

## **Cocopai RC&D Meeting notes - June 15, 2004**

**Item 1.** Welcome/introductions.

Present: Bob Aberg, Bob Arambula, John Beicl, Max Castillo, Charlie Ester, Jane Everts, Maggie Formhals, George Gehlert, Diane Joens, Diane Lovette, Terri Nelson, Lynn Reddell, Bob Rothrock, Bev Sass, Bill Stafford, Jess Tyler, Fran Whetten, Ian Wickson.

**Item 2.** Approval of Meeting notes, Feb. 4, 2004.

**Item 3.** Max Castillo – Overview of Dead Horse Ranch Trails Coalition.

- Urban Greenway established in 1986 – need easements on private land to connect to Dead Horse trails.
- Coalition started in 1996 as multi use group including hikers, bikers and equestrians.
- Dead Horse trails adopted by Forest Service in 1999.

Current projects/areas of interest:

- Lime Kiln Trail connecting Cottonwood to Sedona via Kachina Horse trail system
- Trail from Zaleski Road to Cornville
- Protected Cliff Rose an issue for Lime Kiln (and other trails) – need sign-off from AZ Game and Fish Department.

**Item 4.** Bill Stafford – Overview of Red Rock Ranger District trail projects/plans

Sedona area:

- Need to complete Herkenham Trail (Carroll Canyon to Chavez Ranch) as part of the Urban Pathways plan
- Valley View Trail will connect Airport Saddle to Vista on mesa to enhance safety. Hikers are currently using Airport Road.
- Llama Trail – user created trail connecting Courthouse Rock with Little Horse Trail will become part of inventory. NEPA process complete, awaiting Decision Memo. Mountain bike community involved in planning process.
- Long Canyon – reroutes needed to get around golf course and to protect arch sites.

Other areas:

- Lime Kiln Trail prioritized. Old route flags found, NEPA process under way, right-of-way purchase through State Trust land completed May 13, trailhead grants established.
- Chavez Wagon Road – connects McGuireville to Rimrock and Camp Verde. Used by General Crook to enter Verde Valley area.
- Andante Trailhead – Skyview Trail to be rerouted into Andante.
- Camp Verde – have funding for regular trail maintenance and completion of Mail Trail.
- Fossil Creek Trail – protection of Chiricahua Leopard frog. Land take required to connect with General Crook trail.
- General Crook trail – will connect West Clear Creek with Fort Verde. GPS data complete, nothing on ground yet.
- Bell Trailhead at Beaver Creek Ranger Station – rebuilt with enhanced equestrian accommodations. Site of National Trails Day celebration.

**Item 5.** Bill Stafford – GPS data acquisition

In order to effectively inventory existing trails, both system and user-created, the Red Rock Ranger District needs help with GPS data acquisition and management. Given Cocopai's interest

in helping to create a trail master plan for the Verde Valley area, it would be appropriate to delegate this responsibility to non-Forest Service personnel. The FS is simply too busy with the current workload.

Bill suggested designating a "GPS Data Steward" from within our group to track the data, report and transfer the data to FS personnel, and generally "nursemaid" the process.

Maggie Formhals informally nominated her husband, Bob, to this position. Bob has experience with GPS and expertise with the software needed to organize the data.

Bill then opened the discussion to questions and answers.

Q: How much work would this entail?

A: 30 days/year for the Red Rock District, and 10+ days/year for Prescott National Forest.

Q: What is appropriate pay for a volunteer involved in field GPS data acquisition and stewardship?

A: Duties are equivalent to GS-7 FS employees. Pay is about \$140/day including benefits, or \$120/day without.

Q: How do \$6000 GPS units used by the FS differ from consumer models?

A: Program accumulation levels affect the quality of data. High dollar units will stop recording to weed out "bad data," then restart. Consumer models record continuously.

Q: Are consumer models adequate for this phase of the planning process?

A: Yes!

Q: What is the time frame for trail inventory process?

A: October 1, 2005 through September, 2006.

Q: Can Bill accept data collected on the Prescott National Forest?

A: Yes, but I can't make any decisions for those areas.

Q: How do we work with all the different land management agencies?

A: Central data stewardship will help. Need to be aware of the boundaries. Suggested contacts within Prescott National Forest; Bruce Fahrni and Tom Bonomo. Prescott will be an important link.

Bill emphatically encouraged public involvement in trail/resource planning. "These are your trails!" He outlined the appropriate steps for trail proposals:

1. Answers to basic questions: "Where do you want to go?" "What type of experience is sought?" **Determine motorized vs. non-motorized preferences. Determine need for guided vs. non-guided recreational opportunities. (Amended per meeting of October 8, 2004.)**
2. Inventory all trails in the area, including FS trails for reference.
3. Evaluate alternatives
4. Public comment/involvement
5. Proposal presented to land managers
6. NEPA study
7. Survey and design
8. Build

Bill also emphasized the need to identify priorities in terms of trail importance and problems to be solved, such as illegal access, dumping and campfires.

Bill noted that any GPS data and planning maps presented by any organizations present should be considered proprietary information. It should not be published in any public media because it

can do damage in the wrong hands. If “social” trails are published, they receive more use which can lead to resource damage. The public then expects them to be part of the community, and conflicts arise when the FS needs to move or obliterate non-sustainable trails. The group agreed that only officially inventoried system trails can be published.

Bob Aberg called for more guidance from the FS in this project. “Tell us what needs to be done.”

Jess Tyler suggested we need to establish standard criteria for GPS data acquisition before proceeding, such as frequency of waypoints and methods for noting problem spots and archaeological sites. Bill noted that historic sites can be difficult to identify, even for experienced scientists. He also noted that knowledge of local history is important when considering “adaptive reuse” trails such as Lime Kiln and Munds.

Bob Arambula noted that Yavapai county has left much of the master plan process to public involvement, which hasn’t really happened yet. Believes Cocopai can provide that bridge. Also noted that inventory is fairly deep into the process.

Bob Aberg said the Verde Valley Multi-Modal Transportation Study identifies “inventory” as the first step in “Phase II” of their program. They are already onto that step. Verde Valley Transportation Planning Organization should be involved. It may be beneficial for Cocopai to meet with both groups and align their projects.

Bob Rothrock felt that public involvement is not needed in trail planning because they have already spoken with their feet and wheels through the creation of social trails. Land managers should consider adopting these trails (e.g. Thumper Trail at Dead Horse) since they already represent the public interest in trail location.

Ian Wickson noted that social trails do not always meet with land manager’s criteria for sustainability, and can cause user/manager relations problems. Asked Bill how to help stay ahead of these problems.

Bill responded:

1. Trail difficulty ratings help separate and direct users to the experiences they seek
2. Keep social trails off maps
3. Travel on durable surfaces when off established trails. “Leave No Trace.” If you do, others will follow.
4. Advertise lesser used trails in less sensitive areas
5. FS may conduct “sting” operations to bust illegal trail builders
6. Appeal to public preservation instinct through education

#### **Item 6. Presentation of maps**

Lynn Reddell presented the Camp Verde Trails planning map, which features:

- 200+ miles of trail
- A “combined use” (motorized and non-motorized) trailhead at Copper Canyon
- Combined use trail network on the east side of I-17
- Non-motorized use trail on the west side of I-17

George Gehlert presented the Cottonwood Regional Open Space Recreation planning map, which calls for open space between Cottonwood and Bridgeport to maintain community separation and establishes greenbelts and public trails within the community. Current status:

- Basic level planning phase
- Need to establish easements on private land – no budget currently available to acquire needed lands
- Looking for Dead Horse Ranch State Park to create localized trails to tie in

**Item 7.** Meeting wrap-up – Charlie Ester

The following were identified as action items to be pursued at subsequent meetings:

1. Assign data steward
2. Acquire GPS units
3. Assign lobbyist within Cocopai to approach local governments/ city councils
4. Assign someone to write a Resolution for each community to sign onto master plan for non motorized travel accommodations. (Bob Aberg to provide examples)

Charlie also identified the following organizations as having similar goals in terms of non motorized travel planning, and suggested cooperation among these groups:

1. Cocopai RC&D
2. Dead Horse Ranch Trails Coalition
3. Trans Verde Trails Coalition
4. Verde Valley Cyclists Coalition
5. Verde Valley Transportation Planning Organization
6. Yavapai Trails Committee