

Peralta Regional Park
1001 N. Idaho Rd – Apache Junction, AZ
4-9-15 Meeting Notes

Participants

Sue Schaffer, Ann Adkins, Barb Houck, Barbara Linkins, Michelle Green, Chris Ogg, Charlie Goff, Terry Johnston, Steve Abraham, Patrick Kell, Kent Taylor, Cate Bradley

Kent is posting all relevant reports, meeting notes and other information about his process on the County website at

<http://www.pinalcountyz.gov/DEPARTMENTS/OPENSACETRAILS/PARKTRAILPLANNING/Pages/PeraltaPark.aspx>

Agenda

Welcome, Introductions

Field trip review

BLM information update and map update with mining claim boundaries

Master Plan elements review with stages

Review and clarify information gathered for first stage Master Plan elements

Discussion of Committee roles, communication approaches, tangent issues

Next steps

Welcome, Introductions

There was a round table of introductions with all present very familiar with the project.

Field trip review

Cate provided a summary handout of the March 19, 2015 field trip comments. She encouraged everyone to go see for themselves how beautiful the site is.

Participants

Anne Coe, Sid Griest, Barb Houck, Barbara Linkins, Charlie Goff, Jeff Prince, Kent Taylor, Cate Bradley (please excuse any omissions, the field trip interactions were casual and we use multiple vehicles)

Field Trip Impressions

Access

- need high clearance vehicle for access
- unimproved access road is really rough and steep and will degrade quickly with use
- access is not readily apparent to locate
- access need to be located and improved
- access is off of State Trust lands

Drainage

- wash along upper western edge of boundary
- wash just to north within the boundary flowing southwesterly
- wash from lower eastern corner of upper west quadrant southerly to bottom west quadrant
- wash from lower eastern quadrant flowing southwesterly
- confluence of both washes on southern boundary
- wash to east of property behind a ridge (west of Queen Creek)

Scenery

- 360° of natural desert beauty

Grades/elevations

- Base elevation \approx 2080' to \approx 2120' on flat areas which are about 80% of the total area
- 4 steep areas: northwest corner \approx 2289'; northeast corner \approx 2400'; inner eastern corner \approx 2546'; eastern edge \approx 2240'

Adjacent Land Uses

- Surrounding AZ State Land Department
- ASLD ranching lease (Shelly Donnelly)

Current Permits

- BLM grazing permit and ASLD ranching permit held by Quarter Circle U Ranch Chuck Bacus
- ASLD ranching permit held by Shelly Donnelly
- One other ASLD lease (Dee Johnson)

Comments/Ideas from informal conversations on the field trip

- Possible entry level rock climbing area
- Multi-use management model – recreation, grazing, mining
- Camping area somewhere
- Not appropriate size or area for shooting
- Undisturbed area by OHV use
- Is this a hunting area? (when, what, where) no signs of spent cartridges or field dressing
- Not sure there is a good 3 to 4 hour horse ride and access to the area is very steep
- Interpretive area near flat parking/entrance/picnic area
- Any use/development should be minimal with minimal services provided because of location and topography
- Where are important buffer areas and connectivity opportunities

BLM information update and map update with mining claim boundaries

Kent provided a large wall map with the proposed park boundaries and the mining claim boundaries within and he reported on more recent information regarding the mining claim. The only active mining claim on the proposed park site is 20 +/- acres on the west boundary just north of the southern quadrant. He obtained the four names on the claim from the BLM claim file – 3 are in-state and one is out of state. He has sent letters to them all and heard back from only one who gave a name of someone who is their local representative. Kent sent a letter to him but no response back yet.

This active mining claim cannot be part of the R&PP lease with BLM. If the site plan moves forward and becomes a regional park, it is likely the County would fence the mining claim, but that would be determined at a later date. Kent learned that any claim remains active as long as the annual fee is paid, the site is signed and the corner posts are installed, and annual improvements or development on the site are made. Sue asked if there is a requirement to sign the site and other regulations regarding this claim?

On the field trip, another mine shaft was evident. We need to get GPS points for it but it does not seem to be part of the active mining claim. This will be a discussion for BLM. Terry said a non-registered inactive mining claim or a rouge site shaft on public lands has to be mitigated. Other questions to ask BLM are “does the County have to provide access across their R&PP lease to the mining claim?”

Kent said Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department has had to address mining claim issues at the San Tan Mountain Park.

Kent said as far as this park planning process goes, all we can do is prepare the draft plan and present to the BOS for approval. After approval the next step is to file to activate the County's R&PP application.

Master Plan elements review with stages

Cate reviewed the Master Plan Elements handout from the February meeting and presented a 3 Stages approach to this planning process:

Stage 1

- Inventory/existing conditions
- Specific land uses
- Access
- Target audiences
- Adjacent land use(s)
- Recreation/conservation opportunities

Stage 2

- Proposed site plan alternatives
- Proposed buffer needs
- Proposed phases of plan alternatives
- Proposed partnership opportunities

Stage 3

- Proposed construction needs/improvements
- Proposed inventory and compliance for natural, cultural, and historic resources
- Proposed operations plan
- Proposed cost projections
- Proposed recommendations

Review and clarify information gathered for first stage Master Plan elements

Discussion began about information gathered in State 1:

- Property is not large enough for a 3-4 hour horse ride, but it can be a pass through from other areas or trails
- Add buffer areas to enhance a long equestrian ride
- Equestrian staging area, with access, within the park to get to other trails outside the park
- Really need to weigh the land use of trailer parking vs. area for camping
- Will riding on existing two-track roads be an acceptable experience?
- Are new trails needed in the area?
- Riding anywhere outside the proposed park boundaries will require a user permit from ASLD
- Need to consider horses riding off trail and how many horses or times before it would create a significant impact
- What are the existing equestrian opportunities in the surrounding area – none, there are no official trails in the immediate surrounding area on State Trust lands, however the Lost Goldmine Trail is open to equestrian use as well as all the Forest Service trails in the area including the wilderness area
- There is a dirt parking lot near the Donnelly property
- There are basically 3 types of trail/horse use – board and ride, trailer in and ride, ride from own property
- Looking forward – will people want to do this activity in the future?
- Staging in 15 years may be very different (most likely a growing demand)
- Patrick said that it's possible to plan a 10- 15 mile bike trail for a 2 hour ride within 480 acres. He said this site may be more important for interpretation/education rather than an iconic or special mountain biking site
- Trails should be multiple use

- Site offers connectivity from adjacent lands (State Trust lands that require a recreation permit to use)
- The Town of Superior is working on a multi-use bike/hike trail network, so there will be good opportunities within the region
- What is lacking in the region is more opportunity for beginner mountain bike trails (Mesa, Gold Canyon, Fountain Hills, Usery Mtn Park have some trails)
- Beginning mountain bike trails are best the closer they are to urban areas for easy access
- This proposed site is better for intermediate and advanced skilled riders
- The size of this proposed park would be better to plan as pass through trails to other trails and destinations
- Camping and cultural history may be the better uses of this site
- The elevation areas provide good opportunities for a good hike and camping
- Limit to about 20 dry (primitive) camping sites
- Develop some interpretive messages
- Low level services (dry camping, hiking up to peaks, etc) are a good place to start of this site and observe use and demand patterns to modify for in the future
- Provide some day picnic areas
- Parking is needed close to the use areas
- Create a wilderness experience
- Waste is an issue vs “pack it in, pack it out”
- What programming is needed for this site (interpretation/education, services, etc.)
- Explore entry level rock-climbing for this site and what the impacts of that would be
- How to address the hunting issue (needs to be controlled because this area is small), what is the impact of hunting debris
- Where are some other regional shooting site opportunities
- AG&F is looking for sites, this is not likely the place

Buffer Areas

- Land north to the Peralta trailhead will be import as a buffer or expansion area from the proposed park site
- SALT has an area near Peralta the could possibly be combined
- Would the County acquire Peralta Rd?
- How do we define “buffer” – is it acquisition of State Trust land to expand the park boundaries? Is it new open space?
- First we have to plan for the 480 acres, any expansion concepts can be explained and presented in the park master plan as future recommendations
- We need to describe adjacent land use in the master plan
- Is there a special use process with ASLD for specific use (yes, but it can be canceled with 30 day notice)
- Need to address access from Peralta Road to the park and identify where it will be on ASLD (related to camping and parking on flat land to keep high land and washes more pristine
- West side ranching lease on STL, how do we plan to integrate with that
- We need to prepare alternative site plans (low, medium, high impact activities and service concepts) to review
- The Don’s only have a 7 year lease with FS and they may or may not renew their lease

Discussion of Committee roles, communication approaches, tangent issues

Cate talked about the need to keep this process fact based, especially with people in the community that are not attending the meetings, to avoid or reduce misunderstandings and misinformation being spread. She requested that committee members share the meeting information with others in the community, and encourage others to

attend or participate by logging onto the County website to review information materials and make comments. If anyone in the community has concerns or questions Kent is available for direct contact.

Kent will send an email to the contact list with an enlarged topo map of the proposed site to use for marking up ideas about activities and locations. These will be discussed at the next meeting.

Next Meeting Agenda Topics and Date

Next meeting is May 14, 2015 from 10 a.m.to noon. Agenda will be working with maps to discuss concepts and alternatives for activities, access, locations, services, etc.