

Conservation Committee Minutes—July 7, 2015 - FINAL

Attendees: Jim Daniel, Mark Young, John Parker, Cherry Payne, Mary Clark, John Cannella, Rob Egemeier, Tom Brimacombe, Greg Colello (Board Liaison)

1. **Guests:** Bob Sandlin

2. **June minutes:** no corrections or comments. John P. moved to accept the minutes, Cherry seconded. Approved unanimously.

3. **Status of Greenbelt Work-VGPL to Rail trail:** The county owns part of the property that the Library trail transits which is a part of the trail improvement project. Carol Branch, Santa Fe County, has confirmed they own the trail. The county has agreed to do improvements in accordance with our suggested revised alignments. The next step is to flag the trail and then the county will cut it. It was decided to flag the trail Thursday morning, July 9th, 9:00 am. Meet at the Library. John P., Jim and Tom will be there. Mark will let Steve Griego know. Mark is providing the county the addresses of adjacent landowners in order to notify neighbors of the impending work.

4. **Crossvane Repair:** This work in the Galisteo Creek wetland is scheduled to happen between July 9th and the 14th. Denise and Mark worked through administrative issues so that Craig Sponholz, the heavy equipment operator, can repair the washed out erosion structure. Part of Trailhead 3 will be closed off on the 8th for the delivery of rocks. Jim would like to consult with Craig about the condition of a structure immediately upstream from the damaged one.

5. **Quivera Coalition Grant (Trail 401):** We received word today that we did not receive this grant.

6. **PNM Utility Easement (Trail 401):** In an effort to discern the status of the PNM easement, Mark contacted PNM. Subsequently, their representative (Dennis Kemp) did an on-site visit with Mark and Dag Ryen. In 2011, there was an agreement written up between PNM and ECIA that was never finalized. The draft agreement has been emailed to Dag Ryen for his review. There was a discussion about the language of the agreement. It was suggested that we draft some language to provide to PNM giving ECIA some say in what happens regarding repairs and work on the easement, as well as inserting a sunset date on the agreement. This kind of language does not appear in the 2011 draft. John P. made a motion to amend the easement language, Mark seconded, and it passed unanimously. John Cannella will draft up some language and send it to the committee.

There is an opportunity to get a grant from PNM for trail/easement improvements. However, there is no money budgeted for the work at this time. They have advised us of the opportunity to request a grant, but there are some caveats associated with their grants.

If there emergency work needs to be done on the power line, PNM can come in and do any required work.

7. **Erosion control features near start of Greenbelt Pilot project:** Jerry, Jim and John P. worked on the trail and addressed a spot where there is run-off coming down a hill and across the trail. They built some one-rock dams; another day is needed to finish the work.

Subsequently, Mark and Jim planted grass seed in some bare areas. We will meet on July 15th at 8:00 at the Rail Trail parking area on Ave. Vista Grande. Bring gloves and water. Be prepared to work 2 hours or so.

8. **COLTPAC:** There was no meeting because there was no quorum. John P. did speak with Carol today about the Rail Trail from the Spur to Ave. Vista Grande. There was an inspection recently and there is a punch list of about 20 items to be addressed. It should be officially opened in about 3 weeks. There will be a grand opening/ribbon cutting when it is completed. John P. asked Carol that we be notified.

Work should commence on the next section, Ave. Vista Grande to Ave. Eldorado immediately upon completion.

9. Report on Progress of Installation of remaining Trail Signs: The vendor has yet again promised signs which we have not received. It was suggested that we find someone else to do any editing and layout revisions. Tom has Adobe Suite software and will look at the files to see what he can do.

10. Status of budget expenditures YTD: We are unable to get a updated status of our budget due to the switch from Quickbooks to Hoamco's system. Mark is tracking bills as they come in. To date, we have spent about \$4325. We have a balance of about \$3600 remaining.

11. June 6th Herpetology Talk: Ted Brown gave a herp talk on June 6th. There was a good turnout—maybe 30 to 40 people. He brought some snakes and everyone seemed to learn a little bit and enjoyed the talk. The emphasis of the talk was on reptiles and amphibians found in New Mexico and Ted did not emphasize that most snakes found in Eldorado are both harmless and beneficial. Snakes are often killed by homeowners out of fear, when they ought to be welcomed as allies in keeping our rodent population down.

John P. has contacts for a talk about Hanta Virus, the plague, and tularemia; it might be something we want to consider for the community. There seems to be a boom of rodents right now. With cooler weather, rodents tend to come in, so September or October might be a good time to offer this.

12. Eagle Scout project (Diego Rigalis): He was invited to tonight's meeting; we think he may have another project that he is interested in doing rather than our project.

Jim suggested we have Jan-Willem attend our August meeting to discuss the Trail 101 project which was the project we thought would be good for the Eagle Scout project. Mark noted that Scouts always need service hours and that we can invite them to help on this project. He will follow up with the Scout Master.

13. Invasive thistle and Japanese dodder in preserve and greenbelts: Two residents have contacted Mark regarding invasives in the preserve and the greenbelt. Tom thinks we might have Scotch thistle. Perhaps goats would be a good control method. Mark ran into someone that has cattle and asked about the possibility of cattle grazing on ECIA property. Mark told him that goats are probably preferable.

Tom has noticed that the thistle has invaded in colonies in the Preserve. He has been whacking thistles—it is probably a losing battle.

English Sparrows have taken over the Bluebird boxes installed along the Rail Trail. John P. suggests that the Conservation Committee talk to the person who is installing Bluebird boxes in the Greenbelts and ask him to maintain them and ensure that the boxes are occupied by Bluebirds. It was suggested that we ask Roger Clark, a bird expert, if he knows someone who would pull sparrow nests. John C. will email him and see if we can get someone from Audubon. There are also some houses on Trail 105 near Los Vaqueros as well as some boxes on the 200 trails that were put out by the Earth Works students.

13. Other Business:

a. Tom Brimacombe has asked if we want to mow or trim along the pilot trail. His concern is that with all the rain, the trail will get overgrown and revert to a single track. Some of the weeds are moving into the trailbed itself; we decided to look at the issue next week during the work day. Greg feels that if we put something on the marquees announcing the mowing that we will have

given adequate notice to residents. It would fall under our 2-year maintenance permit with the County.

b. Tom noted that the 403 trail needs some work in places.

c. Purchase of wildlife cameras: We budgeted \$600 for cameras this year. We can get a decent one for about \$200 that includes night vision, has an SD card, can be hooked up to a solar panel or a 12 v battery. John Cannella has done some work with these before. He suggests weekly maintenance is required. He also noted that there can be risk of theft putting them out. He said we will need a couple of SD cards so that they can be swapped out. Tom will pick out a couple of options and send suggestions to the committee.

John P. moved that we get a camera for under \$200, Jim seconded, it passed unanimously.

d. Mark reported that the cattleman he met asked about the fence line along the Preserve's eastern boundary, by Trails 401/403. Mark is looking for volunteers to hike it. We suggested that Tom lead a hike and invite every one—he will come up with a date.

e. Greg brought up the issue of cholla abatement in sections of the trail where there are hundreds of cacti that are invading the trail. We will look over the trail in the fall and decide what to do then.

f. Mike O'Farrell has resigned from the committee. Cherry moved that we formally thank him in the minutes. It was seconded by Jim. The committee unanimously agreed to express their appreciation to Mike in the minutes. Thank you, Mike!

14. Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Next Meeting: August 4th at 7:00 pm