not yet been agreed upon. There was much discussion about the types and extent of impacts and mitigation in response to this.

RUG members agreed that they would submit a DEIS comment explaining that this trail development process has been ongoing for 4 years, is a well-thought-out consensus of various user groups, should be approved, and should be funded. Comments will point out benefits beyond the mitigation “ratio”, including economic benefits and diversity to the Town of Superior and enhancement of regional recreational opportunity. The RUG does not believe this plan is a simple 1-for-1 replacement but addresses loss of access to many additional connected trails, visual and aesthetic impacts to existing trails, changes in the overall recreational experience in the area, and the beauty of the Oak Flat ecosystem. Comments should key off of language in the DEIS to describe recreational impacts. The RUG would, additionally, like to request a cost estimate for development and maintenance of the trail system, and the requirement for an endowment sufficient to cover some of these costs (recognizing that local partnerships will also be developed).

Bronco Creek Exploration

Recognizing that the Bronco Creek Exploration proposal is completely separate from the DEIS analysis, RUG members decided that their comments should describe the issue of potential conflict and suggest a solution that would require Bronco Creek – as part of their Environmental Assessment - to perform mitigation for any impacts they create to the RUG trail system. This might include monitoring to determine tourism and recreation impacts. The option of Resolution purchasing mineral rights from BCE to preclude this exploration was raised, but this is not feasible since those rights are not for sale.

Climbing & Mountain Biking Impacts

In consideration of Queen Creek Coalition who helped to develop the trail plan as a past RUG member, it was suggested that we contact climbers to see what their concerns are and possibly include them in RUG comments. Likewise, we should also contact International Mountain Bicycling Association as an original RUG member.

Finalize RUG Informational Brochure

Rick Schonfeld reminded the group that the graphic handed out is meant only as an informational marketing and awareness piece about the RUG process and recreational plans to be used as promotion to RUG organizations and other interested groups and people; it is not meant to be a 'field guide', directional map, or is intended any way as a wayfinding document to help people to find specific trails. Details of the actual plans and proposed routes may be found on a website.

RUG members liked the map prepared by WestLand Resources, with a few corrections, modifications, and additions. These included the removal of all non-labeled roads and trails, adding the LOST connection to airport and the canyon section, labeling the Castleberry Campground as proposed, showing the IMRYS holding in white as 'private property', and highlighting the Boyce Thompson Arboretum in a different color to call attention to the tourist attraction.

In a final review of the text for the tri-fold handout, it was agreed that the headline should be *A Superior Place to Recreate*.

Update on Status of Discussions with State Parks

At the previous RUG meeting Resolution suggested that a partnership with State Parks Department to manage a campground at Castleberry might be possible and said they would pursue this. Klenk reported that he'd met with State Parks a couple of times but there is no plan yet for this issue. He said that Pinal County has also expressed an interest in managing the area, but they don't have a lot of experience with campsites. There are no agreements in place yet.

Funding & Maintenance

As discussed above, the RUG agreed they want to ask that Resolution fund construction of the trail system and establish a bond or perpetual endowment for construction, operation, and maintenance.

Next Steps, Next Meeting

A November meeting will be scheduled in concert with the November CWG meeting, which needs to be moved from the regular date. The RUG will be consulted about this.

November, date to be determined
10:00 AM
Superior Town Hall – same meeting room