

Recreation User Group
Meeting 26
September 9, 2020
MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting Attendees

Representative	Organization
Fred Gaudet	Arizona Trail Association
Greg Waterman	Sun City Anthem Hiking Club
Bill Scott	Sun City Anthem Hiking Club
Chris Burkhart	Sun City Anthem Hiking Club
John Bricker	Tonto Recreation Alliance (TRAL)
Jim Schenck	LOST & Superior Community Working Group
Mila Besich	Mayor, Town of Superior
Todd Pryor	Manager, Town of Superior
Erik Filsinger	Queen Creek Coalition
Adam Bromley	District Ranger, Globe Ranger District, Tonto NF
Mary Morissette	Resolution Copper Company
Hesston Klenk	Resolution Copper Company
Rick Schonfeld	WestLand Resources
John Godec	Godec, Randall & Associates (GRA)
Debra Duerr	GRA

Welcome and Introductions

In local news, several RUG members mentioned that Porters Restaurant has moved to a new building, which is conveniently located near the pedestrian bridge with easy access to LOST. Adam Bromley reported that the Tonto National Forest has very high to extreme fire conditions, and with no forecast change in the weather current fire restrictions will probably last for some time.

Adam Bromley, the new Tonto National Forest Globe District Ranger, joined the RUG this month. To help him understand the work of the RUG, he asked if there's a map of the area that shows every proposed and existing trail. The group said there is no single map that shows all of this, as there was some sensitivity about producing public maps with proposed trails that don't yet exist. However, there is a comprehensive map for the Legends of Superior Trail (LOST), and the proposed RUG trail plan. These items will be sent to Adam, who offered his contact information:

adam.bromley@usda.gov

928-200-1731

Review Scoping Letter on OHV Staging Area

The group reviewed a scoping letter to be sent to the Tonto National Forest today supporting a proposed OHV staging area near the Superior golf course area. Those who wished to sign the letter did so, and the facilitators will submit it on their behalf.

Update & Further Thoughts on Imerys Concerns re: Castleberry Campground

It was reported that Resolution's lawyer will reach out to Imerys lawyers to try to determine what the real issues are. RUG members think that perhaps Imerys' underlying concern is that they will be surrounded by urban uses and won't be able to continue mining as they have done.

The Forest Service offered that 850 feet is well within the fallout area for blasting (up to 2000 feet for some mines), representing a valid public safety concern. Consequently, this sort of comment has been upheld in the past. Adam Bromley guessed that the Imerys letter will be sent to the Forest Service Office of General Counsel for review. Godec asked if there are alternatives to the location of the Castleberry Campground. Bromley stated that the agency is not in favor of building more campgrounds on Forest Service lands due to maintenance and resource burdens. Sheryl Cormack thought Castleberry was the best option, but another private parcel might be possible. A member asked if there has been any discussion of other private options. Mary Morissette confirmed that Resolution had evaluated about 40 locations that had any potential, including Top-of-the-World, but none proved suitable due to size, location, proximity to US60, or willingness of owners to sell. RUG members asked if a land exchange would be possible, but it was pointed out that this type of action could take up to 20 years to complete.

The group had the following questions and comments:

- If the RUG plan is included in the Final EIS can we assume it's been approved?
 - Yes, but there could be court challenges.
 - It was pointed out that since the campground is on Resolution's private property, they can build it whether it's in the EIS or not.
- Can Imerys block the EIS?
 - They would have received notice of the EIS as an adjacent property owner, but they apparently ignored the process. Because of this, it's felt that they don't have standing to object under NEPA.
- Hesston Klenk clarified that the Mine Safety & Health Administration (MSHA) regulations don't require adjacent landowners to take care of blasting mitigation; it's the owner's responsibility.
- Based on Tom Hawk's email this morning, it sounds like Imerys is waiting for a list of mitigations from Resolution, and they might be willing to negotiate on some of these. Resolution has had many conversations with them to discuss this. "The offer still stands".
- Members wondered what the life of the Imerys mine is. It's possible that the campground won't even get going until near the end of the mine life. A member thought they may develop the Chicago pit further south, which is the concern about use of Forest Road 4.
- A RUG member observed that Imerys owns western Arnett Canyon, and the Forest Service put a trail through there.
- Will Resolution own the campground for the next 60 years, as well as owning the land, or will be become public?
 - Resolution doesn't know the answer. It will always have public access regardless of Resolution ownership, as required by the EIS.

- Who would have the liability?
 - Resolution said they would have liability insurance and could require waivers, but this isn't worked out.
- It was estimated that Imerys hauls ore only about 27 days per year, which equates to about 6 days per year of blasting.

RUG members pointed out that the campground notwithstanding there will be increased recreational use of the surrounding area in future. Their belief is that we either manage it or it becomes a free-for-all. The Forest Service said they recognize this, but they also need to be concerned about public safety. It is generally felt that the "bait" attracting trespass today is Apache tears, and this has been going on for many years.

It was suggested that the RUG could proceed with its plans since the group has always followed the Forest Service process. Godec asked if everyone agrees we should move forward. All endorsed this approach and suggested that we should consider additional safety items like barriers, guide cars in front of haul trucks, and limited access on blasting days. However, the group feels that further negotiations are up to the respective company lawyers. The RUG believes it can work around all these obstacles and end up with a premium campground. We also need to keep in mind that this is just a small part of the larger trail system.

Trail Planning & Improvement Updates

Some updates on RUG initiatives follow.

Status of IMERY'S Easement, FR 4 to Arnett Trail

Sheryl Cormack is working with Imerys' new lawyer. The Forest Service has approved this.

FR 4 Reroute Design

The route has been surveyed and the Forest Service is following up with engineering. The next step after completing the design would be to let a bid on a public works contract. A RUG member said it would be nice if they could get this done by winter for hiking season. Bromley doesn't think contracts will be awarded until after the holidays, realistically, since the Forest Service has already been cut off for new contracts in this fiscal year that ends September 30.

Status of sign installation for Arnett Creek Trail and Arizona Trail

The signs are ready to go. Shawn Redfield (trail manager for Arizona Trail) will provide the equipment and expertise, Sun City Hiking Club will install the signs, which should be done by November.

Plans for LOST completion from airport to FS trail to Arnett Creek

A RUG member wondered if there is a plan for turning it from a route into a trail. Jim Schenck said because this segment is on Forest Service land the town can't do this on its own. It was

suggested that we discuss improving that route with the Forest Service, particularly with signage. The Forest Service said they'd be happy to talk about it, given staffing limitations. Maintenance is a big issue for Tonto National Forest due to resources, so maintenance needs to be done in perpetuity by someone else. Schenck clarified that the route improvements from the end of the airport to crossing Queen Creek is more a matter of signage, not creating a new trail. Members agreed that the concept was to link the Arizona Trail to the Town of Superior, so it would be nice if a continuous route was easily identifiable to users.

- It was agreed that Greg Waterman, Jim Schenck, and Superior representatives will get together to discuss this.

LOST Old US60 Segment Parking & Access Improvements

As was discussed at last month's meeting, ADOT is constructing a parking lot at Magma and Haynor avenues, near the US60 Queen Creek Canyon access. This location was pointed out as the "Magma Trailhead" as shown on the LOST map (distributed to RUG members). The parking lot has been approved, and there is a signed contract. Todd Pryor reported that they are starting to put fill in now for the trailhead, but he doesn't know when the status of the parking. Members emphasized that a good attractive parking lot, in town, would help tourism; people from town and out of town are hiking that trail regularly. The Sun City hiking group has people who are anxious to visit the trail when it's ready.

Old Queen Creek Bridge Replacement

Related to the above project, ADOT is also planning to replace the Queen Creek bridge, which might affect access to the upper canyon. The old Queen Creek Bridge (big arch bridge) is being replaced for safety reasons, to the east side of the existing bridge. The old bridge will stay while a new bridge is being built, until probably 2022. The town has asked ADOT whether they will maintain access during this period; otherwise the trail would be closed at this location. Some RUG members wondered if it would be possible to keep the existing bridge strictly for recreational purposes; bungee jumping was humorously suggested as a use. If this ROW is maintained, it could represent a leg between the canyon segment and the bridge. This would be a natural access to a trail at the base of Apache Leap. Mary Morissette pointed out that ADOT doesn't have ROW in many places, so parking for climbing access to Atlantis is actually owned by Resolution.

Superior Wayfinding Study

The Town of Superior reported that a Request for Qualifications for the wayfinding study is approved, and work will start in October. This will include evaluation of signage for some of the trails and recreation features of interest to the RUG.

Castleberry Campground Management Update

There is no update on this. Information has been given by Resolution to Boyce Thompson Arboretum for consideration by their Board at the appropriate time.

Next Steps, Next Meeting

The RUG would like to continue meeting every month Therefore, the next meeting will be on:.

Wednesday, October 14

10:00am to Noon

online