

**Candelaria Farm Preserve
Technical Advisory Group**

Rio Grande Nature Center State Park • 2901 Candelaria Rd NW
Education Building

May 10, 2017 • 2:30pm – 4:30pm

MEMBERS

Steve Cox
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DRAFT AGENDA

- 2:30 Introductions
- 2:40 Public Comment
- 2:50 Presentation of TAG purpose – updated Resource Management Plan (RMP)
- 3:10 General discussion of questions and issues
- 3:50 Develop Work Plan
- 4:20 Set tentative timeline for meetings
- 4:30 Adjourn

Next Meeting To Be Determined

NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have a disability and you require special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Open Space Division at 452-5200 at least 3 days prior to the meeting.

Candelaria Farm Preserve Timeline

- 1960s-70s** Citizen activism for establishment of a nature center or recreation area in the North Valley
- 1969** Middle Rio Grande Park Plan noted the value of the site to “insure a permanent open space adjacent to the river for nature study, recreation uses, open space, and urban shaping”
- 1975** CABQ & Bosque del Rio Grande Nature Preserve Society joint study on the relationship between the river’s ecosystems and the metro area and recommended establishing a pond and marsh restoration project on the site
- 1976** State Legislature agreed to partially fund a nature preserve and study center and the City purchased the Candelaria Farm site for that purpose, using – in part – funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (now administered by the National Park Service)
- 1977** - Site purchased; the original 167 acres were composed of 144 acres in two tracts north of Decker Rd and Candelaria Rd and 23 acres north of Campbell Rd and south of Decker
- State Parks and Recreation leased 100 acres of Bosque from the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD), to be managed by the State “for nature study purposes”
- 1978** - City Environmental Planning Commission – with support from City Planning and citizens – approved re-zoning the site to SU-1 (Nature Study Center and Wildlife Preserve)
- The USDA Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resource Conservation Service) conducted a land use and treatment study with recommendations for farming the site as wildlife forage
- 1979** Architect Antoine Predock coordinated development of the *Rio Grande Nature Center and Preserve Master Plan*; the Master Plan divides the site into two areas: a nature study area (the soon to be RGNC State park) and a nature preserve “for the encouragement and protection of native wildlife communities” through limited management activities and maximum “edge condition” where different habitats connect
- 1980** City approved lease of 38.8 acres of the site to the State for the eventual Rio Grande Nature Center State Park
- 1982** City exchanged 8 acres on the northwest corner of Trellis and Campbell for 7 acres owned by the fraternal order of Police that separated the 144-acre parcel from the 23-acre parcel, thus creating a contiguous 174-acre parcel
- ???** City Parks and Recreation took over management of the 7 acres along Rio Grande Blvd as a tree nursery and a “buffer zone to the [Rio Grande Nature] Center” [this would appear to be a “conversion” but there does not seem to be any record of this transaction, including offsetting recreational acreage to incorporate into the site]
- 1983** The State Park and Recreation Division and City Open Space Division signed an MOU and the State developed a comprehensive operation and management plan for the entire site: the *Rio Grande Nature Center Management Plan*, which designated 15 acres to wildlife forage and about 98 acres to commercial crops [there appear to be two separate plans, one for the entire site and one specifically for the RGNC State Park; both plans have the same name]
- 1985** Commercial agriculture formally began on the site
- 1996** Approximately one acre at the southeast corner of the site along the end of the unimproved section of Veranda Rd was “converted” to City use to widen the road, pave it, and provide a turnaround at the end; in exchange, the site gained about one acre of an existing trail north of Montaña on the west side of the river running from the riverside drain east towards the river
- 2004** The Open Space Division developed the *Candelaria Farm Preserve Resource Management Plan* “to address management issues regarding the integration of wildlife conservation with agricultural land use”, declaring the Mission of the site as “to provide habitat for wildlife, demonstrate sustainable farm operation ..., and encourage public education about wildlife and traditional and innovative agriculture” and stating that Open Space Division “has always managed the Candelaria Farm property as an Agricultural Wildlife Preserve”

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act was passed in 1965. Title I, Section 1. (b) states that the purposes of the Act:

... are to assist in preserving, developing, and assuring accessibility to all citizens of the United States of America of present and future generations and visitors ... such quality and quantity of outdoor recreation resources as may be available and are necessary and desirable for individual active participation in such recreation and to strengthen the health and vitality of the citizens of the United States by (1) providing funds for and authorizing Federal assistance to the States in planning, acquisition, and development of needed land and water areas and facilities and (2) providing funds for the Federal acquisition and development of certain lands and other areas.

To receive LWCF funding, a state had to: 1) have a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan; and 2) provide written assurance to the Secretary of the Interior that the state had “the ability and the intention” to finance its share of the cost and to operate and maintain the site at its cost. States could transfer LWCF funds to a political subdivision of the state or some other appropriate public agency. No lands acquired with any LWCF funding could be converted from their intended use (outdoor public recreation) unless the conversion: 1) fit within the state outdoor recreation plan; 2) the replacement site(s) had equal or higher fair market value; 3) the other site(s) had “reasonably equivalent” outdoor recreation value; and 4) the Secretary of the Interior approved.

Agriculture on LWCF Lands

Chapter 3.B.5. Acquisition involving compatible resource management practices. Acquisition of land upon which the project sponsor proposes natural resource management practices such as timber management and grazing, not including agriculture, may be carried out concurrently within the area if they are clearly described in the project proposal, are compatible with and secondary to the proposed outdoor recreation uses, and are approved by the NPS.

Chapter 3. – Acquisition and Development Project Eligibility

B. Criteria for Acquisition

7. Acquisition for delayed outdoor recreation development.

- a. General. LWCF assistance may be available to acquire property for which development of outdoor recreation facilities is planned at a future date. In the interim, between acquisition and development, the property should be open for those public recreation purposes that the land is capable of supporting or that can be achieved with minimum public investment. Non-recreation activities such as agriculture occurring on the property at the time of acquisition may continue for up to three (3) years. In this case NPS will place a financial hold on the project precluding reimbursement until the non-recreation use is terminated. [cf also Chapter 4, Section C.6.b. “New acquisition projects and amendments involving delayed development and interim uses]

9. Acquisitions that will not be assisted.

- i. Acquisition of agricultural land primarily for preservation in agricultural purposes will not receive LWCF assistance.

C. Criteria for Development

6. Facility location requirements.

- e. Agricultural lands. Outdoor recreation and support facilities, such as demonstration farms and wildlife management and hunting areas, may be planned by the project sponsor in conjunction with agricultural activities, provided that the type and extent of the agricultural activity is limited to that necessary to support the outdoor recreation activity.

Purpose of the Technical Advisory Group

In Spring and Summer 2016, neighbors of Candelaria Farm Preserve approached Open Space division staff and the Open Space Advisory Board (OSAB) to resolve issues that worried them regarding management of the agricultural activities at the site. In response, the OSAB approved a draft resolution to the City Council requesting creation of a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to develop a new Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the entire site. The Council approved Resolution R-16-147, which was subsequently amended (R-17-159) to clarify that the OSAB was the lead agency in assembling and facilitating the TAG. A new RMP for Candelaria Farm Preserve has to comply with three requirements:

- *The Council Resolution*
- *Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act* – both the original 1965 legislation (which was amended twice before acquisition of the site but without relevance to this effort) and the currently applicable administrative guidelines (2008 Federal Financial Assistance Manual)
- *The Major Public Open Space (MPOS) Facility Plan (1999)* – developed as a Rank 2 plan within the then-new Albuquerque Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan (updated in 2016)

Council Resolution

The Resolution reaffirmed that the site is to be managed as a “nature study area and wildlife preserve providing access to outdoor recreational activities”. The new RMP will use, clarify, and update the three existing plans as its basis. The TAG will work “with all interested parties” to determine the funding necessary to “return the CFP lands to wildlife croplands and natural areas”, and work collaboratively to secure needed on-going operation and maintenance funds.

LWCF

The LWCF requires a management plan for any lands acquired with LWCF funding. While three plans have been developed for the site, none of them was ever submitted for approval by the relevant LWCF agency (today that is the National Park Service). There are also strict limitations on use of LWCF lands for agriculture (see page 3). Resolving the agricultural uses will have to happen before work on the new RMP can take place

MPOS Facility Plan

The MPOS Facility Plan states that all new developed open space sites must have a management plan of some kind (RMP or Master Development Plan) and lays out the requirements and approval process for these plans. Candelaria Farm Preserve should have an RMP, which includes the following:

- Detailed baseline studies shall be conducted to inventory the following:
 - archeological sites
 - wildlife and vegetation
 - visual resources, opportunities for open space experiences, and other opportunities for satisfying MPOS purposes
- The Resource Management Plan shall:
 - Identify land use “carrying capacity”
 - identify access points
 - identify facility locations, including utility and transportation corridors
 - identify areas to be monitored and develop a monitoring and management plan
 - establish policies for resource management, access and parking, facility management, staffing, fees, interagency cooperation and enforcement
 - classify the parcels within the Resource Management Plan area according to MPOS type according to the criteria contained in Table 2-1
 - evaluate impacts of proposed development within the Major Public Open Space on adjacent areas
 - evaluate reasonable alternative development schemes