MEETING RECORD

**SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE**

Thursday, May 23, 2019 – 9:00 AM-1:00 PM

Altadena Community Center, Altadena, California

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# Action Items

1. **Matthew Bokach** will include the **Conservation Education Committee** in discussions with visitor center volunteer groups.
2. **Each Ad Hoc Committee** will complete the action plan table, including a description, goals, lead, steps, timeframe, and milestones.
3. **NFF staff** will draft the “SGMCC: Who We Are” and “Partnership with the Angeles National Forest” sections of the whole action plan.
4. **NFF staff** will share the Collaborative contact list, including email and phone. NFF staff will follow up with the group before sharing to give an opportunity to let us know if someone does not want their contact information shared.

# Welcome and Introductions

The group welcomed new members and attendees. Matthew Bokach attended with Engine Captains from the Forest Service.

A key goal of today’s meeting was to discuss the SGMCC action plan template and have each Ad Hoc Committee speak to the group about project priorities to be included in the action plan, and provide an update on key needs and meetings with Forest Service liaisons.

# Forest Service Update, Matthew Bokach

* Matthew Bokach, Monument Manager for the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument provided a Forest Service update:
* There is not yet a definitive date to sign the Monument Management Plan.
	+ There has been dialogue with the Washington office and others. A firm signing date will likely be announced in the next month.
* Staffing Update
	+ There were several hires, promotions, and resignations in the last month. As a result, the engineering staff is currently lean. Their current priorities include:
		- Access roads and winter damage repair
		- Vegetation management in preparation for fire season
		- Timber management
* Fire season preparation (Matthew noted that ‘season’ is now a somewhat misleading term because fire season is essentially year-long. This year *may* prove an exception and there could be a marked beginning and end for fire season.)
	+ Wet weather has posed some challenges, but it has allowed for scheduling more prescribed burns. Prescribed burning may continue through the summer if moisture levels allow. Conditions so far have allowed for a lot of extra work.
		- Road access to burn sites have been an issue. Forest Leadership has been focused on this issue.
* Finally, Matthew noted that seasonal employees will be brought on next week.
* Committee Questions:
	+ Last year Matthew provided a list of high-priority projects. Similar information was requested for this year, Matthew will plan to provide a list of this year’s program of work at the next meeting, although he noted that not a lot has changed since last season. Work includes:
		- Permitting and administration issues
			* Because the Angeles is not a timber forest, there is a lot more organizational, administration, and permitting work.
		- Several high-profile projects resource management project including:
			* Cattle Canyon
			* Williamson Rock (Decision coming soon)
			* Crystal Lake Master Development Plan
			* Federal energy licensing at Pyramid Lake
		- Fire management projects
	+ Are there any new Monument opportunities with Judy Chu’s office related to current legislation?
		- * No- it’s just a bill at this point. However, if it passes there will be a lot of conversations around that.
	+ How does the Forest prioritize controlled burns?
		- Are there any volunteer opportunities?
			* Not for the actual burning, but they could potentially help with survey work.
		- Matthew discussed needing to go back on the landscape and survey the circumstances. A lot of current documents are out of date and new survey work needs to be done. Matthew will be initiating more investigation work in the next year-particularly in high priority areas near communities with an emphasis on ladder fuel elimination.
		- There is a target number of acres to treat every year. Matthew is confident they will hit it each year, there is plenty of need for it. It is easier to plan, but harder to implement each year.
			* Any NEPA process will take some time. There will be a 30 day comment period for each one. This is available online.
			* Fuels work is usually a Categorical Exclusion. There is still a comment period for this. The Forest has to demonstrate that they respond to these comments.
		- Southern California Edison- if large surveys need to be done one could train external people to do this. It would be possible to recruit extra help for surveying. Volunteers cannot do the actual burn work.
		- Robert Bonny- Undersecretary of the previous Administration discussed the most important things people can do to help manage the Forest:
			* We all need to understand the process of controlled burns and what everyone's role is. It is important to not say no to the burning process and to allow it to go forward. It is critical to understand that the burning process is critical for fuel management and wildfire prevention.
			* Post-Station Fire, there was a period of time where everyone was very worried about controlled burning. Matthew feels we are past this point now. People are ok with burning and they are currently doing a lot of work in the Mt. Baldy area. Originally people were very worried, but now that work is being done, people have a much more positive response.
			* It might be beneficial to connect with statewide messaging.
			* Social media is announcing these controlled burns as much as possible to raise awareness and keep people from calling Fire Departments about smoke when it just a controlled burn.
			* Cal Fire- each community might be able to have a Fire Safe Council. People don’t seem to have an interest in developing one until after a fire. Sierra Madre has a good model of what one looks like and how to be proactive and provide education. Glendora has not been interested.
			* Increased development of foothill area has lead to loss of helipads for firefighting. (these are outside the forest property)
				+ Forest keeps helipads its own helipads.
	+ Sarah also provided some notes and general information:
		- Noted that Matthew has been asked to take a more active role in the Collaborative’s Action Plan development process.
			* Matthew to start being a regular face with the meeting.
			* Jerry’s intention is once the monument plan is signed, he really wants matthew to take the lead with forest for engaging with the public and the Collaborative.
			* Forest wants to be actively involved in the action plan. It might make sense for Matthew to take part in Steering Committee meetings or at least be looped in. Matthew expressed interest in being involved in the leadership part of the process and becoming more available.
		- New committee- set up by Edison to focus on implementation of the Monument plan
			* Connected to the Collaborative’s volunteer committee because a lot of the actions would need to be done by volunteers.
			* The Collaborative may need to create a separate committee specifically to track implementation.
		- Sarah also highlighted the employee search feature of the Forest Service website. It is a useful way to get connected to the right person on the Forest. NFF is also available to help out with connecting members to the right Forest employee.

# Overview of Action Plan Template and Goals

* A working template was provided to each member. Sarah highlighted the purpose of the plan and overall deliverables for the Collaborative:
	+ A way to build on the partnership between the Angeles National Forest and the Community Collaborative
	+ Identify where desires and interests meet and how to pursue them
	+ NFF to start filling in other draft sections ahead of next meeting
* Sarah also highlighted the criteria needed for an item to be included in the Collaborative’s Action Plan:
	+ Items need to have a Lead
	+ Items need to have a fiscal entity behind them in order to take money and implement
	+ Alignment with Forest mission
	+ Feasibility
* Presentations today should address the criteria

# Presentations: Ad Hoc Committee Priority Initiatives

## Trails and Recreation (Steve Messer, Committee Chair)

* Steve noted that one of the main challenges is that it is difficult to tell who is the lead on each project.
* Steve also highlighted the current priority projects including:
	+ Cattle Canyon East Fork Project
		- WCA is supporting this.
	+ Building trails at Mt. Waterman
		- This project just received funding. Steve is taking the lead.
	+ Colby Canyon Reroute
	+ Spitterman Trails Falls Restoration
	+ Sturtevant Trails
		- Funded by Southern California Edison Grant
	+ Los Pinetos Trails
		- LA County is the lead
		- There is not currently a project lead within the Collaborative. Steve’s group will be following with volunteer hand crews. Work is being done, but it is not a priority project simply because LA County is the lead.
* The Committee needs to get together soon and connect with appropriate Forest liaisons.
* It would be helpful to have someone from WCA join the committee.
* Several of these projects have a volunteer component. They could be added to the volunteer committee priorities.
* Matthew suggested considering Fish Canyon Trail because the destination of the trail is within the Forest boundaries, but the trail itself is not on Forest owned/managed land.
	+ There is currently a grant in the works. Liz would like any contact information for people who would like to be involved. City of Duarte is the Lead.
* Question: As trail work is done, is there any work on ID and removal of invasives?
	+ Some volunteers are trained in ID and removal, but not everyone is expected to have this training. Threatened species are taken into consideration for trail work as well. They are flagged before volunteer trail work, but it is not generally a main part of trail maintenance.
* Steve needs to know who can take leads on projects, whether they are in the Collaborative or not.
* Belinda mentioned the Fish Canyon Project. It is not currently proposed as a top two priority, but there is still interest in the site.
* **Key Need: Identify project leads**

## Transportation (Daniel Rossman, Committee Chair)

* Daniel welcomed having additional members join this group.
* Ricardo is the liaison for this group.
* The first priority project is improving transportation between Arcadia to Chantry Flat. Daniel provided background information on the project and its history.
	+ The Department of Transportation funded the original work and a shuttle from the Arcadia REI parking lot to Chantry Flat.
	+ This project had been identified because it represented a successful pilot project with public enthusiasm. The goal was for it to run year round with support from the City of Arcadia, but due to contract negotiations, they were not included before. The City could be added in now with some funding advocacy from the Collaborative.
	+ Working with WCA to do Chantry Flat site improvements was also discussed.
		- * There is interest among City of Arcadia staff.
			* Nature for All is leading a Metro planning process. It includes a Resolution for the LA County Metro to look into county-wide transit and there is confidence that this shuttle will be included.
			* There is a petition going around for the Metro to fund pilot projects similar to this in several LA locations. Get metro support for these projects to connect with the Gold Line would make a big difference.
* Another related priority project is to connect Forests to community hubs.
	+ Belinda highlighted access for disadvantaged communities. Taking buses to Metro stations makes for long trips. There is rarely smooth access for those who are not directly on the metro line. They have been analyzing the best places to add transit options to provide easier access beaches, public lands, museums, etc. and create hubs where transit can be offered to several different places.
	+ Funding possibilities include:
		- Measure A
			* Litigation has been settled.
			* Access and job training program elements will be pushed out first.
		- LA County Transit funding available. It might be possible to work  with local supervisor’s offices.
		- Nature for All is working on a Kaiser grant to start doing this work.
* Questions to this committee included:
	+ Is there a template for these projects? What created past problems?
		- Feedback from Pasadena community: people didn’t like a bus going through their community. More community outreach on the ground would be helpful in the future.
			* Make buses smaller/quieter/less frequent.
		- Site selection is key.
	+ Transportation for the North side of the Forest was also discussed. There is only one point where a bus comes close to trail access (through Santa Clarita open space).
		- Acton and Antelope Valley would access through here as well. They have poorer communities that would benefit from transit support to get access to the North side of the Forest.
	+ Matthew asked that anyone with interest on the North side get in touch with him. He is working with smaller community groups up there.
	+ The group also discussed having a future meeting on the north side of the Forest, and to possibly include a tour or site visit.

## Volunteer Engagement (Liz Reilly, Committee Chair)

* The committee met with John Cho, Angeles Volunteer Coordinator, and Fabian Garcia, Angeles Partnership Coordination, to discuss how priorities align and what the committee should be working on
* The committee’s number one priority is to develop a website that serves as a clearing house and database for the public to know about what volunteer projects with key details listed such as the skillsets needed and where it’s located. This website could perhaps have a map so potential volunteers know where to go. The goal is to increase access to volunteer opportunities.
* The committee is also working on getting a better system in place that will help volunteer groups know what the needs of the forest are even if there aren’t current opportunities. This will help communicate to groups and individuals that are interested in volunteering know what’s needed so we can train and funnel people in a controlled fashion to get the work done.
* The next step is to figure out a way to get an existing or new organization that can take a lead on the website, fundraise, and provide resources to projects.
* One ongoing volunteer opportunity that we need to keep in mind is engaging volunteers in spotted owl surveys.
* One way to kick off this website is to identify a few projects to set up and test the system.
	+ The website lead will be sure to gather data such as skillsets needed when testing the platform.

## Conservation Education (Claire Robinson, Committee Chair)

* The committee gave examples of signage at the least meeting, which includes map of the watershed and wildfire cycle figures for each location, as well as historical and cultural information.
* They are piloting system at Copper Canyon to produce signs and get them out in the field
* The areas where signage will be placed are often used for sediment management so the committee is trying to figure out how to go to the County and other sources of funding to get pavement for certain turnouts to delineate areas for signage.
	+ Applied to NFWF for Bear Creek, Baldy Bowl, and Chapman trail
* The committee is developing a protocol that will look at the state of a trail, level of difficulty, and features along the trail to reduce rescues needed.
	+ Reaching out to John Wicker and Kathryn Barger from LA County to get some funding to do trail protocol.
* A next step is to work with Fabian Garcia to determine where to put signs.
* The goal is to have a style guide for signage based so that this work can be extrapolated.
* Amigos De Los Rios is the lead for the signage project.
* Justin Seastrand is looking for funding but suggested that groups may want to sponsor a particular site to fund signage.
* Matthew Bokach is working with visitor’s center volunteer groups to try to standardize and update information disseminated to the public.
	+ **Action Item:** Matthew will include the Conservation Education Committee in these conversations.
* Claire worked with Jose Henriquez-Santos and Carlos Flores, Angeles Landscape Architects, when developing signage.
* The committee is working with Diane on the signage for the memorial in the future.
* Jahmal Butler: there are 2 fire settlements at the LA Gateway district so there is funding available if we have projects that fit within specific scope and are focused within the district. NFWF sends out RFP and the Forest Service hands over projects for them to find grantees.
* The committee is identifying additional areas of need in order to find other funding and sponsors.
* Robby Ellingson suggested including Devils Backbone and West Baldy. Mt Baldy Resort would be interested in funding that signage.
* Matthew Bokach requested that the signage project have a plan for graffiti resistance and replacement. Forest Service staff talk about signage frequently but hesitate because there will be vandalism.
	+ Claire ordered duplicates of the sign and may have to do a version that’s cheaper for replacement.

# *Identify Next Steps on the Action Plan*

# The Collaborative Action Plan will be important to document the group’s intent and actions.

# The Collaborative will lean on committee leads to identify actions in critical path action plan table.

# **Action Item:** Committees will complete the action plan table, including a description, goals, lead, steps, timeframe, and milestones.

# **Action Item:** The NFF can draft “SGMCC: Who We Are” and “Partnership with the Angeles National Forest” text to pull together the whole action plan.

# Lightning Talks

#

# Alex Linz, Watershed Conservation Authority

# WCA is working on San Gabriel Canyon and Crystal Lake conceptual management plans.

# Completed an existing conditions survey of San Gabriel Canyon and Crystal Lake campground and adjacent recreation areas, which included user surveys, mapping, and stakeholder outreach meetings.

# Currently working on a hydro study of Crystal Lake to understand water level behavior

# WCA had a meeting last month to present potential new recreational opportunity in San Gabriel Canyon, and next month will present on new recreational opportunities at Crystal Lake campground.

# Longer term work includes developing alternate scenarios around San Gabriel Canyon and Crystal Lake and bring those alternatives to the public for comment. WCA will wrap up conceptual planning by end of the year.

# If anyone wants to participate in the outreach/feedback element, please reach out to alinz@wca.ca.gov.

# If you have mapping need for projects, get in touch with Brian Moller who heads up the Green Project Initiaitve to find a time to talk to him on regional project mapping/database.

# Robby Ellingson, Mt. Baldy Resort

# Mt. Baldy Resort opened in 1952 and has a special use permit from the Forest Service.

# The resort focuses heavily on year round mountain activities.

# Approximately half of annual visitors take the lift as a scenic lift rider and the other half access ski/snowboarding terrain.

# Permitted area exists 65-70% on west/southwest side of the resort is within the Angeles, and everything on north side is within monument.

# The front side has 4 chair lifts.

# During the summer time the resort offers tent/cabin camping and zip golf.

# The resort is at a hub for great trails, including Baldy Bowl through Top of the Notch and West Ridge from the village where there’s a loop.

# The resort considers itself a strong partner in recreation within the San Gabriel Mountains.

# Gary Stickel, Kizh Nation

# Recently went to Chicago for a lecture tour to talk about Kizh tribe at the Field Museum and Northwestern. From there Gary went to Cahokia, at one time largest city in America, to visit WoodHenge.

# The County wants to help restore Kizh historic sites and present as community and interpretive exhibits

# Bit Rock is a flagship site for archeological sites that needs to be protected.

# Gary is working with local groups to the save oldest life form in CA: an oak tree that is 13000 years old. It is threatened by a housing development.

# Roberto Morales, Sierra Club

# Works closely with Nature For All Coalition and serves as chair.

# The group works on the San Gabriels campaign, which is part of the greater land, water, wildlife, and outdoor for all campaign.

# Founded on equity and justice, beyond protection of ecosystem, being mindful of how it impacts community.

# They focus on grassroots efforts and leadership development

# Advocate for creating greater and equal access in National Recreation Areas

# They support Nature For All’s leadership academy

# Support the Nature For All Coalition when it comes to policy.

# The group is effective at grassroots and grasstops level.

# Nearby Nature is a Sierra Club program focused on access and getting folks outdoor.

# Are doing a lot of work with Every Kids in Park.

# Take advantage of trainings to get more outdoor leaders that are coming from our communities to get more folks outdoors.

# Jean Flores, REI

# Jean has served 17 years as the market coordinator, focusing on community engagement, advocacy, and heading up local grant partnerships.

# Public and private partnerships are really important so that we can go further together.

# REI offers programming in the Angeles and has a special use permit to operate and do programming.

# REI is always looking for opportunities to be able to partner so that they can bring an element of education resources and partnership to help elevate the things that they have to offer.

# Local grants and stewardship- gave $8.4 million to 431 NGOs, stewarding more than 5,000 outdoor places and 86,000 trails.

# Would like to elevate partnership and story so that we can go further together.

# Announcements & Miscellaneous Business

* Rivers and Mountains Conservancy has put out a call for projects focused on open space and passive parks projects through June 28th.
* **Action Item:** The NFF would like to share the Collaborative contact list, including email and phone. NFF staff will follow up with the group before sharing to give an opportunity to let us know if you do not want your contact information shared.
* Liz Reilly- I anyone would like to be on the Fish Canyon Trail planning committee, please get in touch with Liz.
* Update on San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act:
	+ This act is up before Congress, reintroduced by Kamala Harris and Judy Chu.
	+ The act designates 30,000 acres of new and expanded wilderness, protects rivers, and expands the monument. The lead agency would be the National Park Service.
	+ The steering committee agreed to not have a dedicated conversation about the act with the collaborative. The group is also not proposing the collaborative write a joint letter.
	+ The group expressed differing perspectives about the act:
		- Some are excited to have this as an opportunity to expand recreational access in a historically parks poor area and direct more resources for the level of use they’re receiving to improve the resource for everyone.
		- Some expressed concern about the political implication of the bill. It’ a time where monuments have been under scrutiny and by elevating this we could be attracting negative attention by presenting as a partisan position. This could invite backlash that could undermine bipartisan support of the monument.
		- Others expressed how the act is additional regulation without a plan for how this will be funded.

# Participants

Aaron Ash

Adrienne Dunfee

Belinda Faustinos

Ben Smith

Bill Reeves

Brian Robey

Claire Robinson

Dale Benson

Dania Gutierrez

Daniel Rossman

Emerald Vela

Fabian Garcia

Gary Stickel

Jack Sahl

John Cho

Julian Juarez

Justin Bubenik

Kelly Carle

Marybeth Vergara

Michelle Nuttall

Nick Salgado

Sarah Di Vittorio

Steve Messer

Susan Jennings

Suzette Mera