

**Candelaria Nature Preserve (CNP)
Technical Advisory Group, (TAG)**

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

August 15, 2019 • 2:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Minutes - Final

Participants - because the attendance list was not returned to Brian, this list is incomplete

Members: Brian Hanson, Chairman, bhanson5@comcast.net: Peggy Norton, Steve Cox, Colleen McRoberts, Carolyn Siegel, Alan Reed, Heather MacCurdy, Judy Kowalski, Dave Parsons, Christiane Hinks

Additional Technical Assistance: James Lewis, John Busemeyer

Community –Dylan Frentzel, Linda Shank, John Busemeyer, Kelly White, Mollie Madden, Dave Belford (Open Space Alliance), Steve Ewing, Ruth Salvaggio, Corey, Melinda Moffit, Roger, Penny Elliston, Bryon Lindsay

Review of Agenda – approved

Review of TAG meeting minutes August 9, 2019 - approved

Announcements from TAG Members

Heather mentioned that the Friends of the Rio Grande Nature Center was having a fund raiser at the Chello Grill August 17; 50 % of the proceeds would go to the Friends Group.

Brian mentioned that he volunteered to write a shorter version of the monitoring section of the Resource Management Plan (RMP) and had exchanged emails with Colleen and Judy.

Alan Reed mentioned that the Open Space Advisory Board (OSAB) wanted a summary of the draft RMP at their next meeting August 27.

Public Comment -

Dave Belford with the Open Space Alliance had read the draft RMP and the Alliance provided their review. Dave stated that many other wildlife refuges did not have a problem with the public disturbing wildlife, mentioned Bosque del Apache, Whitfield and Los Poblanos Fields Open Space. He wanted to know why the TAG is not allowing unlimited public access that is provided elsewhere. Brian responded saying that it is a matter of scale; when you have a large refuge you can have some selected areas with open access. Brian also said there are plenty of biological studies documenting disturbance. Steve Cox mentioned that some refuges have portions that are off limits to the public, especially large areas at Bosque del Apache. Mollie Madden who worked as a volunteer for Whitfield mentioned that there are fewer people there and because CNP is surrounded by the city that disturbance is more likely. Heather also mentioned that the Nature Center restricts public access to some areas already, to reduce the impact of the public on the wildlife there because of the large number of visitors.

One person said that the RMP did not adequately address the impacts of public use on the neighbors. Open gates and parking would cause disturbance to neighbors. Parking on Veranda could be a problem. She wrote a letter to Ike Benton.

A neighbor, Steve Ewing was concerned with future parking and trail use close to Cherokee RD which is immediately north of the Tree Farm on Rio Grande. Are the impacts to neighbors being considered? Right now there is lots of garbage in the Tree Farm and the current operations

includes dumping wood chips, scrap materials and other disturbing activities. He noted that the current plan says that it may be converted to a parking lot and has concerns with open access that may cause crime and other undesirable activities. He suggested a locked gate; perhaps not having a parking lot there; provide the area with permeable surfaces; if a parking lot is necessary then locating it in the middle of the lot, good design and perhaps having screening along the fence to reduce noise to the neighbors. Someone mentioned that the parking lot would be necessary to reduce visitors parking in front of residences. Colleen mentioned that Open Space could have a locked gate at night. She also mentioned that a new bridge over the irrigation ditch would have to be built to accommodate ADA persons and provide safety. Brian mentioned that TAG is hoping that the 4 neighbor groups that are part of TAG are providing input that represent the neighbors' concerns. Judy mentioned the plan, at this point, is just conceptual and that before anything is built, there would be an opportunity for much more public involvement to ensure negative impact to the neighbors is minimized.

Linda Shank said that automobiles have an impact and at Valle de Oro they need a place to park where there is not an impact to wildlife. They have to drive to avoid people walking. Valle de Oro has changed their mission.

Land and Water Conservation Fund – Judy said that LWCF could fund some activities in the future. It is important that the process for the plan was transparent, allowed public input, plan meets community needs. In her conversations with LWCF they said there are at least 3 activities planned for the CNP that meet the public access and outdoor recreation guidelines – study areas, guided walks and viewing. They also are ok with the public being involved with restoration. There is a court case that allows periphery access for LWCF compliance. The current sharecropper relationship with Albuquerque Open Space where the farmer gets income from crops is not acceptable. Agriculture is ok if it supports outdoor recreation and wildlife viewing.

Rio Grande Nature Center State Park - Judy said that State Parks can help by initiating restoration activities in lands that they lease for the Nature Center. like the arrangement between State Parks and Albuquerque Open Space. Part of the state lease goes north of the current ponds and state parks could do restoration there since it is already within the lease area. State Parks might also be able to fund a viewing blind there if it is within the lease areas. Farming occurs on some of that and State Parks may be able to pay for some work. Heather said she sent out an email to volunteers with the Friends group and asked if they would be willing to help with guided trips and other activities in Candelaria South and the area to the north. Many responded they would help. If trips are guided then there is no need to fence off the Discovery pond. State parks would respond to specific situations where sensitive species may be impacted (such as wintering birds) and would also be considerate of impacts to nearby residences. Wildlife research could be used to help with management. Three tours per week might be allowed. The trail might evolve over time but it should be directed away from the corner where there are residences. The elm farm in Candelaria South could be an educational area of the trail – why nothing grows, results of soil tests, how to restore habitat. Possible viewing platform in Candelaria South that could also be used as a location for people to lead mediation.

Candelaria South – Judy mentioned that the map showing a trail in this area does not accurately depict the decisions that were made in the subcommittee about public access there. Heather and John Busemeyer are going to work on creating a trail route that passes by features of interest that

can be developed into an interpretive, guided trail program. The entrance to the trail, from the bike path, should be shown farther to the west, but should be located to protect the restoration plantings that Brian and volunteers have been working on in that area.

Viewing Areas and Blinds – Judy said that viewing areas should also consider the views of other areas such as the Sandias and west mesa when siting the areas. In addition to sites presented in the draft RMP, perhaps other area could have viewing areas; Christiane suggested the border fence line at Arbor road and Judy mentioned that perhaps there might be an area along Veranda that the Sandias could be viewed. Collen circulated a notebook with many ideas for blinds. Steve Cox mentioned that the UNM School of Architecture has a class that designs wildlife blinds.

Tree farm area west of Rio Grande Blvd – Colleen mentioned that the gate on Rio Grande would probably be open during the day and could be locked at night. An improved trail would be built from the Tree Farm to the Woodward House.

CNP Recreation Implementation – Collen put together more details about a schedule for recreation including years after acceptance of the RMP for years 1, 4, 8, 12, 16 and 20 years out. Categories of work included public events, citizen science, maintenance, restoration, blinds, signage, fencing, trails, viewing platforms, bridge, outdoor furnishings, tree nursery, parking areas and facilities. This will be included in the RMP.

Budget - Colleen put together an estimated budget for various years including capital expenses, and operations for many activities such as Habitat restoration, tree farm area, Candelaria South trail and fencing, wildlife blinds, monitoring, Open Space staff, Educator expenses, farming contract, farm equipment, wildlife forage seed, soil amendments, interpretative signs, and movable blinds. Capital expenses were totaled at \$7,492,124. Between now and the public meeting in September some individuals are helping Colleen with certain sections of the RMP.

Next meeting – September 11 Final Public meeting at the Nature Center, 5:30 – 7:30 PM.