

Recreation User Group
Meeting 27
October 14, 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
Elizabeth Butler	Friend of the Tonto, equestrians
Lynne Nemeth	Boyce Thompson Arboretum
Mark Flint	Southwest Trail Design
Adam Bromley	District Ranger, Globe Ranger District, Tonto NF
Jason Scow	Globe Ranger District
Sheryl Cormack	Globe Ranger District
Meghan, Ashley, Sam	Globe Ranger District OHV Team
Hesston Klenk	Resolution Copper Company
Rick Schonfeld	WestLand Resources
John Godec	Godec, Randall & Associates (GRA)
Debra Duerr	GRA

Welcome and Introductions

Sheryl Cormack, recreation specialist for the Tonto National Forest (TNF) Globe Ranger District introduced her new OHV crew: Meghan, Ashley, and Sam. They will work in the field talking to the public about good trail use, and will also be working on closing routes and cleaning up trails. RUG members welcomed them and thanked them for the good work they're doing.

Arizona Trail Association had provided a paper to RUG members from Arizona State Parks dealing with the subject of single versus multiple use trails, which was acknowledged.

The Tonto National Forest confirmed receipt of the RUG's comments submitted in support of the proposed OHV parking lot near the Superior airport.

A RUG member noted that Pinal County is dropping fire restrictions in November and wondered if the Forest Service will do the same. Adam Bromley said that Tonto National Forest

restrictions are currently set to expire at the end of the month but if conditions don't change it will be extended another month. This is the driest (lowest fuel moisture) it's ever been.

Update on Imerys Concerns re: RUG Trail Plan

A second letter was received from Imerys on their concerns about the RUG Trail Plan. Godec asked RUG members if they have thoughts on this letter. Jason Scow of TNF said that he's communicated with Mary Rasmussen about these letters. She has determined that, since they were not submitted during the comment period, the Final Environmental Impact Statement will serve as the response. Also, Jason thinks Imerys was referring to an old map showing trails going across their property, which is not the case. Imerys has given permission to cross their property on old Forest Road 4. Although they may change their mind about this, the Forest Service is working on the reroute. When that is completed, none of the routes will cross their property. Forest Service is still working with them to get an easement for a small segment of trail to connect with Arnett trail. Tom Hawk was reported to have said that, in principle, if there's no mineral resource along this small segment Imerys would be OK with it. Resolution clarified that patented mining claims are essentially private property, but the RUG trails avoid those.

A RUG member suggested that they've lived with this for a while and "it keeps getting turned up". He suggested that the group send a letter to Imerys reiterating the belief that there will be increased recreation in this area with or without the trail system and campground, and the RUG thinks its plan is the best option for managing recreation in this area. Other members thought the proper approach would be to send the letter to the Forest Service, since the Imerys letters have not been addressed to the RUG.

Members felt that they have tried to be responsible. There's been a multi-year process and wide knowledge of this proposal. The RUG has been good about submitting comments and information, while Imerys missed the EIS comment period and they have ignored the RUG. It was generally felt that the company had opportunities to comment in a reasonable timeframe. Members hoped that Tom Hawk from Imerys would attend the RUG meetings.

The group recognizes that Imerys has concerns about the Castleberry Campground, blasting, and the general increase in recreation in the area. However, they feel that all Imerys property can be avoided if FR4 is rerouted, blasting control is completely the responsibility of Imerys, and several mitigation measures have been offered by Resolution to address concerns. After discussion of possible future actions or legal challenges, and the pros and cons of additional responses or letters, it was agreed to take no further action. The group reiterated that this issue needs to be resolved among Resolution, Imerys, and the Forest Service. They want to move forward with their plans and not spend any more time on it. They can keep the option open of submitting more holistic comments after the FEIS is released.

Trail Planning & Improvement Updates

Status of IMERYYS Easement, FR 4 to Arnett Trail: There is no additional news on this.

FR 4 Reroute Design: The Forest Service reported that their Enterprise Team has prepared all the specifications and a cost estimate. They now need to find funding, determine who's going to take the lead, and complete a NEPA assessment.

Status of sign installation for Arnett Creek Trail and Arizona Trail: Greg Waterman and Bill Scott will be back in November and will resume work on this.

Plans for LOST completion from airport to FS trail to Arnett Creek: This LOST itself is complete but just needs signage. There are Forest Service or user-created routes in this area that can be confusing. Greg and Bill will be back in November and would like to get together with Jim Schenk to figure this out. They will develop a plan to present to RUG.

Old Queen Creek Bridge: Todd Pryor talked to ADOT, who said that the trail will likely be closed for an extended period. Pedestrian access will not be provided. ADOT said the idea is "not off the table" but it's not part of this current project. A RUG member expressed concern that people will go through a fence if they need to park at the top and walk around it. Pedestrian access from the bottom should be provided and would need to be agreed by Resolution, who owns this property. ADOT would also need to give approval.

Superior Wayfinding Study – RUG Input

The group asked the status of this study and wondered if any input or suggestions from them would be useful. The Mayor reported that Council approved the Request for Proposal and will hire Kemley Horne for \$35,000. Public outreach meetings will be held, as well, for this study. Regarding a role for the RUG, this depends on what happens with trails; the Town of Superior is annexing a lot of this area so trail signage might be a consideration.

Boyce Thompson Arboretum asked how to get the highway sign saying State Parks fixed. This seems to be a grey area of responsibility; if the sign was located within Superior, the town could fix it. No one had an answer to this question.

Other Business

Update on EIS: The group asked the Forest Service if there is any update on the Environmental Impact Statement. They said they're on track to release it by the end of the year. RUG members felt that they need to be able to digest the FEIS quickly and prepare a response from the group.

Is Superior requesting another National Park Service grant for next year? The town has submitted a request but their contact, Adam Milnor, is gone and there are only two other people statewide who do this. So, they don't know what might happen.

"LOST Fundraiser for Nanook's Birthday": The Mayor humorously started a campaign to raise funds for the LOST in honor of her dog. People can contribute to this fundraiser on Facebook.

Wallace Garden at Boyce Thompson Arboretum: Lynne Nemeth announced that this new garden is now open and noted that “it’s spectacular”. There’s been a lot of publicity and TV coverage. Although there was a delay due to COVID, the opening was a wonderful experience. There will be ‘petite picnics’ with small groups and short tours. Let Lynne know if anybody wants a tour and she’ll arrange it.

Superior Annexation Initiative: The Mayor said she appreciates the signing of a pre-annexation agreement with Resolution. The Council has approved this, so the town can annex the Castleberry property, the Arboretum, and other areas. Imerys has not signed an agreement, meaning that they are giving up some rights. Although mining is permit-exempt through the county, if Imerys doesn’t sign the agreement they would need to get permits through the town. Each agreement is different; for example, for Castleberry it specifies that the town would provide services for the campground. The annexation area covers about 6 square miles, most of it National Forest. Since the Arboretum will officially be in the Town of Superior, this could play into the wayfinding study, which could allow signage from the Arboretum to town on US60.

In related news, the Arboretum fall plant sale is going on through next weekend. Everyone must wear masks.

Multigenerational Center Update: There has been a “major pivot” around Superior’s multigenerational center. Because expected funding was not available, the town is now trying to work with Elijah Cardon to purchase the old High School. If all goes well, this transaction will close before Christmas.

Volunteers Sought: Sheryl Cormack of TNF told the group that the Picketpost volunteers aren’t coming back this year; therefore, she asked if anyone knows of people who would be interested in being stewards or hosts. The group suggested that the Forest Service write an announcement and RUG members will pass it on to their contacts and constituents. They felt this announcement would be better coming from TNF.

Next Steps, Next Meeting

The RUG would like to continue meeting every month, but Nov. 11 is Veteran’s Day. It was suggested that we look at an alternative date. The facilitators will canvass the group and suggest the most desirable time.

It was later agreed to meet on:

Thursday, November 12

10:00am to Noon

online