

Candelaria Farm Preserve
Technical Advisory Group, TAG
 Los Griegos Health & Social Services Center • 1231 Candelaria NW
 June 14, 2018 • 2:30 pm – 4:30 pm
Minutes - final

Participants

Members: Brian Hanson, Chairman, bhanson5@comcast.net: Christianne Hinks, Peggy Norton, Judy Kowalski, Kent Swanson, Steve Cox, Carolyn Siegel, Alan Reed, Christina Sandoval

Additional Technical Assistance: Dave Hutton, Matt Schmader, James Lewis

Community – Linda Shank, Ken Romig, Drew Seavey, Matt McMillan, David Lightfoot, Bruce Baumgartner, Alec Wyatt

Review of Agenda – approved

Minutes May 10, 2018: Approved with minor adjustments to Peggy Norton statement about herbicide spraying.

Announcements from TAG Members

- Kent mentioned the Open Space Visitor Center was hosting various activities. He also said that pesticide spraying followed guidelines from the Organics Materials Review Institute.
- Brian summarized the email he sent to Brandon Gibson about pesticides and crops for wildlife, Brandon responded quickly. See the emails at the end of these minutes.
- James Lewis said that the contracts for the Resource Management Plan (RMP) will be completed soon.

Public Comment - none

Summary of TAG principles and future habitat management

At this meeting 4 individuals representing SWCA consultants attended (Ken, Drew, Matt, David) so Brian lead a discussion of the principles of habitat management and specific management actions that would benefit wildlife. The discussion followed the May 10 briefing statement at the end of these minutes.

- Christina (City of Albuquerque) - said that funding needed to be identified to fund habitat work and future maintenance
- Judy (NM State Parks) – mentioned the letter from State Parks to Open Space requesting Land and Water Conservation Fund compliance within 3 years. She suggested the RMP address commercial agriculture.
- A question came up about the time frame that the RMP should address; Christina suggested a 10 year time frame. Brian stated that habitat improvement will take many years.
- Adaptive Management was mentioned as a subject for the RMP. Brian agreed.
- Climate change was mentioned and it makes sense to address that. Brian stated that native bosque plants of the Middle Rio Grande was proposed that would be drought tolerant.
- James Lewis said that alternatives should be included in the RMP.

- The need for public meetings was voiced by one of the contractors. The need for development of a nature preserve and nature study area is the purpose and the public needs to know that. Why the new RMP is necessary should be explained to the public.
- Christianne (Rio Grande Boulevard Neighborhood Association) – defined US Dept of Agriculture (USDA) standard for “pesticides”, as including all herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and rodenticides. Said that neighbors surrounding CFP have resoundingly stated their opposition to the use of pesticides and would find a RMP that included approval of their use unacceptable.

Next Meeting:

July 12, 2:30 PM – Rio Grande Nature Center.

June 8, 2018 - Email to Brandon Gibson from Brian Hanson

To: Brandon Gibson, Acting Superintendent, Open Space Division, City of Albuquerque

From: Chairman, Technical Advisory Group, Candelaria Farm Preserve (CFP)

Subject: Crops on CFP and pesticide use on CFP

At the last meeting May 10, 2018, the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was informed about future crops that would be planted on CFP (May 3, 2018 map). A recent email dated June 1, 2018 from Kent Swanson (Albuquerque Open Space) to Peggy Norton (North Valley Coalition) contained details about the selection of sorghum for fall and winter food for wildlife. In addition, at the last two TAG meetings herbicide use was discussed, specifically the recent application of herbicides. These two issues were discussed numerous times in TAG meetings during 2017 and 2018 when representatives of Albuquerque Open Space were present.

Crops for Wildlife - During TAG meetings we have developed a draft plan that would provide excellent habitat for wildlife, for the purpose of creating a wildlife preserve. The cropland has been addressed with a proposed conversion of most of the cropland to native bosque habitat including native trees, shrubs, grasses in a mosaic; using moist soil management; and creating additional wetlands. Part of the cropland, along the eastern and southern boundaries, would be planted for winter target wildlife of sandhill crane and geese. These species could be easily viewed along the boundary fence. Outdoor recreation is a requirement for the CFP property.

To ensure that crops are beneficial to wildlife, I suggest contacting wildlife refuges that have experience in New Mexico, namely Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge and Bernardo Refuge (NM Dept. of Game and Fish refuge). I suggest crops be selected to attract geese and cranes during the wintertime. Sandhill cranes prefer corn, since about 70% of their winter diet is corn. During a field trip to Bosque del Apache on February 6, 2018, I learned that sandhill cranes are attracted to C3 photosynthesis plants (<https://www.cropsreview.com/c3-plants.html>), like triticale grass when they first arrive then switch to C4 photosynthesis plants (<https://www.cropsreview.com/c4-plants.html>), like corn later. They need corn in late winter to prepare for their migration north. To ensure that cranes and geese use the cropland area, it should be fairly open and tall food plants should be knocked down gradually over the winter so the cranes don't eat all the desired plants all at once. More precise information on sandhill cranes can be obtained from Dan Collins, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque (505-248-6881). Selection of crops for nonwinter times is also important. I encourage the Albuquerque Open Space Division to select crops that are beneficial to wildlife.

Pesticides have been linked to a wide range of human health impacts, ranging from dermal irritants, headaches, nausea, breathing distress to more severe impacts such as kidney and liver damage, cancer, reproductive harm, disruption of the nervous system and endocrine disruption. Wildlife impacts can affect insects, birds, small mammals and aquatic organisms. For example, bees can be impacted from neonicotinoid pesticides that impacts their mobility, feeding and navigation. In one study, this pesticide caused homing failure in bees. (Michael Henry et al. Science, April 20, 2012. A common pesticide decreases foraging success and survival in honey bees. Vol. 336, Issue 6079, pp 348-350).

To reduce harmful effects of pesticides at CFP, I recommend an ecosystem-base strategy of Integrated Pest Management.

“Integrated Pest Management is an ecosystem-based strategy that focuses on long-term prevention of pests or their damage through a combination of techniques such as biological control, habitat manipulation, modification of cultural practices, and use of resistant varieties. Pesticides are used only after monitoring indicates they are needed according to established guidelines, and treatments are made with the goal of removing only the target organism. Pest control materials are selected and applied in a manner that minimizes risks to human health, beneficial and nontarget organisms, and the environment.” University of California” <http://www2.ipm.ucanr.edu/WhatIsIPM/>

During meeting discussions problems were identified with notification of spraying before application. It was also mentioned that weather can change when pesticides should be applied so a firm date for application may be difficult. Surely communication can be improved.

I appreciate Albuquerque Open Space managing areas for wildlife. It is a difficult and sometimes uncertain task working with the weather and plants that are subject to numerous other threats. The location of CFP near the Nature Center makes it even more important to provide wildlife habitat since many people are attracted to this area in the Rio Grande valley. I am certain that in the future CFP will be a place for wildlife to thrive in Albuquerque.

I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,
Brian Hanson
Chairman, Technical Advisory Group, Candelaria Farm Preserve

June 11 email from Brandon Gibson to Brian Hanson (responding to Brian’s June 8 email)

Mr. Hanson,

Good afternoon. Thank you for your detailed notes regarding Candelaria Farm Preserve. Our staff is working diligently with the various stakeholders to ensure that the farm continues to provide forage for wildlife. It is my personal goal to have both C3 and C4 crops at the farm in the near future. We have had discussions with J&T Farms to potentially plant triticale this fall (based on water and seed availability).

There has not been any pesticide spraying at Candelaria Farm since I have been Acting Open Space Superintendent. J&T Farms did obtain permission from the City’s herbicide review committee to spray 5oz per gallon in the ditch banks only (4/2/18). J&T Farms did notify Open Space staff on 4/23/18 that spraying would be taking place, but our key staff person that typically notifies the adjacent neighborhood groups was out of the office. The actions were reviewed and discussed with staff and the farmer. Additional protocols have been put in place to ensure that spraying notifications will be sent to the neighborhood prior to any approved spraying taking place.

Your notes and experience are invaluable to the future management of CFP, and we will be sure to share them with our staff and the contracted environmental planners.

Thank you,

Brandon R. Gibson

Acting Associate Director

Candelaria Farm Preserve briefing statement

May 11, 2018 prepared by Brian Hanson, Chairman of Technical Advisory Group

The Albuquerque City Council passed 2 resolutions directing a team of voluntary biologists and citizens to write a Resource Management Plan for Candelaria Farm Preserve (CFP). The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was formed in early 2017 with 13 members along with supporting members. The team has met monthly and biweekly with a goal of establishing a wildlife preserve.

CFP is about 170 acres at the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park, which includes 100 acres of cropland, 40 acres of the State Park and another 30 acres of bosque habitat directly south of the Park.

Vision - To engage in a planning process that results in improved ecosystem health and increased biodiversity of Candelaria Farm Preserve, ensures compliance with Land and Water Conservation Fund guidelines by providing opportunities for wildlife oriented recreation, and fulfills the requirements of City Council resolutions R-16-147 and R-17-159.

During our meetings we developed the following

Principles of Wildlife Management at Candelaria Farm Preserve

Create mosaic of habitats; Remove exotic species while restoring native species in phases over time; Keep vegetative cover for wildlife until new plantings; Improve recreation while avoiding wildlife disturbance; Improve pollinator habitat (Bee City designation); Improve bird habitat (Migratory Bird Treaty City designation); Improve habitat for native fauna; Crops for wildlife only (PreDock Plan); Keep cropland near fence/boundary for wildlife viewing; Monitor management actions

Habitat improvements discussed in three areas of CFP

Cropland - restricted public access to guided trips only; keep croplands for migratory birds, primarily cranes and geese, near the east and west fence lines; convert the rest – remove exotic plants such as Russian olive and elm; increase hedgerows; plant trees, shrubs and grasses; use moist soil management; add 2 wetlands; and add salt grass meadow.

Rio Grande Nature Center State Park – improve water quality in the ponds.

Candelaria South (south of Nature Center) – restricted public access to guided trips only; remove debris such as wire, asphalt, large logs, trash; remove exotic plants Russian olive and elms; plant native trees and shrubs.

To meet the needs of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, we have discussed adding viewing areas, informative signs, guided walks and talks.

The TAG looks forward to the day when the City of Albuquerque proudly advertises that the City has a wildlife preserve within the City limits. This sets our city apart from other large cities and demonstrates to all that Albuquerque values the natural environment and its wildlife.