

## **Conservation Committee Meeting Minutes**

### **November 10, 2020**

**Attending:** Carol Beidleman (recording secretary), Thom Bredenberg, Tom Brimacombe, Paul Butt (Chair), Jürgen Lehman, John Parker, Carol Sanguinetti (ECIA Board Liaison).

**Guests:** Paul Fink, Jim Knight, Darrel Owen, Sue Will.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Paul Butt at 7:01 p.m.

**Approval of Agenda:** Approved on motion by Thom Bredenberg, John Reynolds second.

**Appointment of Recording Secretary:** Carol Beidleman.

**Approval of October Minutes:** Correction by Carol on spelling of her last name. Minutes approved on motion by John Parker, Paul Butt second.

#### **Board Liaison Report:**

Dog policy: Board hasn't completely made a decision. Don't want to make a lot of rules or guidelines that aren't enforceable. Leaning towards leaving it as is, what the county's is, under voice control. Report dog not under voice control, not in view of their master, to Santa Fe County Animal Control.

Assessments: Assessments/dues packets out in early December. Changed the due date to 2/15/21, no additional late fees; separated date eligible to vote and date assessments due.

Sarah Skagen: Sarah is engaged and will be leaving us in the next couple months; send replacement ideas/resumes to Julie Navarro so we can get a replacement asap and allow for cross-training.

ECIA insurance RFP committee: ECIA insurance due to be renewed in March. Want to be able to offer more activities, e.g., swimming lessons, ice-skating rink, things for kids, but current insurance won't allow or would cost more. Hope to find better insurance company; have team (including Paul Butt) to assess.

#### **HOAMCO Report:**

Gallina Park tumbleweed mowing:

Paul B. said Thom had identified area in Gallina Park west of the Rail Trail which was a sea of tumbleweeds. Worked with Carol S. and used fire mitigation money to get a surveyor out, then HOAMCO maintenance mowed and removed *some* tumbleweeds in early October. Can pick this up again in the spring; should make before-and-after observations. Thom said most of the Russian thistle is still there, some stuck to junipers on both on private property and the Greenbelt. In Gallina Park, where it crosses Espira and Dovela Roads, there are concrete culverts choked with many years of tumbleweeds, of concern for water/flotsam. Paul B. will work with the County Liaison/Roads to arrange to pull these out. Thom said we were tasked with identifying fire issues in the Greenbelt, and this is one, removing tumbleweeds that are flammable then next year looking at reclamation and reseeding.

Fire/safety danger from railroad:

John P. wanted Board to know railroad people doing survey work near the Rail Trail said they were getting ready to run that [Spur Line] train again. We ought to be engaging with the railroad, as that's where tumbleweeds collect. The train came through when I was there; see latest Eldorado Living. Board ought to be talking to them; it's a potential ignition source and we ought to make sure they are following mitigation procedures. Carol S. said for safety reasons it would be good to tell residents the train is running and to know the schedule, for those who walk this area. For cars there are crossbars, but not for hikers; some may be deaf or distracted, not used to it running.

## **Project status updates:**

TH 404 rock hauling by HOAMCO maint. Staff using the new UTV:

HOAMCO staff took UTV to the staging site at the upper gate and moved rocks to upper meadow. Were able to use existing trail without any modification and did not have to cut any branches. Thanks to Maintenance for being careful and following instructions. Then Jürgen, Paul B. and community volunteers did some grooming to mitigate the impact of the UTV, brushed the slope and groomed out the trail to the meadow. There are tire tracks in the grass in the meadow that are not treated; may get some pictures and need to assess again in spring. May want a trail post-remediation sign if it hasn't recovered. Weren't any complaints about the tire tracks from hikers. It was a successful project.

TH 401 old dam site restoration ph. 1 (plug & spread) (11/10 site flagging update):

1/3 mile west of TH 4 is old earthen dam from ranching days that has breached and has severe gullyng. This project is to begin to mitigate that erosion. Paul B. and Jan-Willem Jansens (JW) completed the laser level work today. Will put in two berms (plug and spread) across the trail; some trees will be removed, others marked for saving. JW understands the need for delicate actions, as does contractor San Isidro Permaculture. In year or two the disturbance won't be noticeable. JW will arrange a start date and keep us apprised, and Paul will let us know; this will be restricted to Committee members for COVID safety. This will stop the runaway erosion, restore the trail, and stabilize it. Will be a follow-on project in spring 2021 for the gullyng on the south side. PNM drove up the hill and around that spot; John P. said we don't have to conform to PNM's truck route. JW looked at it, but we didn't want him to flag it. In spring we want to look at it before inviting JW to vote on where and how to do it. Can be done mostly by hand, with mechanical work using Kioti and Kubota by HOAMCO.

Preserve Signage printing, ph. 1 (Paul Butt):

Paul B. is working with HOAMCO staff to get the order in with Fast Signs in Albuquerque for the waypoint and direction-finding signs. The big signs are not part of this order, pending new logo. Will work with Board; need to get big sign order in by 12/1 or before Thanksgiving. Hope to get direction and waypoint signs done by Thanksgiving. Then we will talk about how to replace those signs.

Preserve Brochure printing (Tom Brimacombe):

Paul B. said Tom sent out the prepress version, did outstanding job. Using the master map for all signs.

Re photos, Tom took the horned lizard picture on 404. Paul B. wants to press ahead on the brochure as presented [retaining existing photos, not Carol B.'s Pinyon Jay idea]. But towards the end of 2021, we should begin planning for another pressing in 2022, a 2-year cycle, and beginning in 2021 we should amass photos that meet the whole spectrum of interests, open to Eldorado community to submit (1-2 per).

Paul B. said Carol B. has a great point about an emblematic and keystone species, habitat obligates. Tom said if someone has a good quality bird photo, it's not hard to substitute; nothing's locked in stone. Resolution should be 300 dpi. Good quality jpg, not reduced, should be fine. Carol S. likes the horned lizard, although appreciate they're harder to see; people won't know the jay. Paul B. said if we take the Pinyon Jay and devote three to four lines to why important, why people should care, that would be better. Carol B. said since we're the Conservation Committee it would be good if we talked about conservation issues and the conservation value of the Preserve.

Thom mentioned future webpage suggestion for slide show of photos from locals; Carol S. said it was moving but held up due to logo but hope to have logo voted on by the November Board meeting.

Re permissions, Jürgen had question about the volunteer image. Will have to consider for 2022-2023 reissue, which will be just an update.

Re target date for brochure, if we get logo by Nov. 23<sup>rd</sup> Carol S. will work with Julie Navarro and Mike Rogers to make the request for the bid, hopefully by the end of that week.

Re print run, Paul B. got quote from FedEx/Kinkos, Paper Tiger, and websites. There is not a lot of discount for big volume; .90 a piece for a run of 2,000, but our run would probably be 1,000-1,500.

### **New business:**

Vote on New Member application, Susan Will:

Paul B. gave presentation on Susan last month. He asked for a motion to recommend appointing Susan Will to the Conservation Committee. John R. made the motion, second by Thom; vote was unanimous. Requested that we make a motion to the Board that Susan Will will be a member of the Conservation Committee, after suitable vetting; Carol S. will write up on regular motion paperwork.

Begin planning for waypoint and direction sign replacement:

Signs will be ready by Thanksgiving. Paul B. asked how should we go about replacing 22 waypoint and 25 direction signs? Some are way out there, some are new. New signs will take some work.

John P. said the poles are mostly replacement, for ones already there. He and Mark [?] used J-B Weld epoxy to put the old signs up because of concern that they would unscrew. May need to cut those off.

Tom said the new waypoints are where we need to drive stakes. Ground will be unfrozen until first-second week December, then it will be hard. Do we have stakes for new signs; where did we get?

Paul B. ordered 6-foot lengths of standard u-channel. He didn't find stakes on the little signs now; didn't realize were purpose-made until a climber knocked one over. The bottom is tapered. Re u-channel, should I try to find those 40", or take half of the 6'? Tom said easy to cut with grinder and cut-off wheel.

John P. asked if for waypoints to next intersection with number, do we use the smaller ones? Paul B. said all are 2". Tom thought cutting 6' in half would be too short. Paul B. said we will make the proper length; can try to find the 40" that are tapered, John P. agreed. Paul B. will go to TH4 this weekend.

Tom asked where to order these from. Paul B. said it's a specialty deal, not Home Depot; he will order more of 6' stock if need to. It takes an angle grinder to cut that stuff, it's hard. Do we replace where we have existing stakes and try to prioritize the new ones based on where think traffic is? Tom suggested we do what we can right now. Paul B. will email when have in hand, and if [Committee members] want to run signs along trails he will give the signs, before ground freezes; rest in spring.

John P. said we need protocol for placement of the new ones; had in past for visibility on trail but signs with S/W exposure were more faded, so should place them to give a northern exposure. Tom agreed. Paul B. didn't know if existing signs had UV coating; new ones will be identical to 2017 "no mud" signs, which have held up so far. Where possible should angle away from the sun, but in a lot of places just can't. John P. said company asserted they were UV resistant but they faded. Paul B. said UV is in the specs for new signs, but good if put them in the shade of a tree. Will ask for volunteers for replacement. We should hold onto old signs, and put together a picture of what nature has done to them over the years. New ones will be rounded corners (business insisted), for safety; good idea on the bigger signs. John P. said the direction signs are closer to the trail at knee-height, could cut someone's leg or pant and therefore should also be rounded.

## Old Business:

Fall fenceline ride request to Stables Committee Chair:

Paul B. is reluctant to ask Amelia Adair to do a fall fenceline ride given the pandemic, and is inclined to defer until spring; Thom and John P. agreed.

Paul Butt report on social trails south of trail 301 (301 E-F):

Paul B. reported that in May Carol B. brought up enormous pile of rocks between 301 E and F. On Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> Paul B. went out with JW to make an assessment of this social trail for ideas about what to do [see Paul's report, with images]. There's an intersection with cairns and bike trails to the west; pretty clear it connects to T105. We followed this to its end and the trail deteriorates, with 10" deep ruts in spots.

John P. said there is one with a large pile of rock cairn, parallel to the lookout trail; the other goes to the road in The Ridges. Paul B. said it was near where T301 branches off T101. There is also a social trail heading off to the west/northwest; this came down to the preserve boundary. There's a house on Buen Pastor [in the Ridges] where it terminates. There are social trails everywhere. The Preserve boundary is marked with no trespassing signs, but they are being totally ignored. There is no fence near old pink catamaran; they are aware that it is posted and choose not to observe that sign. We need to begin thinking about it. JW summarized it's a problem trail, a rogue trail, along the fall-line and badly degraded, heavily used. This is a social problem, not a trail maintenance problem. What can be done? The first step to take out that big cairn. Thom said it's like having [unrepaired] broken windows.

John P. suggested a well written, not threatening, letter to HOA for The Ridges from ECIA stating we've removed this cairn and these social trails are emanating from their subdivision which is illegal. Carol B. said the removal of the large cairn puts them on notice we are watching. [John P. later said it was premature to write letter to The Ridges; we could just remove the rock cairns. Better that we have consensus on how we should approach it, and to set up a meeting with the Ridges HOA. Paul B. said it wouldn't hurt to formulate our ideas in a letter, narrowly focused on that specific issue, but in January so ample time to come up with a plan.]

Paul B. said Preserve neighbors are potentially a powerful force for keeping an eye on the Preserve, and would like to not foreclose on the idea of opening a dialog with them. An idea is about a "Friends of the Preserve" limited agreement that in return for their vigilance for reporting problems and sweat equity, they could have a preserve pass good for a year or two; we won't get into that tonight.

John R. said it is good Paul B. found the deed restrictions, as we probably could do this. Granting of access to other people is not at odds with the use of the Preserve for recreational purposes of ECIA residents. We should have our lawyer look at it. All our neighbors are using the Preserve.

Paul B. said even with rangers in Preserve this wouldn't stop, and we don't want to aggravate. He asked if someone on the Committee wants to write/send a draft of this letter to him; the Board would have to approve.

Carol B. cautioned that this would need to be explicit, since other non-ECIA residents would then want to have access too. Paul B. said this granting of access would be for adjoining properties period, as they have a vested interest in maintaining a safe space in their back yard. He said it's a longstanding issue and it's time to grapple with it. Paul B. showed images of sign options for social trails, e.g., "this is not an official trail", a Hikers Advisory sign, no access – not an official trail, thank you for not trespassing, etc.

Carol S. said this goes into the insurance question, when you open up to non-ECIA residents.

Paul B. shared that when Mike Rogers worked at Ken Caryl, that subdivision had a unique relationship with surrounding Jefferson County. Their HOA was in partnership with the county and had a permit system where they required 40 hours of volunteer service to get a one-year pass into the private park. If we were to do this, it would be on a permit basis. If someone was in the Preserve and had a problem but no permit that's trespassing. To access trails coming out of The Ridges, there would need to be some additional sign. We need to walk about that western leg and see where it joins T105, to innumerate the feeder trails.

Paul B. said when they were there, they saw that that vehicles had been in the 100-300 section of the Preserve. It looked like hunters because there were tire tracks coming in from the south, and had backed into the trees to be hidden, looking out onto the meadow area. This is of greater concern.

Carol S. asked if he had called the Sheriff, but Paul B. said they don't care. Since it's not fenced, what are they going to do? He wants to talk about fencing the Preserve, the entire segment east of CR 51.

Paul Butt report on climbing sites southeast of the Line Camp (tr. 402):

Paul B. said this originated with information from Jim Knight, who was aware of climbing sites on that ridge. We went out last week with Jim Olsen. See the written report Paul B. put in Dropbox for climbing related material; he showed images of overhangs where they climb over to set their ropes and the bolts cemented to rock. It's just southwest of the end of T402, looking towards Lamy. We began looking for climbing sites, where hardware anchors were bolted into rock. Somebody has removed rope attachments from the bolts. Thom said there are two more in the vertical rock face with rope guides.

Paul B. asked for thoughts about how to address this. Last May some Eldorado residents did an archaeological survey, and these attachment points bracket some of these archaeological sites. We removed a couple cairns which had been there for years. They are all social trails. Next steps are to continue gathering information to come to some resolution as to the insurance issues, but Paul B.'s opinion is that these existing attachments are not suitable for limited climbing because of the proximity to archaeological features. Jim Olsen is an experienced climber and said these four attachment sites are for advanced climbers only and a fall is likely to be fatal. Re climbing advocates in the community, we're still studying this; this site had been mentioned as potential, but we can't recommend it because of safety and the proximity of archaeological features.

John P. mentioned one near end of Lamy which may have used for SAR training and repelling, but Jim Knight said this was not correct, that SAR has used the Preserve for training but never for that type of technical training, only search techniques and navigation, because 1) it is unsafe and the rock quality is poor and 2) SAR adheres to principles of leave no trace, not abrading rock, disturbing flora and fauna, or disturbing archaeological sites.

Thom said if our consensus is that this hardware needs to be removed, he strongly recommends we get a professional to do that, not volunteers [for safety reasons]. Paul B. said we are not prepared to recommend removal at this time because of the risk, but at some point we need to address it. These sites may tempt those who are susceptible. Thom agrees with Jim Knight that the rock quality is poor for climbing and also porous for soaking up chalk; hesitant to allow bouldering or climbing in this area.

Jürgen asked how many people in Eldorado are interested in climbing; he believed those doing the bouldering were from outside Eldorado. Paul B. explained the Committee has been dealing with this issue since April so Eldorado residents have had five months to present opinions, and although there was one person who couldn't be present tonight that brought the total number to 4. Thom B. said of those who have spoken none represented the bouldering community.

Paul B. was at TH<sub>4</sub> today and said the recent interim closure policy sign is still there [but previous have been removed]. Carol B. suggested trail cameras. Thom said Merlin Emrys reported a man with a big mattress on his back and a woman who Merlin had seen there before. They went out on the social trail up and around; there was evidence of footprints and fresh chalk on the westernmost boulder of Cactus Heaven and more footprints on Saturday. If you see anyone with a mattress in the 400s, let us know.

Jürgen asked if the 4 residents were interested in free-climbing or if those were more non-residents. Carol S. said one resident was not aware we had an area he could go climbing, but only one. Paul B. said it is important to maintain a sense of proportion about how much interest there is.

Carol S. said we had no trespassing [climbing] signs; that's an indication we're doing all we can to prevent an issue. Paul B. did look at wildlife/security cams, ones using cell phone bodies with camouflage covers, but there's the question of cell phone battery life. Could put at TH 4 and Cactus Heaven. Paul B. requested members get him brands and models (from Carol B. and Jürgen) before the January meeting. Tom said ECIA had a camera in use off T<sub>404</sub> which still works; it was near a watering hold but the weather started getting dry so we took it down and it hasn't been out for a year. It's ECIA property, if we want to put it up, but would have to swap out the memory card. Paul B. asked how wide angle it was. Carol S. said none of us knew about it.

#### **Open Forum:**

Carol S. got email from Nancy. If stays on track, should be able to vote on logo at the November Board meeting.

Paul B. said we can sit tight long enough for that (for the signs) and we have approval to do the brochure without the logo. Tom said we can put that logo on the big signs without a lot of trouble.

Tom B. said when we feel good with the brochure draft and have a printer, he'd want to send off the original InDesign file; it's good they have that so it formats right. Paul B. said when he talked to Paper Tiger and FedEx/ Kinkos they wanted a pdf, but he'll set up a Dropbox folder to get those uploaded and he'll will work with Julie.

December meeting: We don't meet in December; our next meeting will be January 5, 2021, 7-9 p.m.

In 2021, Paul B. wants to focus on trail maintenance as much as possible.

**Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.