

San Miguel County Open Space Commission
Meeting Minutes

Monday, July 28th, 2025, 4:00 PM

Attendance:

OSC Members Present: Susie St. Onge, Laura Kudo, Sefra Maples, Joanna Kanow

OSC Members Absent: Jason Merritt, Yvette Henson, Angela Dye

SMC Staff Liaison Present: Janet Kask, Greg Pollio, Jacqueline Hudson, Julie Kolb

Call to Order: 4:07 p.m. by Chairperson Susie St. Onge

Approval of 5/19/25 Meeting Minutes: Motion to approve- Laura Kudo, Seconded- Joanna Kanow

Approval of 6/23/25 Meeting Minutes: Motion to approve- Joanna Kanow, Seconded- Laura Kudo

Mill Creek Park

- Janet provided an update on the Mill Creek Park community survey, which was reissued following BOCC interest in potential affordable housing for the site, even though the site was deeded and is designated as open space park land. The previous survey was 5 years ago.
 - Janet will share the results of the survey when she wraps it up.
- The survey includes six questions and will remain open for 2-3 months.
- Janet reported that the MCP RFP for grading work, released earlier this year, had no bids
- The MCP site continues to be used by the community with picnic tables, portable toilets, trash receptacle, and the south side of the parcel is graded.

Pollinator Garden Management Strategies

- Julie reported that cheatgrass had been treated with a pre-emergent herbicide at Mill Creek Park, as it was widespread in that area.
- Jacq shared that she manually controls weeds in the Down Valley Park using mechanical methods.
 - She has identified whitetop and toadflax at the MCP.
- Laura discussed the management and accessibility of the pollinator garden at the DVP.
 - She suggested replacing "no entry" signs with informative signage about the species in the garden, encouraging visitors to learn and replicate the garden at home.
- Jacq also mentioned the collection of excess seeds from the pollinator garden at the DVP, which are harvested every fall.
 - Some species have naturally introduced themselves to the garden, requiring an update to the garden's field guide.

- The group discussed noxious weed management strategies at the pollinator gardens, with Susie expressing interest in consulting with Bee Happy to enhance their current approaches.
- Jacq agreed that while chemical treatments may be necessary for some noxious weeds, they aim to minimize the use of herbicides, especially in small areas.
- The conversation touched on the potential benefits of Bee Happy consulting services and the work they have done to address specific weed issues, such as White Top, in Sawpit.
- Jacq stated that the methodology that is currently employed at the DVP is very similar to Bee Happy's, but she is open to meeting with them.
- Julie clarified that she does not spray herbicides in pollinator gardens but supports integrated pest management.
 - She agreed to consider working with Happy Lands for future pollinator garden projects, while Julie emphasized the importance of both chemical and natural treatment methods for managing noxious weeds.
- Julie explained her current practices for herbicide use and posting warning signs when herbicides are applied. She spoke to the challenges of public compliance with safety signs.
- The group also noted the differences in climate Down Valley vs a pollinator garden project in Telluride, with Sefra noting the different plant species needed for varying ecosystems.
 - They agreed to follow up on information from a previous experimental garden project by Ramona Solei and to obtain educational materials about rare plants in the area.

Southside Perimeter Trail

- On June 18th, a site walk with the Idarado HOA members, the TMtC, and County Staff was conducted because the Idarado HOA opposes the new SSPT construction.
- This trail was part of TMtC's overall trail submittal package to the USFS for NEPA review.
- The Idarado HOA has filed litigation to prevent the project from moving forward.
 - The litigation is around wildlife impacts of the trail.
- Maura Fahey (County Attorney) was consulted about historic trail designation.
 - She believes that if the landowner comes forward to say that the trail is historic that would hold more weight.
- Laura Kudo recommended that we research the Ouray Perimeter Trail to see if they encountered similar litigation.

OSC Memorial Policy

- This conversation was prompted by a family who lost a child in the Texas floods earlier in the year.
 - The family was inquiring about a memorial on the Bridal Veil Trail.
- The OSC had discussed developing a policy in 2013, but no record could be found of official adoption, but it was discussed with the BOCC at that time.
- In this research the ToT policy was investigated and found, which specifies approved items and locations for memorials.
- The OSC was tasked with thinking of and drafting an amended policy.

Business Updates

- Parks & Open Space has discussed a 20th anniversary party for the Down Valley Park.
- The Bridal Veil Platform work is scheduled to begin Aug. 28th.
- Mill Creek Park and Noxious Weeds Surveys are currently being advertised on the County website.

The meeting adjourned at 5:28 p.m.
Next County OSC meeting - Mon., 8/25/25 at 4:00 p.m.