

San Miguel County Open Space Commission
Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 26th, 2024, 4:00 PM

Attendance:

OSC Members Present: Susie St. Onge, Jason Merritt, Angela Dye, Joanna Kanow,
Yvette Henson, Roger Wickham, Sefra Maples

OSC Members Absent: Laura Kudo, Sefra Maples

SMC Staff Liaisons Present: Janet Kask, Greg Pollio

Call to Order: 4:05 p.m. by Chairperson Susie St. Onge

Approval of 12/18/23 Meeting Minutes: Motion to approve with edits moved by Angela Dye,
seconded by Jason Merritt. Unanimously approved.

Agenda Items:

Meeting Minutes

- Approved as amended

Parcels D&E Conservation Easement

- Management Plan for Conservation Easement
 - Rich Hamilton leads a discussion on the management plan for the conservation easement, contemplating a name change to Bridal Veil Conservation Easement. The plan encompasses the property's transfer, ownership, and management, along with a rare plant survey conducted by Peggy Lyon from the Colorado Natural Heritage Program. Additionally, the plan includes a stewardship and monitoring plan developed by Steve Boyle and details about the absence of rare plants and the presence of introduced non-native species on the conservation easement.
- Bird Survey and Management Plan
 - Rich Hamilton provides detailed information about the black swift, including its habitat, migration patterns, and the need for conservation efforts due to its endangered status. He also expresses the intention to conduct a follow-up bird study and monitor rare plants and noxious weeds as part of the management plan.
- Discussion on Trail Projects and Conservation Values
 - Rich Hamilton provides updates on trail projects, highlighting the completion of the Bridal Veil Trail and plans for installing stairs at the base of Bridal Veil Falls. He also stresses the need to consider conservation values, particularly in relation to the proposed perimeter trail and its potential impact on the environment.
- Discussion on Adding Ecological Values
 - Suzie St. Onge proposes including "ecological values" in addition to conservation values to highlight the need for environmental protection. Yvette seeks clarification on the distinction between conservation and ecological values, and Jason Merritt and Angela Dye support the addition of "ecological" to the list. Rich also inquires about Chris Hazen's feedback on the updated version, and it is mentioned that he was pleased with the inclusion of new structures and trail possibilities.
- Conservation Easement Management and Budget Allocation
 - Rich Hamilton leads a discussion on the potential of studying the black swift and managing the conservation easement. The conversation also delves into budget allocation

and funding sources for conservation efforts, including the possibility of connecting it to the PEZ budget and payment for ecosystem services line item in the budget.

TMtC Trail Proposal

- Discussion with Mountain Club Representatives
 - Todd Rutledge, Heidi Lauterbach, and Sophie Fabrizio from the Mountain Club, discuss the need for a conservation easement management plan and the club's projects, including the Via Ferrata and trail proposals. They also delve into the history and management of the Via Ferrata, highlighting its significance and the efforts to maintain its character.
 - Management Plan for Conservation Easement
 - Via Ferrata and Mountain Club's Role
- NEPA Analysis and Trail Proposal
 - Heidi Lauterbach provides detailed insights into the NEPA analysis and trail proposal, explaining the background of the proposal's development and the partnership with the county for a trail sustainability plan. She emphasizes the challenges and constraints faced in identifying suitable trail locations due to environmental, topographical, and regulatory factors, and discusses the public comment period and the potential outcomes of the NEPA process.
 - * NEPA Analysis and Public Comment Period
- Discussion on Collaboration and Acknowledgment
 - Susie St. Onge discusses the historical evolution of trail management, emphasizing the shared interests and investments in trails and conservation values. She highlights the need for collaboration and acknowledgment from the commission, expressing the desire for recognition of the Open Space Commission's role in trail management and the importance of joint efforts in trail development.
- Discussion on Collaborative Efforts and Recognition
 - Susie St. Onge raises concerns about the lack of recognition for collaborative efforts in various projects, especially in the press. She stresses the importance of communication and building coalitions to strengthen bonds between different entities involved in the projects. Susie also highlights the need for more awareness and acknowledgment of support from all parties involved.
 - Bridal Veil Trail project
 - Collaboration and communication between entities
- Support for Trail Maintenance and Collaboration
 - Heidi Lauterbach seeks the commission's support for a letter to the Forest Service to bolster a NEPA proposal. He emphasizes the importance of trail maintenance and the potential impact of e-bikes on trail usage. Additionally, she discusses the need for collaboration and funding to address trail maintenance challenges.
- Funding Support for Forest Service Act
 - Heidi Lauterbach updates the group about the upcoming meeting with congressional aides to support funding for the Forest Service Act. There is a request for support in writing a letter to endorse the proposal, and a discussion about the involvement of the Board of County Commissioners in the process. The group also discusses the importance of open communication and the need for safety-related trail projects.

Skyway CMP

- Discussion of the San Juan Byway Corridor Management Plan
 - Angela Dye updates the group on the San Juan Byway Corridor Management Plan kickoff meeting. Thirteen entities have committed to be the stakeholder group of the project. Needs to be updated every 10 years, and it is in danger of losing the designation of a scenic byway if the plan is not updated. A discussion of the intrinsic values of the corridor will be conducted. There was a discussion of the state of some of the signage and the need for replacements.

New/Old Business Updates

- Discussion of the Parks & Open Space conservation easements
 - Andela Dye poses the question of if we should have management plans for all the POS conservation easements?
 - The Down Valley Connector Trail Feasibility Study presentation to the Board of County Commissioners was discussed. The Commissioners gave Parks & Open Space approval to seek funding for sections 1 & 5 and supported the next steps of seeking a second round of public outreach. Angela brought up the fact that the article about this meeting did not give credit to the Open Space Commission.

Meeting Adjourned – 6:02 p.m.

Next OSC Meeting - Monday, March 25th, 2024, 4:00 p.m.