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Working collaboratively to support a healthy Rio Grande Bosque and riparian ecosystem while celebrating its benefits to the communities of central NM

**Save Our Bosque Task Force**

Save Our Bosque Task Force Monthly Board Meeting  
Socorro County Annex Office  
198 Neel Ave, Socorro NM

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**Tuesday, July 6th @ 3:00pm   
Meeting Location: Socorro County Annex**

In attendance: Amy Erickson, Sarah Anderson, Gina Dello Russo, Jeff Havlena, Matt Mitchell, Jack Dickey, Rex Myers, Abigail Plecki, Ginny Weisar, William Haywood, Leah Atherton, Yasmeen Najmi (on phone)

**Board Member Action Items** –

* + Gina and Amy will develop a grass seed list for Sal Gonzales
  + Amy will put on the agenda for August – should we allow campfires and cooking fires at the parks now? And – discussion of Bosque Conservation Day
  + Matt will reach out to the school superintendent to get their thoughts on BCD, and see if they can bus the students out there
  + Sarah will invite somebody from BLM to our August meeting to give an update on the Socorro Nature Area
  + Sarah will provide a budget for each completed PFW project showing that the funds were paid out, and send this to Matt
  + Sarah will set a date for the October trash pickup
  + Yasmeen and Sarah will coordinate to get the No Camping signs installed at Otero, Island, and Sandbar park
  + Yasmeen will develop a draft guidance document to get our segment of the trail designated into the Rio Grande Trail system.
  + Ginny or Will will take a photo of where the cars cross the barrier at Otero Park and send photo to Yasmeen
  + All – Send Amy or Sarah calendar items to put on our website calendar
  + All – Please send Sarah a post for the Facebook page so we can keep everyone engaged in our work. We would like to have a post from each board member.

Meeting began at 3:07 pm. Attendees each gave a brief introduction.

Approve agenda and minutes from last month’s meeting  
Matt motioned to approve the agenda, Rex seconded, passed.   
Amy made changes to the June minutes per Will K’s comments.   
Yasmeen had a correction – Sarah has sent invoices for the entire $25K from MRGCD, not just $19K.   
Matt motioned to approve the amended minutes, Gina seconded, passed.

Public Open Forum

Leah lives in Lemitar and wants an update on the Socorro Nature Area. SOBTF was involved in the initial development and has assisted with upkeep over the years, but the BLM is responsible for the facility. BLM has recently put in some handicapped accessible trails and is doing other work out there including rehabbing the pond. We will invite someone from BLM to our next meeting so they can provide an update.

There are currently fire restrictions at the parks and trail – the interns covered all the grills with garbage bags and State Forestry has hung No Campfire signs. There are still issues at Otero Park with people driving down past the rock barriers – putting up a better barrier or more rocks is needed to prevent people from driving into no vehicle areas.

Amy mentioned a field day hosted by Isleta Reach Stewardship Association on July 22. Contact Amy for more information (amy.erickson@audubon.org).

Fiscal Reporting  
Matt gave the treasurers report. Our balance as of last month’s meeting was $46,951.59. As of today our balance is $35,313.48. We have around $4800 in our general fund. Gina took our credit card application to First State Bank and we were approved. Matt, Gina and Sarah will each have a card. When those board members rotate out of their positions, we can get a new card issued with the new board member’s name. The card has a $10,000 credit limit and we will pay it off every month. The card has no annual fee. We will receive the cards in 10 days.

Current grant applications

We did not receive the WaterSmart grant. This summer, we will apply for a Water Trust Board grant in partnership with State Forestry.

Other fundraising efforts

We have not gotten any new donations through the membership drive. We still do not have approved nonprofit status with PayPal.

Project Updates

*Partners for Fish and Wildlife* – Matt is writing final reports for the finished Conklin, Gonzales, and Thomas projects. Our one active project is the Barclay’s. We are working on developing a budget to deliver to them. Ken Hart is interested in applying for a PFW project, and we will know more about funding availability for him when we do the Barclay budget. It would be nice to do followup on Pack et al. with tree/shrub plantings and saltgrass plugs. We could plant cottonwood and willows along the old river channel but the rest would be better for grassland.

*Riverine Parks and Bosque Trail* – Sarah is still working with Atilla and NPS to get the story map finished. We spent out the city riverine parks money by buying 3 more grills and we will have the city help install them. We have not heard back from the city about the next $5,000. The interns have picked up trash the last 3 weeks in a row twice a week. People seem to be living at Otero Park and there is always trash there. People leave trash at Confluence Park, dumping at the same spot every week. *If anyone sees people camping long-term or leaving trash, call the police non-emergency line at (575) 835-1883.* MRGCD received new no camping signs in (they say day use only) and they will be installed when they buy the mounting posts.

The Riverine Parks subcommittee is still waiting to hear back from the city. We still want new park signs and Yasmeen can send what files or information she has from the signs that were installed previously. Yasmeen will be in Socorro next week and she can schedule a time to discuss signs with other members of the parks subcommittee. Jack wants to know when to open the bosque back up for campfires and cooking fires. We will revisit this next month, after fireworks season is over.

*Rio Grande Trail / Socorro Valley Trail* – The Rio Grande Trail Commission has a document outlining what steps to take to get a section of the trail officially designated. We can designate our existing 3 mile segment (the MRGCD board will have to approve first). We need maintenance plans but SOBTF doesn’t have the capacity or legal authority to take on that role. There is a funding opportunity of $50,000-$100,000 for shovel-ready projects, but we are not there yet. What we need now is funding for capacity building and planning assistance. The commission said that is not an appropriate use of the funds but they can help us find other funding to hire support staff to get all the bureaucracy together. There are a lot of partners involved in this project including the City, the County, MRGCD, and BOR.

*Sevilleta* – No one is here from Sevilleta. Tabled.

*NMC grant* – We are building on to the Pack et al. project to create a larger firebreak. We are on phase 2 this year and were just approved for fall/spring phase 3 funding. The contractor was at the site this month and finished spraying saltcedar. We still need to masticate but we ran out of time before ESA timing restrictions to protect habitat for SWFL and YBCU. Gina is getting certified to do the bird surveys. We got an extension so we are doing this year’s phase 2 this fall.

*BOR cooperative agreement* – interns will start weeding the project sites next week. Sarah is looking for a contractor to do herbicide treatments.

We addressed all of the board action items from June.

Community outreach

Sarah finished the newsletter, there are a few small corrections and it will be sent out next week. We will do another newsletter in January. Abigail suggested that a couple weeks before the next trash pickup maybe we can have some sort of in-person social hour, and try to get some new folks interested in our work including new citizens and college students. Let’s look at getting work done in the parks aside from just picking up trash, ie) fixing the fence at Otero park. We could do work on the parks outside the city limits as well, like removing old grills and possibly purchasing new grills with Capital Outlay funding. We will plan a community work day for grass plug planting at Sal Gonzales sometime after November.

Advocacy

Rio Grande Basin Study. No updates.

*Other advocacy* – Today is the deadline to submit comments on the proposed SunZia powerline and its proposed route crossing the Rio Grande. There will be other opportunities for public comments. A local group called Protect our Rio Grande advocates for the serious consideration of undergrounding the line as it crosses the river, and an evaluation of impacts to communities. Pattern Energy can fund studies, including crane impact studies. Gina asked for them to fund small nonprofits that work with local communities. This would not be “mitigation” but would be “community benefit”. Gina will attend a followup meeting. Amigos de Sevilleta opposes the route through the refuge. There will be damage to the desert due to infrastructure and access roads so they want to keep it out of the refuge altogether. They wrote a formal recommendation favoring the route around the west side of the Ladrones. There is lots of opposition from folks in the Santa Rita and Riley area.

Other

There are upcoming open positions on the board. This will remain an agenda item until we have board elections in November. There will be 2 officer positions open – the chair and the secretary. At-large positions are available as well. There is no limitation for how many terms someone can serve on the board.

Interns are here until August 11th. At the next meeting they will give a short presentation about some of their work. They are having a good time even though it’s hot.

Thoughts on Bosque Conservation Day? Schools will be back in person this fall. We will invite Bosque del Apache’s education staff and Sevilleta staff. We usually do BCD in October.

Yasmeen motioned to adjourn, Rex seconded, passed. Meeting adjourned at 4:23pm.

**\*\*\* Our next board meeting will be at 3:00 on Tuesday, August 3rd\*\*\***