

San Miguel County Open Space Commission (OSC) Meeting Minutes DRAFT

Date: Monday, February 27, 2023

Time: 4:00 PM MST (via Zoom)

Attendance:

OSC Members Present: Susie St. Onge, Roger Wickham, Angela Dye, Laura Kudo

OSC Members Absent: Jason Merritt, Sefra Maples, Yvette Henson

SMC Staff Present: Janet Kask, Deanna Drew, Starr Jamison

Call to Order: 4:04 pm by Chairperson Susie St. Onge

Approval of 1/23/2023 Meeting Minutes: Approval of 1/23/23 minutes will take place at next OSC meeting for lack of quorum.

Agenda Items:

Starr Jamison, County Natural Resources Director, Updates:

- **USFS Alta Lakes Improvement Plan; BOCC Comments:** USFS is taking public comments on the first stage of implementation of the Alta Lakes improvement plan that was presented and approved in 2018. BOCC is reviewing the draft plan; is aligned with comments submitted in 2018. Starr submitted additional comments regarding the East End Master Plan. No wetland permit is required; roads will be decommissioned; vehicles will be restricted to certain areas; campsites will be confined to certain areas and pulled away from the water; restrooms and signage will be added to the area. Additional suggestions include improved resource repair and reclamation activities, careful timing of projects in regard to wet ground and weather at this elevation, especially when using heavy equipment.
- **Gunnison Sage Grouse update:** Ms. Jamison meets monthly with BLM. Two weeks ago she was asked to comment on their draft alternative to the Environmental Assessment and Resource Management plan, in regard to the sub-populations of GuSG. Another round of comments will be due on the draft next month. GuSG working group coordinators met recently with USFWS GuSG coordinators, to present on Recovery Implementation Strategies (RIS), with action items for implementation of projects and actions to help in the recovery of the bird. Starr is helping to create a map indicating existing County conservation easements with GuSG habitat, and to identify landowners with property in GuSG habitat, so to provide education to property owners and create a database on record with GuSG properties for future sale of the land. Two County projects were completed this summer with Southwest Conservation Corps: zeedyk structure repair and tamarisk removal. Starr will continue to update OSC on volunteer opportunities within San Miguel County. CPW and USFWS are discussing how all GuSG subpopulation working groups can come together and work as one, moving forward. The existing Restore grant expires in 2023.
- **Mining, Oil and Gas update:** Alyonza submitting a copper mining application to the County Planning Commission and BOCC, and it is going through a two-step Special Use Permit process. This is a drill program, with 5 drill pads, and want to use SMC/BLM roads and trails, limited development of temporary access routes. Starr created a map that includes wildlife habitat, NCA and County roads. This is called the State Line Project, ½ is in Utah, the other ½ in SMC. This area has had historic/existing exploration. Current SMC land use code appears to encourage mining in

the West End, so it is difficult to deny these applications. BOCC is putting out an RFP for a Planner to update Land Use Code as it pertains to Natural Resources, as it needs an update where it pertains to GuSG and Mining, Oil and Gas. OSC submitted comments asking them to adhere to Federal standards on SMC and BLM lands.

Sunday Mine Complex, a uranium mine in the Gypsum Valley, has a new plan of operations and needs to update their plan and permitting with the County and BLM. The mine company has spoken to the BOCC, and Starr submitted new comments for the plan approval process. The state has required the Topaz mine to close but they are proposing to keep it open through the BLM. Chair has asked Starr to review OSC Work Plan to ensure she keeps Commission updated on her projects that cross over with OSC projects, and to send background material, maps, etc. ahead of the meetings for the group to review. There is only one active oil/gas mine in the County at this time. A review of the County comments, mining activities and maps will be scheduled and agendaized with OSC at an upcoming meeting.

OA Greager Temporary Use Plan/Musser Fund Planning Grant: County staff is working on a temporary use management plan for the County's OA Greager parcel, to have in place for 1-3 years and see how the site suits groups, until a more permanent Use Management Plan is approved by the BOCC. Yvette Henson is proposing to lead a native plant class at the site in May. Comments on the temporary plan included setting a site capacity; how/where groups will occupy if overnight and camp rules; how permits will be handled and details of the permitting process; vetting process and who could apply for a permit so it is not arbitrary; what groups qualify; what types of schools/districts. Because of the 1997 no-firearms County resolution, No Hunting signs have been posted on the perimeter of the property. Educational handouts regarding the GuSG efforts could be distributed to all users so that the intent of the property is understood. Staff will refine the permit application and approval process and bring back to the OSC for review. The group is in favor of Yvette holding the Native Plant class in May as a compatible use; BOCC gave preliminary approval to open site to day-use, educational groups last July. Staff proposed to re-activate the vault toilets at the site for temporary, day uses until a permanent management plan is in place.

An annual grant opportunity exists (Laura Jane Musser Fund) that could fund educational efforts at the OA Greager site moving forward. The "environmental initiative" category of grant funds, will: assist public or not-for-profit entities to initiate or implement projects that enhance the ecological integrity of open space that improves a community's quality of life and public health, while also ensuring the protection of healthy, viable, and sustainable ecosystems by protecting or restoring habitat for a diversity of plant and animal species." This grant could fund the development of curriculum for teachers to plan their lessons and trips to the OA Greager property.

East End Master Plan: The Planning department would like all County residents to participate in an East End Master Planning public survey. OSC members provided comments to staff regarding the parts of the EEMP that they feel are most relevant to the Commission, and these comments will be summarized into one document to review/discuss with County planning staff. Planning Director, Kaye Simonson will appear at the 3/27/23 OSC meeting to discuss the EEMP with the members.

Old/Other Business:

- Susie St. Onge is no longer on the Town of Telluride Open Space Commission. Another OSC member TBD will present the crossover reports/minutes moving forward.
- TOT OSC is continuing to work on the Bear Creek kiosk map.
- Regional recreation e-bike meeting took place to review current trail designations and maps.
- The TOT Valley Floor bond has been paid off in advance of the target date, and Telluride is now considering how to redirect spending of that portion of collected open space funds.
- POS Director and Chair of OSC will present the 2023 OSC Work Plan at the 3/8 BOCC Work Session.
- Down Valley, Placerville Park policies and revisions will be reviewed at the 3/8 BOCC work session.
- Mill Creek Park consultants are working on a grading plan for the park, and have proposed the County hire hydrological consultants to determine water needs and appropriate water sources for the park project.
- The Perimeter Trail partners have met and are coming up with a plan to redirect the trail layout around federal lands to avoid the lengthy and costly federal land use standards and processes.

Next meeting: Monday, March 27, 2023 @ 4:00 pm

Meeting adjourned: @ 5:47 p.m. by Chairperson St. Onge