

Recreation User Group
Meeting 29
December 9, 2020
MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting Attendees

Representative	Organization
Fred Gaudet	Arizona Trail Association
Greg Waterman	Sun City Anthem Hiking Club
John Bricker	Tonto Recreational Alliance (TRAL)
Jim Schenck	Rebuild Superior, LOST & CWG
Mila Besich	Mayor, Town of Superior
Todd Pryor	Manager, Town of Superior
Erik Filsinger	Queen Creek Coalition
Elizabeth Butler	Friend of the Tonto, equestrians
Tom Hawk	Imerys Plant Manager
Nick Lund	Tracks (Apache-Sitgreaves NF, Lakeside Ranger Dist.)
Chris Burkhardt	Sun City Anthem Hiking Club
Pete Casillas	Superior Chamber of Commerce
Sheryl Cormack	Tonto National Forest, Globe District Recreation
Adam Bromley	Tonto National Forest, Globe Ranger
Hesston Klenk	Resolution Copper Company
Rick Schonfeld	WestLand Resources
John Godec	Godec, Randall & Associates (GRA)
Debra Duerr	GRA

Welcome, Introductions, Housekeeping

John Godec reviewed the agenda and asked the group to think about what they want to discuss and explore in 2021, which we'll talk about later in the meeting.

In local news, the mayor provided instructions on how to make a donation to buy an *FBLA Fill-a-Bowl* shirt for which proceeds will go to the Superior Food Bank.

Adam Bromley of the Tonto National Forest (TNF) reported that he hasn't heard a solid date for release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), but they're waiting for the required federal land appraisal to be done. It could be the end of January. A RUG member asked for clarification on FEIS timing. If the appeal period begins after July, and people with standing are able to comment, do we have to wait for lawsuits to be settled before implementation of mitigation? Lawsuits are expected but the Forest Service don't know what they'll entail. It may be reasonable to assume that everything in the Record of Decision (ROD) could be litigated, in which case there could be a stay placed on the EIS. In this case, we would need to wait until that is settled. The NEPA compliance for the RUG trails system is included in the EIS, as well as the archaeological work.

Godec asked Tom Hawk if there are any updates on Imerys' issues. Hawk said they're waiting for more information from Resolution on the campground and mitigation suggestions. Resolution confirmed that they are moving this forward now that they are working on more mitigation specifics. Imerys is working with FS Sheryl Cormack at Tonto National Forest on the easement for Forest Road 4; an attorney is on board to start writing the easement.

A RUG member asked the Town of Superior if the annexation will be taking place this month. Todd Prior responded that as soon as they get pre-annexation agreements in place they need to submit them to the county and hold a January Council meeting to approve the annexation.

Discussion on Resolution & Town of Superior Mitigation Letters

Godec noted that the discussions the RUG has had over the last few months have caught the attention of Resolution, who has responded to these concerns. The mayor is expecting a letter back from the TNF Supervisor, Tom Torres, and will set a meeting between Superior and Resolution with Forest Service participation. The town has meetings scheduled with Resolution on water mitigation and socioeconomics this week. They are remaining vigilant on these issues and intend to pursue them. They expect that some things will be documented in writing, as they have requested. They want to see exact and firm responses, with timelines. A main objective is to firm up commitments for RUG trail maintenance.

It was reported that the town attorney found some Good Neighbor Agreements between mining companies and communities in Montana, and the town hopes that this might serve as a model for Superior. Hesston Klenk said he's open to exploring this approach, and he's familiar with the Montana initiatives. This could be a future project for the RUG and CWG.

Updates on RUG initiatives

FR4 Environmental Assessment

A RUG member asked for clarification that the NEPA assessment on FR4 is separate from the overall trail plan. The TNF confirmed this.

Trail Plan Management Organization

Nick Lund wanted to talk with the group about an idea he has based on the experience of his group, Tracks, in the White Mountains. He suggested a single organization that would involve all user groups could be designated to oversee trail construction and maintenance. It would be a 501(c)3, report to the RUG, and have oversight by the Forest Service. He and other RUG members have contacted the motorized groups, hikers, mountain bikers, and are working to contact equestrians. Although the Tracks group only represents nonmotorized uses they coordinate closely with motorized groups, who can charge a fee for licenses. Sheryl Cormack shared a link to the Tracks website (<https://www.trackswhitemountains.org/>), and she strongly endorsed this concept. A great feature of this website is that it includes maps of all area trails.

John Bricker noted that the funding issue might require that the organizations be kept separate; however, TRAL has worked on this kind of initiative (trail maintenance, reconstruction) for

years. Lund observed that the critical agreement is to work together even if there are two organizations. Erik Filsinger also noted that the climbers have an organization (Queen Creek Coalition) but sees that it would be possible to work together.

The group wondered whether this group would oversee work being done by others, and whether it would be able to receive grants and other funding. Hesston Klenk noted that the financial mechanism for funding by Resolution hasn't been finalized by the Forest Service yet. The wording on the proposal is that outside funding would also be welcomed. Therefore, there is no need to limit the groups that could bring in funding to benefit the entire trail system.

It was pointed out that LOST was formed this way but would need to be greatly expanded to meet this vision. The town was the fiduciary for the LOST (paid bills, applied for grants, etc.). Todd Pryor envisions the LOST board expanding to include at least current RUG members. You need a nonprofit to accomplish this. They could contract to outside groups to do the work. The RUG agreed to consider how this might be accomplished.

Recognizing that setting up a nonprofit organization is an onerous process it makes the most sense to use LOST, which has already gone through all this. Coordination with TRAL and others would be critical. The mayor noted that the LOST was set up with the expectation that they would eventually expand, and the infrastructure is there. This made sense to most RUG members. Todd noted that the RUG has an intellectual property base that could easily be transferred over to an organization such as LOST. The process of applying for grants, managing them, and constructing even small projects requires careful management and coordination.

It was suggested that the LOST prepare a proposal for the RUG on how and whether they would be willing to do this, and how it could be done. The Forest Service should also be involved in this conversation since a lot of Forest Service land is involved. A name change was also suggested to better reflect the breadth of the effort. Mayor Besich said she'll discuss this with LOST and report back.

Lund talked about the history of a mountain bike event in the White Mountains, which is now run by Epic Rides in Tucson. High school mountain biking is the fastest-growing sport in the state, so there is enormous economic benefit to the local community from such an event. The group pointed out that this trail system has been designed to be a great mountain biking system. The facilitators will send information to Lund about past RUG efforts in this regard.

Adam Bromley cautioned the group of the need to keep this as simple as possible. He emphasized that the Forest Service needs to be able to coordinate with as few groups as possible in order to be efficient and effective.

Installation of Lost/Arnett Creek Trail Signs

Greg Waterman provided an update. Two signs have been installed on the Picketpost trail with two more to go on Friday, with Shawn's help. The installation is difficult due to subsurface conditions. Greg will send photos of the signs, which are very professional looking. From LOST over the hill there will be more/different signs to make it less confusing for folks.

Queen Creek Cleanup

Arizona Wild is removing invasive plants on Queen Creek, and they have been asked to expand the area to get rid of trees of heaven, more upstream. A grant will need to be applied for. Cormack said that Ryan Nicholas at FS already working on this.

Climbing Area Directional Signage

Queen Creek Coalition said they placed signs from the Atlantis parking lot to the climbing trail. A RUG member said he saw Erik Filsinger on an Arizona Highways TV show recently. It was noted that the Olympics are considering adding climbing. All this points to the potential for future world-class climbing activity in Superior.

Forest Service Updates

Sheryl Cormack reported that the grant from State Parks for a staging area near the golf course is stalled but may be released this Spring. Work probably won't begin until next winter.

She showed a map of where the OHV patrollers are working. She's directing them to prioritize the Pinal City area, and asked the RUG members to outreach to users to explain why roads may be closed off to protect the resource.

Equestrian Issues

There have been suggestions for an equestrian and single-vehicle parking lot and possibly another equestrian trail to Picketpost. Cormack asked the group to provide feedback. Elizabeth Butler will contact her.

Waterman asked for additional equestrian contacts for the trail maintenance efforts. Butler feels that it might be up to the LOST to identify additional contacts. The mayor reiterated that the LOST is very open to expanded membership and initiatives.

Suggestions for Meeting Topics, Study Needs, Action Items

RUG members agreed that implementation of the trail system is their first priority. It's assumed that the EIS will be approved including the RUG trail plan, so we should be working on how to implement it. Klenk referenced Resolution's commitment to start construction within a specified time of the Record of Decision.

Next Steps, Next Meeting

Mayor Besich thanked everyone for their efforts in this unusual year, and wished everyone Happy Holidays.

The next RUG meeting will be held on:

Wednesday, January 13

10:00am to Noon

online