

Diablo Trust Recreation Working Group
Meeting Notes
May 3, 2021

Present: Bob Prosser, Kari Roberg, Kit Metzger, DeAnna Bindley, Becki Ross, Matt Eberhart, Nate Ragan, Tim Holt, Steve Cassady, Nick Hall, Shasha Stortz, Jed Botsford, Rick Shore, Ellen Parish, Lisa Bolton, Stephen Williams, Alix Skelpsa, David Wessel, Bridget Roth, Stephanie Teskey, Jaqueline Thomas, Heather Green

Ellen opened the meeting at 10:30 with a welcome to the participants and a round of introductions. She said there was a change in the date for the recreation summit primarily due to the impact of Covid restrictions on capacity at various suitable meeting locations. She also asked if there were objections to recording this meeting in order to clarify the information for the meeting notes. There were no objections.

Lisa pointed out that new information has been added to the Recreation Working Group information page. This page is only for the Recreation Working Group. Agenda and meeting minutes are located at the bottom of webpage. She noted the contribution from the Arizona Office of Tourism which included a toolkit that highlights a variety of topics, messages, ways to share those messages; and ways that brochures can be requested. She said this could be useful for Diablo Trust, especially with the upcoming Memorial Day weekend.

Matt provided an OHV program update. The non-resident decal sale program took effect at the end of August 2019. Arizona State Parks and Trails anticipate an increase in 2021 resident and non-resident OHV decal sales compared to 2020. Main revenue sources that come to AZ State Parks and Trails are the two decal programs and some dollars from gas taxes. Of this revenue, 60% goes to AZ State Parks and Trails to mainly fund grant opportunities; 35% goes to AZ Game and Fish Department, and 5% goes to AZ State Land Department.

Matt also said they now have a year-round grant cycle with five funding opportunities. These areas are large scale grants, small grants, emergency funds, law enforcement, and signs. Each area has its own provisions: such as what can be funded, amount awarded, who can apply, approval process, how much match is required, and timeframe for completion. There are three on-call contracted companies with AZ State Parks and Trail who can be paid directly by AZ State Parks and Trails. Grant applicants can contact them directly for bids. Grant workshops are held bi-monthly. The next grant workshop is May 27. Additional Information is on AZ State Parks and Trails website.

Matt mentioned they have developed outreach materials for OHV dealerships in Show Low and Phoenix. Outreach packages include educational materials, contact information, as well as brochures from multiple agencies. They are also working with AZ Game and Fish Department to develop information for advertising and rental companies in effort to address undesirable recreation behavior. They are updating the 'Places to Ride' portion of their website to market new areas (by AZ Game and Fish Region) and possibly take pressure off of some existing areas like Mormon Lake.

Ellen asked if we can post Matt's presentation on the Diablo Trust working group webpage? Yes, Matt will send presentation to Lisa. Ellen also asked if they were targeting any OHV clubs or chat groups, etc. about education and riding opportunities? They are using OHV Ambassador (on their website) as the online vessel for messages and updates rather than having AZ State Parks and Trails social messaging. A lot of clubs follow this page. It is thought this is more effective than having the agency present the information.

Stephen W asked if the grant workshop locations were rotated around the state? Matt said they are doing virtual workshops for now but will rotate around the state when in-person workshops can be done. Let him know if we are interested in hosting

Bob asked how they distinguish between trail and road maintenance. Matt said they can do maintenance on County maintained roads with OHV issues and need land manager approval and clearances to obtain funding. Bob: Does this apply to FS roads as well? Matt: We are looking at doing some dust mitigation on some roads in the Sedona area.

Jackie asked if there were 'Places to Ride' links other than on the AZ State Parks and Trail website? Matt replied that this is only on the AZ State Parks website as they are the clearinghouse for OHV trail maps. A link to the revised version of 'Places to Ride' can be provided once it is completed.

Jed spoke next about major projects on the Coconino NF. The Forest wide EIS for the Travel Management Rule was finished in 2011. In 2012, the focus was on motorized trails in the Munds Park and Kelly Pocket areas. Now there is a maintenance focus with some corrections and updates needed to the 2011 EIS. The forest is working on resource protection, closed road breaches, and travel management 'fires' such as the issues around the 525 road. The forest wants to deal with the travel management and recreation issues along the 525 road with both short term and long-term solutions but Jed noted that the FS is like a large ship that turns slowly and lacks agility.

Jed also spoke about the Great America Outdoors Act that passed in 2020. This act permanently and fully funds the Land and Water Conservation Fund plus there are funds to address deferred maintenance over five years. It authorized 2020 funds to deal with the deferred maintenance backlog. Some of these funds will upgrade toilets on the Coconino and Kaibab NFs, some of which date to the 1960's. The Coconino has requested 2022 funds but does not know yet which projects have been accepted and put in a finalized budget. The Coconino has finished planning for 2023 projects. For 2024, the forest is starting to talk about how to start incorporating other partners and other cooperating entities into identifying on-the-ground needs. They are still working on how to gather and incorporate ideas from these groups that relate to deferred maintenance, not new construction or ideas.

Jed explained that the forest service is interested in looking at alternatives to capital improvement projects. The forest service is ultimately responsible to maintain capital improvements projects. Geofencing is one of those alternatives. Geofencing is a location-based service in which an app triggers a pre-programmed action when a user enters a certain area. The app can send out pre-programmed messages however a person needs to turn on and opt-in to a particular app like OnX to receive messages or updates. This a gap in the Forest Service and there might be an opportunity for the forest, National Forest Foundation, and Diablo Trust to work together on this. Lisa asked Jed to explain more about how Diablo Trust could contribute... finding an area? Finding an audience to test app? Provide funding? Jed said that is not known right now because so early in the process. Should we work with a current app and load information? DT could help with matching funds when the FS starts working with National Forest Foundation.

Dave asked Matt if the funds in the signage program could apply to geofencing? Matt was unsure as to how this could fit in in the signage program but may be could help in some of the ways such as messaging. It seemed to Ellen that this could qualify under education because of specific messages in specific areas. Matt emphasized contacting AZ Parks and Trails prior to submitting a proposal to see if this could work, especially because it is so new.

Bob thought that OnX would be a good place to start because the hunting community is already using it. If recreation groups start using it as well, then could target the multiple audiences that we want to interact with. He said we should make it an action item to contact OnX to see if they can work with us. Matt pointed out that there is also an OnX off road as well. Lisa wondered if some of the agencies are already doing this, then we could expand that work to this region.

Bridget said she was happy to hear these conversations and that the FS wants to synch different communities together and fill gaps. The FS can use DT here. This could get the messages out there. Virtual infrastructure like this creates more agility than physical infrastructure and the ability to message to specific audiences at particular times and places. She would invite a smaller Diablo Trust group to work with the Coconino on this. She noted that there were still some stakeholders still missing from the group such as hunters and OHV users. The sub-group could work with the FS to set up goals, objectives, and identify how to get there from here. FS does not have the staffing capacity to work on some of these new opportunities and issues. Ellen also thought having a smaller subgroup to work on geofencing was a good idea.

Sasha's power point presentation showed that the mission of the National Forest Foundation included bringing together various entities to restore National Forests and Grasslands with an emphasis on collaborations, outdoor experiences, forest health and engaging people via volunteerism and collaboration. NFF has a national competitive matching awards program focusing on on-the-ground projects. Funding is distributed twice a year and requires a 1:1 match. NFF also has regional entities. The Northern Arizona Forest Fund is the local one. It partners with donors for forest and water health of northern Arizona forests and includes areas outside the northern forests because of potential downstream effects of erosion on water. Sample projects include trail rehabilitation in Oak Creek Canyon and the Flowing Springs Sediment Project on the Tonto National Forest. NFF is a development and implementation partner. They have place-based strategies such as strike teams, stewardship funds, connecting with new users, and projects in critical infrastructure such as trail heads. They have been discussing a pilot project with the Coconino NF on dispersed recreation and responsible recreation. Projects have included fall cleanup after Pickin' in the Pines, fall cleanup of the 525 road, outreach, education and messaging. Ideas include geofencing, QR codes, portable volunteer stations, and physical infrastructure. They have a Citizen Scientist geofencing pilot project which is working with an app used by AZ Trail through hikers for monitoring. There is a lot of excitement around geofencing but need a strategy and capacity to apply to recreation. There are opportunities to identify common messages, share information about events, and distribute responsible recreation messages. Could also bring together learning about different field programs. Capacity and research is needed. Sasha commented that Dyrt is another app frequently used by forest users

Ellen asked if it was possible to engage with other field offices or entities to see about geofencing lessons learned and successful messages so we don't reinvent the wheel. Perhaps Utah has some more advanced information.

Ellen also asked for more information about strike teams – like how to implement on busy weekends and can these be organized for trash collection, distribute maps, etc. She thinks the Sheriffs Department would be eager for some educational help. Could businesses opt in to facilitate funding for maintenance?

Sasha replied that some strike teams were a combination of County, FS, and private forces combined. Colorado office would know more. Stewardship funds: NFF pools money into an account that is restricted for use in particular areas then they work together to identify priority

projects. There is a a lot of opportunity here. Relationships built in groups or teams like this have been productive and have strengthened the ability to get things done.

Lisa asked if Sasha could send information about volunteer opportunities so she could post on DT social media and website. Also, if other people on the working group have volunteer opportunities, resources, or webpages that information could be posted as well.

Ellen said there were benefits with the relationships developed in this collaborative group especially compared to cold calls.

Lisa said there was a need to identify non-Federal land locations that could possibly be used to put up signs. She also asked if signs could be placed on existing Forest Service signs and suggested a focused conversation with a smaller group to go over maps and ideas how to find suitable sign locations.

Jed said he will soon be talking with the three District Rangers about this and he could talk about this more at the next meeting on May 17.

Action item: Bob said it was unclear how Diablo Trust fits into a national model but said there is something missing on the DT side. DT needs to distinguish between main trails and roads for ATVs. There are commonly known routes between Mormon Lake and Munds Park etc however main thorough fare roads are becoming main trails and every forest road does not need to be a high-speed raceway. We don't have trail systems on Diablo Trust area, and it is still relatively undeveloped. DT should take a look at where it is appropriate and not appropriate to have trails and what are consequences. Becki mentioned that trails on the Red Rock Ranger District are mainly roads using for ranching access. Because these are not designed or built for existing traffic and traffic speeds, there is increased damage.

Ellen asked how State Parks identifies access roads. Matt said that trails are narrower and roads are connectors to trails. The land manager identifies these. Vehicles on county-maintained roads need to be street legal and vehicles on trails do not need to be street legal.

Jed said there are other considerations. One is that FS roads have different management levels ranging from paved roads to different levels of dirt roads. Different levels have different maintenance frequencies. There are also nuances regarding County maintained roads on FS managed lands.

Action item: Kit suggested that DT needs to map problem and opportunity areas on their lands. A sub-committee could do this and then give to the Recreation working group.

Lisa will be sending some information and welcomed any information from the group members to send out as well.

Ellen and Lisa thanked everybody. The meeting concluded at 12:10