

Smokey Bear Collaborative Group
Agenda

October 24, 2018
Sacred Grounds - 2704 Sudderth Dr, Ruidoso, NM
3:00 PM to 5:00 PM

- Welcome – Laura Doth (talk about venue ideas?)
- Review of Draft Charter (finalize charter and operating principles)
- Discussion of Hale Lake Area
 - Existing situation and challenges – Jodie Canfield
 - Dream the dream; write down your ideas on the ideal experience (e.g. 25 miles of challenging UTV loop trails) for your area of interest for the Hale Lake Area
 - What do different recreational users want? What adds to your experience?
 - What detracts from your experience?
- Discussion of the ideas; outline of the process and timeline
- Next Meeting Date

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Introductions

Laura Doth, South Central Mountains RC&D
Stephen Carter, Ecoservants, Trails
Mike Buechter, Bicycle Ruidoso
Wallace Downs, Bike tourism, Mountain Biking
Matt Ingram, Ruidoso Midtown Association, Hiking, Outdoor use
Beau Truitt, Bureau of Land Management, Fort Stanton National Conservation Area
Curtis Coburn, NM Dept. of Game & Fish
Joe Kenmore, Lincoln County Emergency Management
David Cox, Upper Hondo Soil & Water Conservation District
Clark Taylor, Grazing permittees
Mary Ann Russ, Little Bear Forest Reform Coalition
Andrew Ellis, US Forest Service
Leroy Cockrell, Off-Road Motorized Vehicle Users
Jodie Canfield, US Forest Service
Alan Barton, NM Forest & Watershed Restoration Institute

Laura Doth is facilitating the meeting.

Draft Charter

Laura sent out a draft charter to everyone by email. This charter drew upon the Mountainair Collaborative charter that was passed out last meeting, with several changes to adapt it to the Smokey Bear Collaborative.

Question: The draft charter says that partners must be organizations?

Laura noted she added organizations or stakeholders. The idea is that each representative at meetings should be representing a particular interest. For example, there are no fishermen groups in the area, but someone at the meeting can be speaking for the interests of fishermen. We want at least one voice per constituency at meetings.

Of course, the public is always welcome at our meetings as well.

Laura recommended that members invite other organizations to join the Smokey Bear Collaborative and attend meetings, if you know some that are not participating. We will then see if new organizations want to be a part of this collaborative.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the charter, as written. The motion passed without objection.

The document will be posted on the Smokey Bear Collaborative website, along with all other documentation. Laura sent out the URL for the website over email.

The URL is: <https://nfwri.org/collaboration/smokey-bear-collaborative>

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Hale Lake Project

The first project for the Smokey Bear Collaborative is to update the travel management plan for the Hale Lake area to the east of Ruidoso Downs, at the southeast corner of the Smokey Bear Ranger District.

Laura noted that the current use plan for this area dates back to 1986. There have been many changes in how the area is used since then. A new plan is necessary to coordinate activities in this large area.

The Lincoln National Forest is in the process of revising its Forest Plan. Jodie noted that the Forest Plan includes planning areas on different parts of the national forest. Under the Forest Service's 2012 Planning Rule, which guides the forest plan revision process, the national forest uses geographic areas as planning units. Under the current Forest Plan, the Hale Lake area is designated for fuelwood gathering and grazing. The area is used for much more than these purposes, however.

Laura said the Smokey Bear Collaborative can help the Forest Service in developing a plan for the Hale Lake area by envisioning the potential uses for the area. We want to start by brainstorming all the possible uses. Consider this: in a perfect world, what would your constituency want to see at the Hale Lake area?

We also want to consider what the existing challenges are and what resources need to be managed.

Jodie described the existing situation on Hale Lake. When she first arrived on the District and drove through the area, it looked well used. There are lots of diverse uses, and not all of them are legal. So, Jodie arranged to send a Hot Shot crew out there to do a formal survey of all the routes. They loaded the data they collected into the Forest Service's GIS system. They have been working on mapping the area, and they have identified a project area. The total project area covers 35,550 acres, of which 29,000 acres are under the Forest Service's jurisdiction, and the rest is private land. There are 158.5 miles of road in the project area, and about 1/3 of the roads are user created. None of the roads are paved, and some are closed, some are only accessible by high clearance vehicles, and some are appropriate for passenger vehicles.

There are no special considerations in the Hale Lake area, so the Forest Service can design uses anyway the community wants. The area is ripe for a travel management plan. The travel management plan can only cover a portion of the ranger district, however. The Forest Service's regional office won't support a plan for the whole national forest.

Jodie and the Forest Service want to create a travel management plan that supports the highest and best use of the Hale Lake area. The Smokey Bear Collaborative, as representatives of a wide range of local interests, can contribute a lot to this plan. Once this plan is completed, then the Collaborative can move on to next thing, which may be a nearby area. So, in creating the travel management plan for Hale Lake, we want to think about how this plan would complement other recreational uses on other parts of the ranger district. How does Hale Lake fit in to the whole area? What are its unique assets?

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Laura suggested collaborative members consider all alternatives – If there were no restrictions, what would you like to see in the Hale Lake area? Do we need facilities for livestock and game, for hunters? Other infrastructure? Roads? Do we need to pave roads to increase access? What adds to your recreational experience there, and what detracts from your experience? Anything is open for discussion – nothing is off the table.

We may find common interests, and then it is up to the Forest Service to see how to make those happen. We may also see conflicts, which is normal, so we need to see how to bring those together or how to mitigate them. Agreement may not be possible, but we want to hear all ideas.

Andrew said that at this point, the Forest Service and the Collaborative are looking at a general conceptual ideas. For example, we may want to think about questions like how many roads should be available for mountain biking, or other uses.

At the last meeting of the Collaborative, Andrew showed us the Existing Conditions Map, and he brought a copy to this meeting to look at. This still is not a public map yet, so it is for the Collaborative's internal use only. The GIS folks are finishing up creating the ArcGIS Online version of the map, and it will be forthcoming – hopefully it will be available by the next meeting of the Collaborative.

Question: Has NEPA been done on the area yet?

Andrew responded that the Forest Service is in the Pre-NEPA planning stage at this time.

Question: Is 443 the only access road to the area?

Andrew said that Highway 443 provides general access for all vehicles, but there are other roads for high clearance vehicles and other vehicles.

Laura reiterated that the Collaborative wants to note all resource concerns. As we move forward, this will help us see what needs to be done to maintain the area. Once the travel management plan is completed, it can contribute to private funding searches and acquisition of grants to support management options on the area.

Jodie added that a new road or trail is not off the table as a possibility for the area, if increased access or new recreational opportunities are desired.

Group Exercise

The Collaborative then conducted an exercise to collect ideas for travel management in the Hale Lake area. Flipcharts were distributed around the room, and participants got together in small groups to discuss and identify interests, and note them on the flipcharts. The group spent about 25 minutes in small groups filling out the flipcharts.

Each group then reviewed the information on the flipcharts, and suggestions to consider in the travel management plan.

See below for photos of the flipcharts.

The information from the flipcharts and notes on the discussion follow:

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- Open decommissioned roads for trails
- Maintain better access in event of fire
 - What roads do we need to maintain? What roads need to be improved?
- Establish camping areas with bathroom facilities and water. More than one area is desirable
 - Having a host at the campsite would be an extra set of eyes to help monitor the area
- Maintain cultural areas
- Pave main roads for tourists
 - RAC funds are available for paving roads. The Collaborative can help with this.
- Mountain Bike specific loop trails
 - Would like to see 25 to 50 miles of mountain bike trails, including high & low altitude with trailheads
- OHV single track trails (for dirt bikes), away from mountain bike trails
 - Want some trails specific for motorcycles, and some that are multiple use for ATVs and motorcycles
 - Jodie – USFS is behind with technology, like fat tire bikes
 - Andrew – want to have trails that don't have trucks and SUVs on them
 - Jodie – high clearance vehicles, ATVs, motorcycles; the Forest Service calls this “shared use”
- Nonmotorized areas as well
- Adequate designation of private property and adequate marking of closed areas
- Design trails to prevent erosion and resource damage
 - This will take maintenance as well
- Trails away from grazing and wildlife areas
- Access to SW corner of the project area
 - Currently there is not much access there
 - Jodie – private landowners may not be willing to allow access
- Livestock pipelines and roads don't mix very well
- Enforce the rules – when we get rules make sure they are enforced
 - Jodie – law enforcement is very limited in the Forest Service, so users, if they get what they want, should do enforcement. If there is an issue, they can call in law enforcement
- Safety is important – need to have access for emergency vehicles (ambulance in case of an accident, fire trucks)
- Need spark arresters on ATVs, chainsaws, or any motorized equipment
- Create hiking and biking as well as horse trailheads
 - Having corrals and watering stations at trailheads for horses
- Half of Hale Lake area open to ORV use
 - 158 miles of existing roads, 75 miles should be open to ORVs
- Permittee gates unlocked, but proper signage regarding use
 - In Hale Lake area, some issues with gates
- Establish enforceable rules to regulate
- Monitor use with law enforcement
- Establish USFS permit system for ORVs (like with firewood)
 - No permit system, or inspection of vehicles for ORVs
 - Opportunity to educate users before they go outdoors
- Nonmotorized areas for hunting and trapping with no ORVs
 - Area would be area to mountain biking, horseback riding, and other nonmotorized use
- Leash law on forest
 - Jodie – there is a statute for protection of fish & wildlife, which says pets must be under control – allows e-collars at times, or in some cases a short leash

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- Beau – we should say keep dogs on leash year round, except for hunters. Families using the area can be bothered by loose dogs
- Have a public shooting range
There is one, but it isn't easy to get in
Need to control lead
 - Landing zone for helicopters on each side – east and west – for emergency purposes. 100x100 is all that is needed. Good for safety purposes
 - Adequate signage

Discussion

Andrew said his experience in many areas around the country shows that users who are invested in the area, it increases community engagement, and this works well to control people who are using the area destructively. Works with mountain bikers, equestrians

Challenges – dumping, poor marking, poor camping

Positives – should have organized camping; Billy the Kid multiuse trail system, near Tunstill murder site, with designated horse trails

Time Frames

Jodie has been authorized to complete an EA for Hale Lake for this fiscal year. We have 11 months to do this – she thinks we can finish this year. She would like to have a signed decision by the end of the fiscal year (Sep. 2019).

An Arc-GIS online storybook will be available next month. This will allow people to fill in their interests and desires.

If anyone has more info they want to add or thinks of something else – a challenge, a problem, a wish – send Laura an email.

Andrew announced that anyone who has points of opportunity or points of contention, can draw them on your own maps and bring them to the USFS. This will contribute to the online GIS map. This is not mandatory by any means, but if you want to contribute, the USFS will listen. The goal is to have the GIS map up and running before the next collaborative meeting.

Next Meeting

Jodie said if we could get a rough draft of a proposed action before the holidays that would be a great start on this project. She wants to scope the purpose and need for the area. It is important to make the public aware the Collaborative is working on these issues for the public.

Next meeting is Dec. 5 from 3:00 to 5:00 pm at Joe's on the road to Capitan. More info will be sent out.

Jodie sent out a list of participants in the group. If you know people who are on the group but not coming to meetings, encourage the to do so. We need to hear all voices and interests.

- ① OPEN SOME OF THE DECOMMISSIONED ROADS FOR TRAILS. (Giving better access to USFS in event of fire)
MOUNTAIN
- ② Camping AREAS / Bathroom facilities / H2O
- ③ Maintain any CULTURAL AREAS
- ④ Paved the main road, rough roads deter users/tourists
- ⑤ MTB specific Loop trails at/near high point w/ Trail head/Facilities
- ⑥ Long mtb backcountry/ridge ride (A to B) High/Low altitude w/T.H. at both
- ⑦ ohv trail (single track) away from MTB trails
- ⑧ ohv < 50" > 50" trails
9. Adequate designation of private property.
10. Adequate marking of closed areas
11. Design + maintain Trails - fire closed + resource damage
12. Trails ~~→~~ away from livestock + wildlife watering areas.
13. Provide access to Southwest corner of Project Area.
14. Pipeline and Roads don't mix.
15. Enforce the Rules
16. Speed Arrestors on ATVs
17. CREATE HIKING & BIKE (MULTI-USE) TRAIL HEADS.
18. CREATE OHV LOOPS & REDUCE USER GENERATED ROADS.

Some Negatives

- Dumping
- Poor Marking ~~is~~ for Camping
- Have Public Approved Shooting Range

Positives

- Could have organized camping (Host) at "Hale Lake"
- Good place for motorized
- Tunstall Murder Site - Could be start of "Billy the Kid Loop" Trail - Multi-USE
- Horse Trails Designated
- Helicopter landing pad - East & West Sides
- Adequate Consistent Signage

1. $\frac{1}{2}$ OF HALE LAKE AREA
INVENTORY OPEN TO ORV USE.
2. PERMITEE GATES UNLOCKED BUT
WITH PROPER SIGNAGE REGARDING USE
3. ESTABLISH ENFORCABLE RULES
TO REGULATE USE
4. MONITOR USE w/LAW ENFORCEMENT
5. ESTABLISH USFS PERMIT SYSTEM
FOR ORV'S (SIMILAR TO FIREWOOD PARTS)
6. NON-MOTORIZED AREA FOR (HUNTING & TRAP) NO OHV OR BICYCLE AREA
7. Enforce leash laws

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