

September 6, 2021
MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting Attendees

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

Todd Pryor – Town of Superior
Jim Schenck – Rebuild Superior, Legends of Superior Trail
Arlynn Godinez – Superior Unified School District Board / Maricopa County
Mila Besich – Town of Superior
Jeff Bunkleemann – Central Arizona College
Pam Bennett – Queen Valley Community Liaison
Lynne Nemeth – Boyce Thompson Arboretum
Rick Cartier – Superior Chamber of Commerce
Amanda Moors – Arizona Wildlife Federation
Bruce Wittig -- Queen Valley Water Department, Fire Department
Fernando Shipley – Cobre Valley Regional Medical Center Board
Silvia Werre – Top of the World

Community Working Group members not present:

Tweedy Armitage – Superior Historical Society
Fred Gaudet – Arizona Trail Association
Hank Gutierrez - Superior Copper Alliance
JoAnn Besich – Superior Optimist Club
Ricardo Provencio – United Superiorites
Pamela Rabago – Superior Chamber of Commerce
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
Hesston Klenk -- Manager--Native American & Regional Government Engagement

Facilitators – Godec, Randall & Associates (GRA):

John Godec

Sydney Uphouse

Guests:

Dr. Sara Souther - Research professor in the landscape conservation initiative at Northern Arizona University

Welcome and Introductions

John Godec welcomed everyone and asked that they introduce themselves.

Housekeeping and Local Issues

Godec asked the group if they had any local news to share. The group was informed that the previous day, September 7, 2021, was the Town of Superior's 45th anniversary of incorporation. The Town would be hosting a business appreciation breakfast, which all members of the CWG were invited to attend. Additional event announcements included Boyce Thompson Arboretum After Hours on September 10, the Apache Leap Mining Festival on October 22, and Second Fridays - Music in the Park.

Godec asked the group if they would like Matrix New World Engineering to test for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), a slurry compound, in addition to other tests being performed on local groundwater. The group had expressed previous concern about the contents of fire-fighting slurry used near town during the wildfires early in the summer. The group wondered if any of that material might have long term negative impacts to soil and water. PFAS are no longer used but have been part of the makeup of slurry material and the USFS recognizes that old stockpiles might still contain these chemicals. The group said yes, and Godec said he would discuss this further with Hesston. (UPDATE: Resolution agreed to pay the cost of adding that to the testing protocol and Matrix has been asked to do so.)

Emory Oak Tribal Restoration Initiative (EOCTRI) Presentation and Discussion

Godec asked Dr. Sara Souther to explain EOCTRI and provide an update on the Emory Oak Preservation around Oak Flat. Resolution Copper informed the group that the partnership between Resolution and those involved with EOCTRI came about at the request of the Apache tribes. Other groups involved include Northern Arizona University, the US Forest Service (FS), and the state of Arizona.

Dr. Souther shared her screen via Zoom with the group. She began by introducing her personal research on conservation of traditional-use plants and further elaborated on background as well as why EOCTRI is important to her.

The group learned that Emory oaks are often the dominant tree in Arizona ecosystems and are considered a keystone species. They reach ages of over 200 years old, and their acorns are featured in the traditional diet of the Apache People. Apache elders initially sounded the alarm that Emory oaks were not reestablishing themselves, and they did not believe the groves were healthy. They pointed out that Emory oak seedlings compete with shrubs for water and have a hard time becoming established, especially with the recent increase in shrub density and decrease in water availability. In addition, Emory oak forests were traditionally believed to be

open with little understory growth. However, these forests are now more dense and shrubby. They burn with less frequency and higher intensity than traditional forests, and livestock has also degraded Emory oak seedlings. As a result, oak stands have been lost.

EOCTRI emerged from a decade-long attempt to involve the FS in Apache tribes' connection to Emory oaks and to the conservation of the oaks. Dr. Souther explained that the purpose of ECOTRI was to establish restoration treatments and conduct experiments to help guide the adaptive management of Emory oaks. Dr. Souther shared the following timeline of EOCTRI's research:

Fall 2018: Initial Emory oak meetings begin
12/2018 - Proposal development which included restoration actions
5/2019: Development of data collection protocols
7/2019: Pretreatment data collection
12/2019: Analysis of FIA data
12/2020: First Emory oak manuscript
9/2021: Collection of pre- and post-treatment data

Dr. Souther also talked in detail about the restoration objectives and research protocols and methodology of the project.

The group learned that there is currently a large grove of 100-150 year old Emory oaks at Oak Flat with several smaller groves around it. In addition, CWG was informed that EOCTRI does not plan to extend the restoration treatments discussed in the presentation to Oak Flat at this time. However, restoration efforts may be extended to the JI Ranch. Some concern was expressed over not extending treatments to Oak Flat given the need to protect the area from future wildfires. Climate change was also mentioned as a major threat to native vegetation and wildlife. It was suggested that the town of Superior get involved in post-fire restoration efforts for Oak Flat, perhaps by designing a forest management plan.

Godec asked Vicky what the long-term prospect is for Emory oaks at Oak Flat once the copper mine is built. Vicky responded that the current campground in the grove will not be impacted, and any possible impacts on the oaks would not occur for decades. Native tribes would still have access to the campground and grove.

Mayor Besich congratulated Dr. Souther on her team's detailed work and thanked Resolution for leveraging their resources to help with mitigation. The group thanked Dr. Souther for her presentation.

Resolution Copper Updates

Godec asked if there were any updates regarding the status of the FEIS report. Hesston responded that recent feedback has been positive. The documentation provided by Resolution was described as thorough and robust. Resolution expects letters to go out to 11 native tribes to reinitiate consultation as part of the rescindment by the Biden Administration. The letters will discuss measures being taken in response to concerns raised by the tribes. It is possible that

politics and uncertainty with the proposed infrastructure bill may be delaying the FEIS process. Resolution predicts that the FEIS consultation will last another 4-6 months, with a final decision expected almost a year after the FEIS was initially rescinded.

The group discussed how the Tonto FS has been struggling with political pressures and has not re-initiated consultation with the tribes. The Tonto is grossly under-resourced and all resources are currently going toward firefighting. With larger and more frequent fires, and fire season extended, resources are being exhausted, and the FS is not available to do much else. In addition, there was concern that those fighting the fires do not use local knowledge and do not know where important local landmarks are. Several members of the group agreed that fire management needs to change nationally. It was stressed that CWG members be cognizant of the tough entities they will be up against as a result of underfunded and under-resourced government agencies and extreme politics. Mayor Besich mentioned that she had requested a stakeholder catchup meeting with the FS. This request was granted, and a meeting has been scheduled for next month. Mayor Besich hopes to use this meeting to revisit a list of previously discussed priorities.

Godec asked if there were any updates on mine construction. Hesston responded that there were not many updates. They are starting to set up for some underground drilling, and they have not experienced any sinking. Things are currently on hold because of the FEIS. Resolution will be requesting more funding (100s of millions of dollars) from Rio Tinto in October. Hesston predicted that there is a 50/50 chance of these funds being approved.

Final Thoughts

Godec announced that the next water monitoring event will take place at the end of September. A highly qualified hydrology group has been hired by Resolution to monitor water quality in Queen Creek.

Jim Schenck announced that ADOT is expected to come to the next RUG meeting. Supposedly, ADOT will be shutting down trails for a couple years to run machinery along Queen Creek. It was unclear when/if this would actually happen and what the impact would be. Hesston stated that Resolution has been told there will be shut-downs of trails when heavy work is happening above. There was concern that this type of disruption would mean there wouldn't be any trails left after construction and trails would not be restored. The group agreed trails must be restored, and Resolution should also be in attendance at next month's RUG meeting.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, October 13, 2021

6:00pm (MST)

In-person at Superior Chamber of Commerce and online via Zoom
RSVP needed in order to prepare meals for in-person attendees.

The next CWG meeting will discuss copper markets and pricing