

**July 14, 2021**  
**MEETING SUMMARY**

**Meeting Attendees**

*Community Working Group members present both in-person and by ZOOM:*

Silvia Werre – Top of the World  
Jim Schenck –Rebuild Superior, Legends of Superior Trail  
Fred Gaudet – Arizona Trail Association  
Arlynn Godinez – Superior Unified School District Board / Maricopa County  
Mila Besich – Town of Superior  
Jeff Bunkleemann – Central Arizona College  
Lynne Nemeth – Boyce Thompson Arboretum  
Rick Cartier – Superior Chamber of Commerce  
Amanda Moors – Arizona Wildlife Federation  
Bruce Wittig -- Queen Valley Water Department, Fire Department  
Ricardo Provencio – United Superiorites  
Pamela Rabago – Superior Chamber of Commerce

*Community Working Group members not present:*

Tweedy Armitage – Superior Historical Society  
JoAnn Besich – Superior Optimist Club  
Fernando Shipley – Cobre Valley Regional Medical Center Board  
Todd Pryor – Town of Superior  
Pam Bennett – Queen Valley Community Liaison  
Hank Gutierrez - Superior Copper Alliance  
Karen Kitchayan Jones – San Carlos Apache Tribe  
Tino Flores – Copper Corridor Economic Development Coalition  
Anna Flores – Town of Kearny (retired from Town of Kearny and CWG)  
Sylvia Kerlock – Town of Winkelman  
Richard Matthews – Queen Valley Water Board  
Cecil Fendley – Queen Valley Water Board  
Tiffany Rowell – Superior community  
Lynn Martin – JF, JI Ranch  
George Martin – JF, JI Ranch  
Cathy Melvin – Gila County  
Anthony Huerta – Town of Superior  
Mayor Bracamonte – Town of Winkelman  
Gloria Ruiz – Town of Winkelman

*Resolution Copper Company:*

Vicky Peacey -- Environmental and Permits Senior Manager

*Facilitators – Godec, Randall & Associates (GRA):*

John Godec  
Sydney Uphouse

*Public Visitors:*

Jesse Garcia -- Superior Chamber of Commerce

### **Welcome and Housekeeping**

John Godec welcomed everyone and asked that they introduce themselves.

Godec asked Mayor Besich and the other RUG members present to give an update on that day's RUG meeting. The Mayor described the Superior Tourism and Recreation Team (START) initiative introduced by the Forest Service (hereafter, "FS"). She explained that the new group will be parallel to RUG, but will have no ties to Resolution Copper. The first meeting of that new group had to be postponed due to the fires but the fires did not impact FS's desire to move forward with START. The FS stated that everything west of 177 is again open for recreation. FS does not yet know how flooding has been, or will be, affecting the areas. RUG learned that there has been low to moderate soil scorching in the Superior area, meaning vegetation should start to grow back quickly. However, the status of the saguaros can take years to assess. Telegraph and Arnett Canyons were not burned as badly as what was expected. Land allotments and ranchers may pose some challenges in moving forward with START projects. Some trails like Burro Run still need to be GPS'd per the Town of Superior Fire Marshal. The Town of Superior and the FS is working on setting up a public education presentation on the Burn Area Emergency Response (BAER) reports. Finally, the town is working with the Boyce Thompson Arboretum to do debris clean-up. There are currently no huge flood concerns for Superior.

There was some general discussion on the origin of the wildfire, which has been a highly debated topic.

Lynne Nemeth from Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA) stated that there is no guarantee that vegetation will return as it was because of regional temperature and precipitation changes. She explained the need to be proactive in rehabilitation and having to make decisions on what to plant now without really knowing what the climate will be like in the future. It was asked if invasives will outcompete natives as vegetation comes back. Mayor Besich responded that FS expects to see native grasses coming back but was not specific on which species. She was not sure whether or not seed sources that were burned away would be artificially restored, but she did mention that nurseries have expressed interest in providing plants to help with restoration. Despite rehabilitation efforts, people will have to accept that some ecosystems may never come back as they were. Lynne confirmed this and said that the Saguaro Desert may end up like the Mojave desert due to changes in temperature and precipitation and fire events.

Concern was expressed over overgrown trails being fire hazards. Mayor Besich responded that the Tonto Forest Service and other federal agencies do not have enough resources for maintenance and resources and people are stressed. Americorps groups are expected to come back to Superior to help clean up, but a lack of resources means that FS is unable to take all preventative measures for fires. The Town of Superior has previously requested resources and funding for prevention, but were denied.

A group member stated that there needs to be a faster response time by federal agencies to wildfires, but this comes down to resources. It was suggested that changes in the retardant used by firefighters may have also contributed to the severity of the fire. However, one member argued that vegetation was already pretty much dead due to drought which is why it burned so quickly.

Mayor Besich stated that FS did a back-burn to protect Superior, and this created a safe zone. However, some areas that did not receive preventative measures are under high stress for recovery. There has been a lot of reassuring news, but there are still a lot of unknowns. Significant precipitation or ground movement could be catastrophic as they could cause flooding, landslides, and/or rock falls. Heavy monsoons have already closed highways in Globe-Miami. Mayor Besich explained that CWG needs to be leaders in saying that something needs to be done differently because current actions are unsustainable.

It was asked if it would be beneficial to call on the Arizona congressional delegation to provide more resources to FS. Mayor Besich responded that at a recent land managers' meeting, it was agreed that stakeholders need to start advocating for more resources for FS. Politics and natural disasters have stripped resources from the local FS.

### **Additional Discussions and Future Meeting Topics**

A list of ongoing and proposed meeting topics had been handed out to the group at the beginning of the meeting. Godec asked the group what potential meeting topics they wanted to prioritize going forward. There were no immediate additional priorities suggested.

It was asked whether or not the congressional letter discussed in the previous meeting had been sent out yet. Godec responded that the letter would be sent out that week.

Godec asked if Resolution or any officials had received any formal update from Senator Kyrstyn Sinema or any others on the status of the anticipated EIS report. No updates were reported. A group member asked Vicky Peacey if she had thoughts on the DOJ being in favor of the land exchange. Vicky responded that the DOJ is in favor of the law, and the courts delivered a multi-page rebuttal to Apache Stronghold claims. She anticipated that the DOJ would rule in favor of FS.

Mayor Besich gave credit to the congressional delegation, saying that federal elected officials have been available at a moment's notice throughout fires and that the delegation believes the DEIS will be published this summer, although there has been no apparent movement in consulting with tribes. Vicky chimed in that FS has re-reviewed the EIS documents and that the documents will need to be updated to reflect current conditions post-fire. She stated that it is highly unlikely CWG will see anything this summer. Mayor Besich responded that there is currently a lot of politics going on in DC and across agencies, including the infrastructure bill, which is taking up a lot of agency and congressional time. She suggested that CWG may see EIS

this fall. Mayor Besich also stated that Superior is officially in the House appropriation bill. If the bill is passed, \$2 million will be given for a multi-gen center at the old high school.

Relative to future meeting topics Lynne Nemeth stated that BTA is very interested in getting a Dark Sky designation for the Arboretum and encouraged Superior to go for a Dark Sky designation as well. Mayor Besich responded that the lights recently installed in Superior are meant to be dark sky compliant. She stated there are challenges to being fully compliant, but the town will get as close as it can to the designation.

It was reiterated that the FS will be holding a public presentation on the BAER Reports and GRA committed to deliver any printed reports that it receives to CWG and RUG members.

Members then suggested topics for future meetings should include water usage, water quality, and water management. It was suggested that a broader meeting be set up to get more people involved in getting water back in Queen Creek. The Mayor responded that Arizona Water recently kicked off their water sustainability program, and BTA is currently teaching people about water sustainability. Superior does a great job conserving water already, but it was agreed that there does need to be a broader discussion on water issues. Discussions always go much longer and become much more complex than anticipated, however. She suggested having regular updates on what's going on to keep everyone up-to-date

Godec suggested to Vicky Peacey that we may need to go back to the beginning of past water discussions to revisit water problems. Vicky suggested bringing in outside experts again to keep everyone up-to-date on various topics. Mayor Besich stated that we may need to have separate water meetings. Godec suggested revisiting a previous idea of a day-long symposium with water being the primary topic.

## **Next Meeting**

**September 2021**

Date, time, and location TBD