

Peralta Regional Park
1001 N. Idaho Rd – Apache Junction, AZ
1-8-15 Meeting Notes

Participants

Chris Ogg, Bonny Knowlton, Sue Schaffer, Jill Moritz, Ed Kender, JoAnn Goodlow, Ann Adkins, David Ochs, Barb Houck, Shelly Donnelly, Steve Abraham, Jeff Prince, Kelly Wolff-Krauter, Patrick Kell, Jeff Bell, Wayne Standage, Dee Johnson, Dolores Owens, Terry Johnston, Barbara Linkins, Chuck Backus, Judy Backus, Gary Hanna, Charles Ault, Kent Taylor, Cate Bradley

Agenda

Welcome, Background, Introductions
Timeline/Planning phases/topo maps
Major Influencers and Rules on this Project (Agencies, Leasees, User Groups)
Uses Within Boundaries
Advisor Inputs (Experts, Operations)
Working Group Desired Outcomes
Desired Uses on the Site (Needs, Impacts, Fee for Service?)
Next meeting date, time, place

Welcome, Background, Introductions

Kent welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Peralta Regional Park Master Planning process and asked everyone to introduce themselves. Cate described her role as facilitator of the meetings and explained that the Open Space and Trails Master Plan (OSTMP) (which identifies the BLM lands for this site as the proposed Peralta Regional Park [RP]) as a product of the 1998 Growing Smarter Legislation which aimed to enhance land use planning statutes in Arizona. Open space was one of four new elements required to clarify and strengthen planning elements in the required plans of municipalities and counties.

Kent said, after creating the Open Space and Trails Department in 2013, the County Board of Supervisors approved the plan to conduct master planning processes for the proposed Peralta RP and the proposed Palo Verde RP on the west side of the County. This is the first regional park planning process the County has conducted and, hopefully, this process can inform and guide the processes for the remaining six proposed regional parks. In all, there will be almost 100,000 acres of regional parks across the County when all the master planning is finished, but the OSTMP is a 50 to 75 year plan for implementation as resources become available to the County.

Kent is posting all relevant reports, meeting notes and other information about his process on the County website at <http://www.pinalcountyyaz.gov/DEPARTMENTS/OPENSACETRAILS/PARKTRAILPLANNING/Pages/PeraltaPark.aspx>.

Cate said the County's desired outcomes for this process are:

- Create a master plan for the proposed Peralta RP
- Include input from interested and affected parties
- Determine best recreation uses to recommend within the proposed park boundaries
- Assure the outcomes and recommendations fit within the goals for the OSTMP

After there had been discussions about other agenda items, participants identified the following as important additional desired outcomes for this process:

- Include opportunities for education about the site, the natural desert, uses at the site and other information that promotes responsible public stewardship of the site
- Final recreation opportunity recommendations should respect and safeguard the special nature of this site creating interpretive signage that explains about the merging of compatible uses – past and present on this site
- Consider if this is an appropriate site for a Desert Education Center or other interpretation facility to tell the story of the desert
- Maintain biological integrity of the site
- Create a buffer zone that may need to incorporate other sensitive and/or important areas surrounding the site
- Be very thoughtful about access and connectivity to, within and from the site
- Incorporate the values for ecological corridors and landscape block protections as described by the AZ Game and Fish Dept.

Timeline/Planning phases/topo maps

Cate explained there was a request from the 12-1-14 meeting to lay out a timeline and the proposed planning process. She handed out the proposed timeline matrix and planning phases (see page 6). She explained the first line represents the Working Group (WG) which includes the participants of the monthly meetings. The second line schedule is for the County Administration and Departments so the process is known throughout the staff, the third is for specific public outreach to broaden public awareness and input, and the fourth line is for communications with the County Board of Supervisors. Cate acknowledged that, as elected officials, any one is free to contact and communicate with County Supervisors. She asked, however, that if there is a problem or concern about this process for anyone within the WG, that they first contact Kent or Cate, or bring it up within the WG to try to work things out, as a professional courtesy. She said the goal of this process is to be open and transparent, and to talk through the issues to get to the best possible recommendations for this site given the constraints and opportunities discovered during these meetings.

Cate also presented copies of a “Draft Peralta Communications Plan” (see page 7). This matrix was based on the Stakeholder Analysis conducted during the first meeting and lays out which groups will be contacted and the method and frequency of contact. **There is still some need to flush out specific contact information from WG members for some of the suggestions.**

Kent passed out topo maps of the site and oriented everyone to the location again. This is also in preparation for the March field trip on the 19th.

After initial discussions, Cate said the park site is BLM land that may be available under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP). She asked JoAnn and Ed to explain the program. JoAnn said R&PP is a Congressional Act that allows the BLM to accept applications from jurisdictions, non-profits, or other organizations for which there is a public purpose (i.e., schools, fire districts, etc.) to develop a management plan for the lands, that include federal environmental and cultural compliance. If the application is approved by BLM, the entity can assume management for up to 25 years

to prove abilities to manage for the public good. Following the initial lease, the entity can take patent of the land at no cost (or at 50% land value for a non-profit). JoAnn said BLM has not had as many applications under this program compared to other programs. She and Ed answered some questions and said they would look into the answers for others.

Major Influencers and Rules on this Project (Agencies, Leasees, User Groups)

BLM and R&PP

Cate introduced the next agenda item by referring back to the R&PP process and conducted an exercise to understand what are the major influencers and/or rules that will define what can be done on this site. She first started with the R&PP rules. JoAnn and Ed explained the following:

- The proposed use must be for recreation or for public purposes – it cannot be used for profit. If there is a fee for service, the revenues must be used to manage the proposed purpose of the site. **(JoAnn and Ed will look into the limitations of a sub-lease agreement for a concessionaire).**
- If an R&PP lease is developed, that lease segregates the proposed lands from other claims such as mining. In the case of an existing ranching lease, the rancher would be given 2 years notice to remove livestock from that land.
- The lease application must be submitted with a proposed Master Plan that defines the proposed use(s) and the scope of any proposed improvements to the land.
- An environmental and cultural survey must be completed on the land according to federal regulations. **BLM staff will check to see if the County may conduct this compliance to expedite the process).** SALT may be able to conduct these surveys according to the guidelines of BLM or standard practices.
- The application and the Master Plan proposal must co-inside with the BLM Resource Management Plan (RMP) process and timeline and implementation strategy so there is not undue impact to the BLM work load. **County staff will work with BLM regarding this timeline.**

Existing Leasees

Shelly and Chuck, lease holders adjacent to or on the proposed site, helped the group understand some of the needs of their operations. Shelly has a State Land lease for the D Spur Ranch on the adjacent State Lands. She grazes all year long on the lease and operates a trail ride business. She has concerns about incompatible recreation uses and safety when horses are present.

Chuck and Judy operate the Quarter Circle U Ranch and hold a BLM lease on the proposed park site. Chuck said there are mining claims, trash and destruction left from abandoned mine shafts. One improvement on the property that he mentioned is a well site that is capped. Chuck said they do not graze in AZ from May to October and graze this site, on a rotation plan in March and April. The grazing permit is based on 4 calf/cow units and there will be a cost to buy out that lease right. He suggests the area would need to be fenced to keep cows out.

Forest Service

Although there are no Forest Service (FS) lands directly connected to the proposed park, Gary said the FS is always concerned about nearby actions that could impact the Superstition Wilderness Area which is about one mile away and at the end of Peralta Road which runs across the northwest corner of the proposed park. Gary said that while an increase in users at the proposed park may mean an increase in use of the Wilderness Area, a regional park in this area could help alleviate use pressure on existing FS resources.

AZ Agencies

AG&F

Cate asked about the rules regarding hunting. Kelly said hunting regulations fall under Title 17, but hunting rules are complicated and depend on season, type of hunting, limits, species, methods, proximity to buildings and more. The AG&F Commission regulates or restricts hunting. **County staff will follow up on how the AZ hunting rules relate to the R&PP permit lands and what authority the County would have over hunting as the lease holder.**

AZ State Land Department

State Land staff were not able to attend this meeting so **County staff will follow up on rules or situations that may apply to the R&PP permit lands.** Several participants cite some issues common to management of State Trust Lands including wildcat OHV road making, shooting and wildcat dumping, lack of wash and habitat protection, road and parcel access issues. It was said that the proposed BLM lands may be some of the most pristine desert in the area.

AZ State Parks

Jeff said the ASP does not have any oversight in or near the proposed park. He said that the influx of winter visitors to the area may be an impact now because they are going out without good information about use, maps and signage. **Jeff said the ASP OHV program has funding to help address some of the issues mentioned.**

Other Comments

Others mentioned issues such as dust from dirt road use, spider web trails from wildcat use, attracting more use and more undesirable uses by creating a park. Jeff offered that managed use of natural areas can help protect them. He said signage, enforcement, low impact visitor use are beneficial to a management strategy.

Dee offered that partnerships with ranchers to help manage the area might be an option. Another concept mentioned is that law enforcement presence would most likely only be needed on a seasonal basis. And there was only mention of the possibility of fee for service. This topic will be discussed in greater depth later in the process.

County

Administration

Kent said the BOS support the OSTMP and the Open Space and Trails Department (OST Dept.), they don't want planning for the proposed regional parks to include organized recreation programs, rather they support more nature-based, less staff-intensive plans for recreation opportunity. The County Administration wants to approach, in the beginning, implementation of the OSTMP from the "low hanging fruit" perspective of doing what is most readily available to implement for the next 3 to 5 years.

The OSTMP focus is on non-motorized recreation for this location, mostly trails related with some possible picnic and some group gathering areas that relate to current trends in outdoor recreation demand. There may be some site specific planning according to what each proposed park has to offer. The OSTMP provides a 50 to 75 year horizon on how the County can grow into providing open space needs.

The OST Dept. has one staff with some minor assistance from collateral staff. The Department mission is protection of the proposed open space areas. This planning process is the first of its kind for the Department, so there will be cautious optimism about opportunities compared to management realities. The County has an existing partnership with the Superstition Area Land Trust (SALT) who maintains the Lost Goldmine trail currently. The proposed park is about one mile away from the Lost Goldmine trail. There may be a need for the Department to consider purchase of adjacent ASLD lands for connectivity to the trail. If so, there would be a need to seek funds to do so.

Miscellaneous Discussions

Other topics arose during the course of discussion that are important to capture now and discuss later. They include:

- ASP OHV Decal Program that generates funding for OHV related projects, including education and signage. Jeff wants the group to make use of these available funds.
- There is a need to do a trails inventory of the area to see what is there now – what might work and what needs to be mitigated
- Consider developing an education program to provide information about recreation use on the proposed park
- The County may need to consider, during this planning process, the need to acquire buffer areas related to the Wilderness area and other sensitive areas that may need protection
- Discuss and recommend the range of services (consider the FS Recreation Opportunity Spectrum model) offered for the proposed park
- The County needs to clarify the road(s) issues in that area, especially with ASLD
- Impacts on the surrounding Home Owners' Associations should be considered and factored into this process.

The other agenda items were not discussed due to time limitations. They were deferred to the February meeting agenda along with other topics.

Next Meeting Agenda Topics and Date

Next meeting will be **Thursday, February 5, 2015 from 10 a.m. to noon at 1001 Idaho Rd. Apache Junction Parks and Recreation Conference Center**

Proposed Agenda Items for Future Meetings

- Uses Within Boundaries
- Advisor Inputs (Experts, Operations)
- Desired Uses on the Site (Needs, Impacts, Fee for Service?) Follow up on outreach to other key interested parties
- Plan for March field trip
- What types of public meetings are needed for this process
- Funding sources

**PINAL COUNTY PERALTA REGIONAL PARK
PLANNING PROCESS PROPOSED TIMELINE**

	JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
WG mtg	1/8/15	Feb 5th	Field trip March 19th	2 nd Thurs	2 nd Thurs	2 nd Thurs	2 nd Thurs	2 nd Thurs	2 nd Thurs			
County mtgs	Dept. Heads, Co. Mgr,	Dept. Heads, Co. Mgr,	Dept. Heads, Co. Mgr,	Dept. Heads, Co. Mgr,	Dept. Heads, Co. Mgr,	Dept. Heads, Co. Mgr,	Dept. Heads, Co. Mgr,	Dept. Heads, Co. Mgr,	Dept. Heads, Co. Mgr,			
Outreach to Co. groups				OST Commission, PPOSTC, SALT, Neighborhood groups, User groups	OST Commission, PPOSTC, SALT, Neighborhood groups, User groups		OST Commission Public open house mtgs.	Public open house mtgs.	Public open house mtgs.	Draft Master Plan to OST Commission		
BOS	As needed	As needed	As needed	As needed	As needed	As needed	As needed	As needed	As needed	As needed	Final draft	Final draft

12-1-14 Stakeholder Analysis Results

- Working Group (WG) – those present, environmental non-profits, BLM, educators, OHV representation
- Advisors/Experts (A/E) – local mtn. bikers, hikers, equestrians, SALT, Maricopa Co. P & Rec., McDowell Mtn Preserve, Citizen Science groups
- Implementers/Supporters/Funders (Imp) – SALT, local, state, federal elected officials, corporations, Resolution Copper, IMBA
- Decision Makers/Opinion Leaders (DM/OL) – Pinal BOS, AJ Mayor and Council, OST Advisory Commission, Pinal Partnership Open Space and Trails Committee, media, ADOBE, Chambers of Commerce
- Potentially Impacted Parties (PIP) – ASLD, State land leasees, Gold Canyon neighbors and HOAs
- People Who Could Be Involved But Are Not Yet (NY) – equestrians, environmental groups, sportsmen’s groups, BLM, astronomers
- Potential Opponents (O) – leasees, special interest user groups, neighborhoods on Peralta Rd., local schools, proponents of less government
- Other People Who Should Know About This (SK) – climbing clubs, County Assessor’s Office (PILT), law enforcement, Fire Department

DRAFT PERALTA COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Method/Lead	As Needed	Monthly	Quarterly	Final
Emails/Kent, WG	WG			
	A/E, Imp, DM/OL, PIP, NY, O, SK	A/E, Imp, DM/OL, PIP, NY, O, SK	A/E, Imp, DM/OL, PIP, NY, O	A/E, Imp, DM/OL, PIP, O
Meeting Notes/Cate, Kent		WG		
		A/E, Imp, DM/OL, PIP, NY, O, SK		
Phone Calls/Kent, WG	WG			
	A/E, Imp, DM/OL, PIP, NY, O, SK	O	O	A/E, Imp, DM/OL, PIP, O
Website/Kent				
	Any	Any	Any	Any
Media/Kent	Kent		Kent	Kent
Meetings/Kent, Cate, Any		WG		
	A/E, Imp, DM/OL, PIP, NY, O, SK			A/E, Imp, DM/OL, PIP, O
Updates/Kent				
	A/E, Imp, DM/OL, PIP, NY, O, SK		A/E, Imp, DM/OL, PIP, O	A/E, Imp, DM/OL, PIP, O
Presentations/Kent,	WG			
	A/E, Imp, DM/OL, PIP, NY, O, SK			A/E, Imp, DM/OL, PIP, O

