

**Red Rock Ranger District**  
**July 25, 2013 Non-motorized Trails Planning Meeting**  
**6-8PM, Hilton Hotel at the Ridge in VOC**

For Forest Service related information on this trail planning process contact Jennifer Burns at 928-203-7529 [jmburns@fs.fed.us](mailto:jmburns@fs.fed.us) For more information regarding the planning process contact Cate Bradley at 520-791-6472 [cate\\_bradley@nps.gov](mailto:cate_bradley@nps.gov)

Meeting notes and other trail planning materials will be posted to the Coconino Forest Red Rock District website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/coconino/recarea/?recid=54892> go to *Land and Resource Management* (on left side) then click on *Planning*, or find meeting notes and other related documents to this planning process at [www.vvcc.us](http://www.vvcc.us) scroll to the RTCA Documents link.

Next Meeting Date (note change of date from usual)

Next meeting is Thursday August 29, 2013 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Hilton Sedona.90 Ridge Trail Drive.

All meeting notes and reports cited in this process can be accessed via [www.vvcc.us](http://www.vvcc.us) and click on the “RTCA Documents” folder. This web link can also be a hot link on other websites. Meeting notes and other Forest Service related documents for this trails planning process are also at [www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/coconino/recarea/?recid=54892](http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/coconino/recarea/?recid=54892)

**May 16<sup>th</sup> Participants:** Cynthia Lovely, Rachel Murdoch, Jen Hensick, Sara Dechter, Forest Seville, Paul Sullivan, Olga Ostrom, Mike O’Neil, Phil Kincheloe, Julia Ascoly, Doug Copp, John Seyfried, Eric Mace, Cole Mace, Thomas Zielinski, Dean Williamson, Janet Levy, Joan Bouck, Steve McClain, James Barr, Lee Luedeker, Rocky Luedeker, John Finch, Don Buffoni, Homer Harmon, Dorothy O’Brien, Keran O’Brien, Craig Leese, Dick Snider, Craig Stevens, Heide Heidepriem, Spence Gustav, Carol Wirkus, Andy Beeler, Sam Serrill, Doug Brown, Jennifer Burns, Cate Bradley (apologies for misspellings)

### **Meeting Agenda**

- Intros
- Review of Process Results to Date
- Forest Plan Presentation
- Budget and Resources Discussion
- Roles and Impacts of Partnerships
- Prioritize Categories from Past Meetings
- FS Management Constraints
- Review Priorities and Discuss Values, Functions, Experiences
- Next Steps (discuss sensitive areas overlay, Trail Mix presentation, how to achieve trade-offs, etc.)

### **Welcome**

Cate welcomed participants and asked for self-introductions at the tables, and reviewed the agenda. She announced that AZ State Parks is accepting applications for their three advisory committees (ASCOT, OHVAG, NAPAC until August 30. For more information go to [www.azstateparks.com](http://www.azstateparks.com)

### **Review of Process Results to Date**

Jennifer explained the maps and other information that will be used to begin formulate the recommendations from this process. She presented a map which includes all the input from past meetings (see <http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/coconino/recarea/?recid=54892> or [www.vvcc.us](http://www.vvcc.us) ).

### **Forest Plan Presentation**

Sara Dechter, a planner with the FS, explained how the maps and information from this process will fit into and inform the Forest Plan. She said the Forest Plan represent various management areas where there are specific resource concerns – such as cultural, biological, topographic, or historic, or strategic uses – such as wilderness areas, motorized use areas, lease areas or other activities, for example. This trails plan provides closer scale information that allows the Forest Service to better understand where, and what kind of use, is occurring related to those various management areas. This creates a more clear opportunity for considerations of getting a trail on the ground. She said, aside from uses that conflict with Forest Service directives, the greatest constrictor of all plans is the funding to carry them out.

Sara made it clear that this process is not approving the trails discussed – those still have to go through the federal environmental compliance process (NEPA). Instead, information from this process will be overlaid on the management areas to assess which recommendations can be considered under the District’s Categorical Exclusion (CE) actions. These are actions the agency has determined will not have significant effect on the environment (human, cultural, wetlands, and/or endangered species), either individually or cumulatively. The Categorical Exclusion status can help expedite the process to get a trail on the ground, for example. If any of the critical categories identified by the agency are involved in a proposed trail, FS staff will make recommendations to mitigate the action, usually, but not always, by rerouting the proposed trail. Otherwise a full Environmental Assessment of Environmental Impact Statement is required by federal laws such as the Wilderness Act, Clean Water Act and others.

Some site specific resources that are considered for a proposed trail include wilderness areas, threatened and endangered species, cultural sites and tribal consultations, wetlands and flood plains, soils and erosion that result in sedimentation loads in streams. Once the planning and compliance process is completed for a proposed trail, it will be considered within the context of the District and Forest level plans and budgets.

### **Budget and Resources Discussion**

Jennifer said the Red Rock District, over the last 3 to 5 years, has been adopting and creating trails with allocated funds (approximately \$40K to \$60K per year). The District has approximately \$100K per year for a Trail Supervisor for maintenance and volunteer coordination. Because of the limited trail funds, the District depends heavily on volunteers (mostly on maintenance) to help meet the user demands on the trail system. There is a sustained trail maintenance backlog of about \$300K each year on the District. That includes repairing trails, signage upkeep, and parking lot improvements, among other things. Most new trailheads have been built or modernized with grant funding, some of which no longer exists.

### **Roles and Impacts of Partnerships**

Jen Hensick, acting District Ranger, began by thanking all the partners and participants to this trail process stating the FS needs the help of partners. To put this planning effort – and any implementation from it – into perspective, she explained the Coconino Forest budget to manage over 1.6M acres includes, among other things, general operations and maintenance, covering legal mandates (court case decision, plan revisions, legislative actions, for example), and forest plan revisions such as restoration,

travel management rule (OHV management), Fossil Creek river management plan (under the Wild and Scenic River Act), the Flagstaff watershed protection project (to protect the city water supply at Lake Mary), and other planning efforts for overall management of the Forest.

The question was asked if dedicated gifts for the creation or improvement of specific trails from this process. Jen said it would depend on the outcome of this process, determining what the priorities are for the future, but that donations can be accepted by Forest Service to do work that is approved by Forest Service. Jennifer Burns said, for example, the FS is conducting an analysis of the Hogs trail area (which has been brought up in this process). She said \$50K in funds have been allocated to planning for this area and of that \$9K has gone to cultural surveys – this can be a thumbnail of what it costs to do the assessment on other areas, depending on the sensitivity/complexity of the area. Complexity can relate to public, tribal, neighborhood issues or to biological, soil or archaeological issues.

It was stated again, that the FS has a deep backlog of maintenance issues with insufficient funds to keep up with needs. This is a factor when considering creating or adopting more trails.

### **Prioritize Categories from Past Meetings**

During initial meetings, participants were asked about their issues, concerns and desired outcomes for this process. Those meetings were well attended by over 70 people each. The input was summarized into seven over-arching categories:

- Trail user safety/user conflicts
- Natural/cultural resource protection
- Access issues (ADA, parking trailheads, facilities)
- Signage
- Volunteerism
- Maintenance
- Add more trails to FS system

During past meetings, these topics have been addressed through presentations and Q&A (see past meeting notes).

At this meeting, those categories were presented on a flip chart matrix for the purpose of understanding priorities. Participants were asked to use 3 colored dots, according to their preferred recreation style – hiking, biking, equestrian) to signify their priority areas. As a reminder, results of this process are not votes, rather they represent areas where the public desires that the FS focus resources for future management decisions.

Results of the dot exercise are as follows:

123 dots were used, of them	N= 123 (100%)
63 blue dots (represent mountain bikers)	(51%)
42 yellow dots (represent hikers)	(34%)
18 green dots (represent equestrians)	(15%)

Following are the specific results by category and recreation style:

	<b>Hiker</b>	<b>Mountain Biker</b>	<b>Equestrian</b>	<b>Total</b>
Trail user safety/user conflicts	(4) .3%	(1) .1%	(5) .4%	10
Natural/cultural resource protection	(8) .7%	(3) .2%	(1) .1%	12

Access issues (ADA, parking trailheads, facilities)	(3) .2%	(4) .3%	(5) .4%	12
Signage	(6) .5%	(1) .1%		7
Volunteerism	(3) .2%	(7) .5%	(1) .1%	11
Maintenance	(14) 11%	(17) 14%	(3) .2%	34
Add more trails to FS system	(4) .3%	(30) 24%	(3) .2%	37

Following the prioritizing categories exercise, participants were asked to place colored dots (according to their preferred recreation style) on the map of existing and proposed trails that has been generated from past meetings (see meeting notes posted on websites listed above). This exercise hopes to reveal patterns of use and/or areas of concentration for FS planners and managers to consider in future decision making.

**Forest Service Management Constraints**

At the August meeting and with the map (with trails and dots), FS staff will overlay known sensitive areas within the District for a discussion about options and constraints based on the site, budget and maintenance needs.

**Review Priorities and Discuss Values, Functions, Experiences**

Input from the group regarding the results of this exercise related to what some of the patterns might mean. Jennifer placed an overlay on top of the dot map that shows the “sub” trail systems surrounding Sedona and VOC. The dot exercise showed:

- Most biker interest in the area west of the Cultural Park where several user created trails are located on the Dry Creek rim and linking Cockscomb Trail with Girdner Trail,
- Most hiker interest in the area west of Girdner (similar to above); on the user created trail known as Transcept and between Bell Rock and Courthouse formations, and
- Most equestrian interest in the area of Turkey Creek, and Baldwin.

Some comments on the arrangement of dots indicate:

- Hogs should be adopted (this is already in planning process)
- Margs Draw area can provide wilderness hike opportunities in a beautiful area close to town
- Turkey Creek Road could use a multi-use trail from the village, and a way to get off the paved road, that connects to Baldwin, Cathedral, Bell Rock and Transept for a loop – currently there is minimal parking and social trails are on poor soil; also Turkey Creek area could use trail development
- Scheurman Mountain – opportunities for loops and connections
- Desire for loop/connectors offered by Transcept, Special Ed, High School user created trails, for example.

**Next Meeting Agenda**

- TBA