

Recreation User Group
Meeting 30
January 20, 2021
MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting Attendees

Representative	Organization
Fred Gaudet	Arizona Trail Association
Greg Waterman	Sun City Anthem Hiking Club
Jerry Stevenson	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	Friends of the Tonto, equestrians
Tom Hawk	Imerys Plant Manager
Nick Lund	Tracks
Pete Casillas	Superior Chamber of Commerce
Adam Bromley	Tonto National Forest, Globe Ranger District
Hesston Klenk	Resolution Copper Company
Ericka Vasquez	Resolution Copper Company
Mary Morissette	Resolution Copper Company
Rick Schonfeld	WestLand Resources
John Godec	Godec, Randall & Associates (GRA)
Debra Duerr	GRA

Welcome, Introductions, Housekeeping

John Godec canvassed the group to confirm that they wanted to meet at this time or postpone the meeting until later in the day, since it is at the same time as the presidential inauguration. They agreed to meet now.

Members of the RUG introduced themselves. Greg Waterman noted that Brian Staltz from Arizona Wilderness Coalition may be joining the group. He has been performing invasive species removal from Arnett Canyon. Todd Pryor also asked the facilitators to invite Maricela Solis de Kester of BHP legacy properties to join the RUG since she is interested in learning about the group's plans. It was also suggested that the RUG try to encourage membership from the birding community; Craig Anderson of the Maricopa Audubon Society may be a contact.

Target Shooting Discussion

Pete Casillas suggested that we add recreational target shooters to the RUG, and this prompted a group discussion of the larger issue of target shooting constraints and opportunities. It was

noted that the Superior area has been getting increased use for this activity. A major challenge is that OHV'ers and shooters tend to find their own places to shoot, which may create public safety and environmental concerns. Casillas explained that the area just south of the Highlands has been designated as a target shooting area since WWII. This range has self-appointed caretakers like Red Bear and other individuals, so it's cleaned up and users are reminded to 'pack it in, pack it out'. He recommends that this site should be officially designated as a target shooting range. It was pointed out by RUG members that this area has caught on fire on a regular basis, and may need more attention by the Forest Service. A RUG member pointed out that the new trail head by the parking gates is ¼ mile from the shooting range, so we might need to watch that, as there is currently no signage or warnings. Casillas offered to investigate possible representatives of the target shooting community to join the RUG. A map of this site will be sent to WestLand Resources to include in the area database.

Forest Service representatives explained that the Tonto National Forest doesn't have any designated shooting areas, mainly because of liability, but they also are forced to do a lot of cleanup from this activity. There have been areas closed to target shooting, but this is very unpopular. This tends to be a political issue with different groups having very different preferences. Adam Bromley suggested that designating such an area will be difficult and will take some time, since there has not been any environmental study completed under NEPA in the past. To initiate such a process, there would likely need to be a group interested in taking it on and starting a NEPA process. Typically, these areas operate under special use permits in other Forest Service locations, and the permittee groups are responsible for them. Lead buildup in the soil is a concern, over which the Forest Service has been sued, and fire is also a significant issue for these areas. It was suggested that as soon as you put shooters into an area, you have to get everyone else out since recreational shooting affects every other kind of recreation in some way.

It was noted that the consultants doing planning studies for Superior have been promoting target shooting as an economic development opportunity. They are suggesting a different place on private property with an indoor range. While this is a significant possible use, people understand that it presents problems for the Forest Service as well as for the town in terms of public safety, fire protection, etc. RUG members concluded that the design of a shooting range must be done for public safety. They think that the main issue is influencing people's behavior, not necessarily with some legal designation.

Bromley feels that, ultimately, the Superior area probably needs an overall recreation plan from the Forest Service perspective. This could be something like a National Recreation Area (NRA), but this isn't realistic in the short term. The Mayor said she'd like to see Superior working toward becoming a NRA, and mentioned that there may be a connection with LOST for this. They will also need to work hand-in-hand with TRAL. Increased recreation use is happening quickly, and we need to work to make sure we have plans in place and we're 'not overrun'.

The group agreed that we should add target shooting to the RUG's discussions and possibly its plans. It would be to everyone's benefit to address and try to manage the issue. There will always be some conflict between motorized off-roaders and shooters. The Forest Service is

concerned that if they open an area to shooting they will be accepting all the liability. Recreational shooting has no organization, which is a challenge. There are some small gun clubs that are generally aligned with the National Rifle Association, and they always claim they act responsibly. Because most shooters are random and individual, it's hard to find and communicate with them.

Acknowledge Release of Final Environmental Impact Statement for Resolution Copper Project

Godec pointed the group to a summary of EIS mitigation measures outlined in the Draft Record of Decision that was distributed to the RUG.

The group's main concern was the number of miles of trails being approved by the Forest Service, which is significantly less than is included in the RUG trail plan that appeared in the Draft EIS. Resolution confirmed that they are only committed to funding what is approved by the Forest Service, so the endowment fund will shrink dramatically based on 11 miles rather than 50 miles of trails. On the positive side, it was noted that all the environmental analysis, including cultural resources, has been done on the entire trail system, so it might be easier in future to go back and use more of the initial trails.

RUG members asked Mary Morissette for an explanation of how the approved plan got so small. While she wasn't involved in internal Forest Service discussions, she assumes the smaller area was developed based on a number of considerations like travel management, cultural resources, and other conflicts. She thinks the plan does not include any new construction of motorized trails and does not include existing authorized roads/trails such as Arnett. She believes, however, that once this smaller area is developed the Forest Service is not precluding expansion. Since the Final EIS does not include a map of the approved plan, Mary will try to get a map of what's been approved. RUG members are particularly concerned about the status of the trail around Picketpost, which is 4-5 miles long, and they feel this would be a great loss. Woods Canyon is also of concern. They wondered if some previous discussion about only allowing a 1:1 mitigation for the loss of trails in Oak Flat influenced this decision.

The RUG would like to invite the Tonto National Forest project manager for the EIS, Mary Rasmussen, to come to their next meeting and explain the process of developing the Forest Service trail plan that appears in the Record of Decision. The facilitators will invite her.

Fred Gaudet also asked for clarification of references to mitigation for the Arizona Trail water pipeline crossing. The mitigation refers to a pipeline management plan, but that plan doesn't say anything about the trail. It was noted that the Magma corridor is private property and people need permission to cross it. Mary Morissette will try to clarify this. Probably, the Resolution plan will be used to authorize an easement for the Arizona Trail. She thinks there must be a prior agreement for use, and she will try to find it. Mary Rasmussen would be the best point of contact on this issue.

Godec asked the RUG if they would like to make any comments on the Final EIS during the 45-day objection period. While members are very concerned about the reduced size of the trail system, they decided to learn more from the Forest Service before deciding whether to object.

Continue Discussion on Trail Funding and Management Approaches

RUG members asked Resolution if there is a timeframe for funding and constructing this approved plan. Hesston Klenk said it's tied to impacts, but Resolution has agreed to start this process within 6 months of approval of the final Record of Decision. There was a question of whether the endowment money would be given to LOST or another organization for implementation. Resolution doesn't know exactly how it will work, but there will probably be a connection with the Forest Service since it's their land and they will probably need to manage it. If Arnett trail is an example, there were agreements made between the Globe Ranger District and trail-building organizations, but that used Forest Service money. Hesston thinks that, in any event, the funding would need to go through the Forest Service. A RUG member observed that "the good news is that this will happen faster, but there won't be as much of it".

It was noted that the EIS commits to continuation of the Community Working Group, so does that mean the RUG too? Hesston said he doesn't know, and it probably depends on how the RUG and LOST implementation strategies develop.

Jim Schenck of LOST provided RUG members with a copy of the letter they sent to Tonto National Forest informing them the LOST board has been expanded and they intend to expand their activities. LOST has the legal standing as a 501(c)3 corporation to take on fiduciary responsibility for trail construction. They are not interested in or able to overlap what TRAL does because of different funding mechanisms. They would like RUG members to be represented on their board, as well, if any are interested. Nick Lund and Greg Waterman have joined the board. Jim Schenck invited RUG members to attend the LOST Board Meeting tomorrow and sent an invitation to everyone.

The group wondered if LOST is set up to receive money from Resolution for trails. This is a possibility, although it's more likely that the Forest Service would administer this for trails on their lands. It was noted that the Forest Service likes to have as few entities to deal with as possible. In this case, TRAL could administer motorized trails and LOST could administer nonmotorized. Some members feel that LOST articles of incorporation are compatible with them being able to oversee the trail work. They could, for example, hire contractors. It was pointed out that most of these trails are now within the Superior town limits, following the recent annexation. The new town limits should be added to the trail plan map, when we obtain one.

There was discussion about how coordination could be accomplished with other groups who have separate programs, e.g. Queen Creek Coalition. Pryor envisions LOST as a coordinator to encourage regional recreation planning. Representatives of those groups were encouraged to join the LOST board. Members agreed that the RUG doesn't have the resources to do NEPA studies, but they can support the plans of others. The maintenance plan that's being discussed

through LOST might be a good avenue to bring groups together. The RUG may not be the ones who initiate activities but can be a coordinating group for discussions and resolving conflicts.

The group discussed whether this means that LOST will replace RUG. The Mayor discussed the origins of the RUG and clarified that the RUG is not organized to accept or manage funds, but the LOST is. All agreed that this will be a continuing conversation.

Updates on RUG initiatives

Godec asked if there's anything new in discussions between Resolution and Imerys about the campground. Hesston said there have been a couple of informal conversations, but nothing has been resolved. It was suggested that there's a lot of work to be done to get this going within 18 months after the Record of Decision, such as developing agreements with the Arboretum, etc.

Greg Waterman reported that they are currently working on re-signing LOST around the jungle area. They hope to be done this week. The group asked that Greg let RUG members know when the signage is done, and perhaps send some photos. Schenck said the Aravaipa running group would like a permit for a run soon, and that signage would be most helpful.

Next Steps, Next Meeting

The next RUG meeting is planned for:

Wednesday, February 10

10:00am to Noon

Online

The group agreed that they could accommodate another date or time, depending on when Mary Rasmussen of Tonto National Forest would be available.