MEETING RECORD

**SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE**

Thursday, January 23, 2020 – 9:00 AM-1:00 PM

Duarte Community Center, Duarte, California

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# Action Items and Next Steps

1. **NFF** to work with **RMC** to discuss providing additional support to Ad Hoc Committees and Collaborative members.
2. **NFF** will follow up with **Matthew Bokach** and **Conservation Education Ad Hoc Committee** to connect with Justin Seastrand, ANF Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist, to discuss USGS trails initiative.
3. **NFF** to work with **Steering Committee** to think about next steps and ensure progress.

# Meeting in Brief

Collaborative members met to identify projects of interest from the priority “wish list” for the Angeles National Forest and the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument provided by the Forest Service. The following projects were identified as projects of greatest interest across each category:

* Transportation Access
	+ Weekend shuttle service to East and West Forks of San Gabriel River, Chantry, and Eaton Canyon
* Conservation Education
	+ Landscape design with interpretation, and better interpretation of the historical character of the Glendora office
	+ Consistent and accurate information provided at all Visitor Centers, while allowing for locally-relevant topics
	+ Better/more interpretation of cultural resources with the Forest without putting those resources at risk
	+ Support for continuing the Field Ranger program: salaries, training, uniforms
	+ Developed actionable plan for public education regarding taking care of the Forest. Trash, graffiti, etc.
* Trails & Recreation
	+ Littlerock dam back open to the public for recreation
	+ Analysis and planning of comprehensive multi-activity recreational access (trail and road network) to the north side of the Forest
	+ Support for re-opening recreation sites on the former Saugus District of the Forest (portion north of the CA-14)
* Volunteer Engagement
	+ Volunteer projects developed and prioritized in an integrated way (perhaps by watershed)
* Capital improvements
	+ Identify and implement priorities in the San Gabriel Canyon Master Development Plan developed with the Watershed Conservation Authority

After this selection process, each Ad Hoc Committee came together to discuss the top projects of interest, and identify potential next steps and the role the Collaborative in aligning with the Forest Service’s priority project list. The NFF will work with the Steering Committee to develop ways to ensure the Ad Hoc Committees achieve their goals.

# Update from the Angeles National Forest

# Matthew Bokach, Monument Manager provided a general update on the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument (Monument) and the Angeles National Forest (ANF).

# The ANF hired a new Public Affairs Officer, John Clearwater. He brings a wealth of experience from his time as a military public affairs officer. Matthew intends to bring him to a future Collaborative meeting.

# The ANF deployed a team of 20 firefighters to Australia to aid in the firefighting efforts there. Twenty more ANF firefighters are lined up to go if Australia chooses to request them.

# This is an agency-wide response. Other National Forests are sending firefighters to Australia as well.

# There are ongoing budget shortages, leading to shortages in staff in resources.

# Region 5 (includes all of the National Forests in California) is experiencing particular difficulty.

# There are internal discussions taking place at the regional level to deal with the shortage. The Regional Forester sent a request to all Forest Service staff requesting innovative ideas to help deal with budgetary challenges.

# Primary causes of the budget issues include:

# The Executive Branch of the federal government (including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and therefore the U.S. Forest Service) signed a 3% pay increase for all employees of the Executive Branch.

# The U.S. Congress did not appropriate additional funds to the Forest Service’s budget. The additional expense was unexpected when the Forest Service created its budget.

# Agencies within the federal government were not paying as much as was necessary into the federal employee retirement program. The deficit was noticed recently and additional funds were taken from the Forest Service’s budget to help account for the deficit.

# As a result of these budget issues, there is a region-wide, indefinite hiring freeze. Overall, the Forest Service is trending towards a more centralized management style and increased resource sharing across National Forests.

# This will help to alleviate budget shortages, but will increase the workload on Forest Service employees.

# As a result, increasing collaborative work with partner organizations is becoming even more important. The Forest Service is striving to find more legal ways for outside organizations to work on National Forests.

# There is still snow on the mountains so the Forest Service is taking the opportunity to conduct pile burns near Mt. Wilson. Many of these piles have been in place since the Station Fire (2009). The Forest Service will continue to take advantage of the current conditions to better prepare for the warmer and dryer conditions later this year.

# Matthew presented a proclamation from Los Angeles County, recognizing the Collaborative’s efforts on the Monument Plan and in celebration of the fifth anniversary of the Plan Signing.

# Angeles National Forest “Wish List” For Partner Engagement

Matthew Bokach provided the Collaborative with the ANF’s “Wish List” of projects. At the September 2019 meeting, the wish list was requested by Collaborative members in order to help align the Collaborative Action Plan with ANF/Monument priorities. The Wish List includes input from the Forest Leadership Team (FLT).

* The list is a result of several brainstorming sessions and is meant to be a list of ideas.
* The list is not prioritized. It is meant to encourage dialogue not constrain the Collaborative’s options.
* There are other priorities for the Forest Service. The Wish List only includes items the Forest Service feels it can reasonably ask the Collaborative to do.
	+ Items on the list are up for consideration by the Collaborative. The list is not meant to imply that the Forest Service is asking the Collaborative to take on every project on the list, but rather present options for consideration.
* The Wish List makes note of “third-party management” including:
	+ Concessionaires (e.g. management of Table Mountain Campground)
	+ Volunteers
	+ Permittees (This group technically includes concessionaires)
		- For example, REI has a permit to offer and conduct outdoor education and skills classes on ANF/Monument land.
		- Concessionaires and permittees have ‘prescriptive’ agreements with the Forest Service. By contrast, partnerships are more two-sided, with both parties working towards a shared goal.
* The Wish List is organized by Ad Hoc Committee.
* The “Capital Improvement” section includes items that the Forest Service is not asking SGMCC to help with, but are listed for context. They are high priorities for the Forest and accomplishing these tasks might require innovative solutions.

The Collaborative provided their initial feedback to Matthew:

* It was noted that the Wish List does not specifically mention protection for the Big Rock Archeological Site, an ancient Native American monument north of the City of Azusa. The site has suffered from vandalism.
	+ Matthew noted that there are many cultural sites that need to be protected and a general item encouraging more education and interpretation of these resources, without putting them at risk, is included in the Wish List.
	+ Fabian Garcia, Partnership Coordinator for the Angeles National Forest encouraged the pursuit of partnership agreements and further discussion with education and volunteer organizations to identify ways to approach protecting these resources.
* There are ways in which the Collaborative can prioritize projects on the wish-list:
	+ The Collaborative previously worked to establish criteria to help with prioritization including having a self-identified organization to serve as implementation partner the manager of funds.
* There are funding sources the Collaborative should consider including the Rivers & Mountains Conservancy (RMC) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF).

The group participated in an exercise meant to identify areas of particular interest on the wish list among Collaborative members. Each member received “sticky dots” and were given the opportunity to place them next to projects of interest.

* “Voting” was designed as a way to identify areas of interest for Ad Hoc Committees to discuss further, not establish a finalized list of priorities for the Ad Hoc Committees or the Collaborative.
* Based on the exercise, the areas of greatest interest under each Ad Hoc Committee included:
	+ Transportation Access
		- Weekend shuttle service to East and West Forks of San Gabriel River, Chantry, and Eaton Canyon
	+ Conservation Education
		- Landscape design with interpretation, and better interpretation of the historical character of the Glendora office
		- Consistent and accurate information provided at all Visitor Centers, while allowing for locally-relevant topics
		- Better/more interpretation of cultural resources with the Forest without putting those resources at risk
		- Support for continuing the Field Ranger program: salaries, training, uniforms
		- Developed actionable plan for public education regarding taking care of the Forest. Trash, graffiti, etc.
	+ Trails & Recreation
		- Littlerock dam back open to the public for recreation
		- Analysis and planning of comprehensive multi-activity recreational access (trail and road network) to the north side of the Forest
		- Support for re-opening recreation sites on the former Saugus District of the Forest (portion north of the CA-14)
	+ Volunteer Engagement
		- Volunteer projects developed and prioritized in an integrated way (perhaps by watershed)
	+ Capital improvements
		- Identify and implement priorities in the San Gabriel Canyon Master Development Plan developed with the Watershed Conservation Authority

# Breakout Discussions

The Collaborative broke into Ad Hoc Committees to discuss the wish list items in their categories and answer the following questions:

* Which initiatives on the Forest’s list are shared by the Collaborative?
* Which 2-3 initiatives might offer the best opportunity for partnership between the Collaborative and the Angeles National Forest?
	+ What would be the Collaborative’s specific role in advancing this initiative?
* How should your ad hoc Committee update your action plan in light of this list?

Trails & Recreation

* Which initiatives on the Forest’s list are shared by the Collaborative?
	+ Analysis and planning on the north side of the ANF
	+ Open recreation sites in the Saugus Ranger District
	+ Development of a San Gabriel Canyon Master Plan
* What would be the Collaborative’s specific role in advancing this initiative?
	+ Support planning efforts for Collaborative and community needs
	+ Recommend individuals/lead reps/expertise from city, county, state, and federal
* How should your ad hoc Committee update your action plan in light of this list?
	+ Actively seek funding and identify leads for projects: stewardship, sustainable recreation, preservation, and enhancement
	+ Supporting Master Plan development and prioritizing project, particularly on the north side of the ANF.
* Q&A
	+ The Trails & Recreation Action Plan goals should align with the San Gabriel Canyon Master Plan. Individual projects would fall under larger master plan. The City of Santa Clarita is interested in partnering with other agencies and the ANF to achieve its goals on the north side of the Forest, such as the opening of a youth education center. The City is willing to put time and money into the plan for this effort.
	+ Santa Clarita also has a transportation plan, and the ability to mobilize its residents. Does it make sense to incorporate a transportation component into the Master Plan?

Transportation Access

* Which initiatives on the Forest’s list are shared by the Collaborative?
	+ The Gold Line presents opportunities to launch several priority efforts:
		- Shuttle from Arcadia to Chantry Flat
		- Shuttle from Pasadena to Cobb Estate
	+ The City of Duarte has already made shuttles available to various recreation sites.
	+ Other opportunities include using the Claremont Metro Station and working with Gary and the Foothill Transit Board to develop transportation options to cultural sites for further study.
* Which 2-3 initiatives might offer the best opportunity for partnership between the Collaborative and the Angeles National Forest?
	+ The priority shuttles are Azusa and Chantry Flat.
* How should your ad hoc Committee update your action plan in light of this list?
	+ Identify upcoming funding opportunities include:
		- Regional park and open space funding
		- Nature For All is going to propose a community transit program.
	+ Next steps for the subcommittee include:
		- Develop a feasibility analysis of implementation for the Azusa shuttle
		- For the Arcadia shuttle, identify a partner to take the lead (either the city or the organization)
* The committee identified challenges including:
	+ Staffing resources in Azusa
	+ Lead agency designation in Arcadia.
		- Foothill Transit or a City could take the lead.
	+ Pasadena-area efforts will require extra community engagement due to past efforts.
* Q&A
	+ A presentation to Metro would be helpful. They are looking for ridership information to share on their website.
	+ Jerry Perez, ANF Supervisor, has indicated that he wants the Forest to get ready for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. Public transit is a key component. Metro will be working on “28 Projects for 2028.” This could be an option for future project funding.
	+ Has there been a feasibility analysis?
		- No, there are only preliminary studies on these issues so far. It will take a comprehensive approach
		- San Gabriel Canyon is going to be a big destination so Metro will want to make sure to collect data that will support competitive applications. Applications require supporting disadvantaged communities, so the Ad Hoc Committee will need to ensure any future applications reflect these efforts.

Volunteer Engagement

* Which initiatives on the Forest’s list are shared by the Collaborative?
	+ All of them are shared but there’s a waterfall effect so chose to focus on one: developed and prioritize volunteer projects in an innovative way
		- This connects to committee’s action plan to develop website to manage volunteers and develop master list of groups and projects; online database; create an organization that will manage website
* What would be the Collaborative’s specific role in advancing this initiative?
	+ Identify Collaborative resources such as time and materials
	+ Identify outside companies to partner with like Home Depot or Lowes
	+ Identify Collaborative partner to host database (e.g. Community Hiking Club)
	+ Create a formalized process and opportunity for training
	+ Centralizing tasks and people who have skill sets to match to projects
	+ Identify inaugural moment/day to unveil efforts (maybe National Public Lands Day)
	+ The Saugus District might be a good place to highlight fire suppression vs. fire restoration methods via a volunteer database
* How should your ad hoc Committee update your action plan in light of this list?
	+ Add companies and groups that can provide resources
	+ Identify umbrella organization
* It was suggested investigating the Golden Gates National Park Conservancy as a model for the volunteer program and database
* Q&A
	+ How will liability be handled?
		- Volunteer agreements that are signed by an ANF representative and volunteer representative indicates that volunteers will be treated as employees so they’re codified and covered but they have to engage only in the activities specified in the agreement;
			* They will be eligible for worker’s comp
		- Most organizations also carry their own insurance.
		- A database would be helpful here as well, in order to keep track of volunteer groups and individuals.

Conservation Education

* Which 2-3 initiatives might offer the best opportunity for partnership between the Collaborative and the Angeles National Forest?
	+ Better/more interpretation of cultural resources with the Forest without putting those resources at risk
	+ Native plant gardens in Glendora and Little Tujunga offices
	+ Developed actionable plan for public education regarding taking care of the Forest
		- A Forest-wide plan for education that includes natural and cultural resources.
* What would be the Collaborative’s specific role in advancing this initiative?
	+ Ad Hoc Committee phone conferences with FS to determine what specific natural/cultural resources to focus on to share that with the public
* Q&A
	+ Sarah noted that we will need tribal engagement if we want to take those next steps.
	+ Where do education and communication differ, or can they work together?
		- They are different. Amigos de los Rios has a tentative sign plan and proposed sites for reaching visitors
		- Suggestion: Community-wide communication like a virtual tour would help the public become more acquainted with their public lands
	+ It would be wise to broaden the volunteer database to include an outreach list of people who are interested in the Monument and ANF
		- Think about ways to communicate better to community members. For example, creating an interactive map.
			* The ANF has been missing GIS staff for several years so have a lot of needs on data and mapping. Lots of folks in the area have those skills so the Collaborative should look into getting help from partners.
		- Perhaps take database development in pieces and pilot them with specific areas to test the model before expanding Forest-wide.
	+ Pyramid Lake and the Vista del Lago Visitor Center is not a place people know is connected to the ANF.
		- Before the Monument Designation, there were 5 Ranger Districts (RD) on the ANF. Saugus RD recreation sites started closing and were abandoned. The only real uses at this point are Pacific Crest Trail hikers and ATV users.
		- Efforts to restore this area are already underway, including redesigning Cottonwood campground and others that the Collaborative might be able to help with.
	+ Matthew recommended connecting the dots between Ad Hoc Committees. The ANF has 2 staff that sit at a Visitor Center, but most Visitors Centers and interpretation are run by volunteer groups. Matthew suggests working with these groups to create a standard plans for interpretation, communications, and publications. Potential models to work with are at Grassy Hollow and the San Gabriel Mountains Heritage Association.
	+ Doing a meaningful site visit might be a challenge because members and work sites are so far apart. A virtual tour of the monument might be useful. Can NFF use its RMC funding to design this?
		- **Action Item:** NFF to work with RMC to discuss providing additional support to Ad Hoc Committees and Collaborative members.
	+ US Geological Service (USGS) has national vehicle trails initiative; can ANF get involved?
		- **Action Item:** NFF will follow up with Matthew and Ad Hoc Committee to connect with Justin Seastrand, ANF Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist, to discuss USGS trails initiative.
* **Action Item:** NFF to work with Steering Committee to think about next steps and ensure progress

# Announcements & Miscellaneous Business

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# During the March meeting NFF intends to facilitate the selection of Steering Committee Chair and Vice-Chair

# Other announcements

# Next meeting will take place on March 26 at the Altadena Community Center

# Confirmed meeting dates and locations include:

# Judy Shay, Palmdale Water District- construction at Littlerock Dam has been completed. Equipment will be out by the end of January

# Participants

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Matthew | Bokach | Angeles National Forest |
| Gary | Boyer | City of Glendora |
| Tim | Brick | Arroyo Seco Foundation |
| Irma | Carle | Backcountry Horsemen of California |
| John | Cho | Angeles National Forest |
| Margaret | Clarke | Rivers & Mountains Conservancy |
| Ariella | Dahlin | Amigos de los Rios |
| Belinda | Faustinos | Nature for All |
| Jean | Flores | REI |
| Fabian | Garcia | Angeles National Forest |
| Joseph | Gonzalez | Rivers & Mountains Conservancy |
| Masis | Hagobian | City of Santa Clarita |
| Cliff | Hamlow | Glendora Chamber |
| Rene | Jimenez | San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps |
| Eric | Johnson | California Rifle and Pistol Association |
| Ricardo | Lopez | Angeles National Forest |
| Steve | Messer | Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association |
| Jeremy | Munns | Watershed Conservation Authority |
| Bill | Reeves | Fisheries Resource Volunteer Corps |
| Liz | Reilly | San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments |
| Jack | Sahl | Friends of the Angeles Forest |
| Judy | Shay | Palmdale Water District |
| Jennifer | Stark | City of Claremont |
| Gary | Stickel | Kizh Nation |
| Jamie | Uyehara | Angeles National Forest |
| Laurene | Wests | City of Santa Clarita |