



Verde River Recreation Master Plan

Appendix III – Neighborhood Listening Sessions & Public Open House Feedback

The Town of Camp Verde prioritized community engagement in the planning process for the Verde River Recreation Master Plan, understanding how critical the support and enthusiasm of community members would be in identifying and implementing the recommendations for recreation management and enhancement articulated in the plan. To that end, riverfront property owners were identified early in the process as a critical subgroup of the community whose engagement and feedback would be critical in shaping the Recreation Master Plan. These are the residents of Camp Verde that are most highly impacted by current, unmanaged recreation use, and would be most affected by expansion of on-river recreational activities and access.

In June and July of 2015, a series of neighborhood listening sessions were organized along specific stretches of the Verde River in Camp Verde to gather input and concerns from property owners facing the most significant impacts from recreation activity on the river. Two of the listening sessions were hosted by residents of the neighborhood. On June 22, 2015, a listening session was organized in the Fort River Caves neighborhood, and on June 23, 2015, a listening session was organized for neighborhoods along McCracken Lane. Later, on July 28, 2015, a public open house for riverfront property owners was also convened at the Town of Camp Verde offices, and nearly 40 residents participated in the session.

During those listening sessions, a brief presentation about the planning process objectives and background were provided to ground the conversation, after which participants were invited to share three things with the Town of Camp Verde staff: 1) concerns that participants had with river recreation and its impacts; 2) potential solutions or approaches to address those concerns that would be supported by riverfront property owners, and lastly 3) opportunities to improve river recreation and quality of life in Camp Verde that would be compatible with property owners interests.

As the Verde River Recreation Master Plan process continued, the scope of community engagement was expanded to include an organized public open house for the general public to provide feedback and input to the development of priorities, share concerns, and identify opportunities. The Public Open House was scheduled for October 15, 2015, and drew participation from over 70 members of the public.

At the public open house, a brief presentation about the planning process was provided by Town of Camp Verde staff, and a listening session to capture concerns, ideas, opportunities and priorities was led by facilitators. Additionally, a series of feedback “stations” were set up to stimulate further discussion about specific properties being considered for expanded river recreation access or development – the I-17 property owned by the Town of Camp Verde, Homestead Park (owned in part by Prescott National Forest and Arizona State Parks), Rezzonico Park/Black Bridge owned by the Town, and Rockin’ River Ranch, owned by Arizona State Parks.

Participants in the Public Open House were also invited to engage in dot voting for priorities potential site-based projects, as well as issues and opportunities the public would like to see addressed first in the planning implementation.

The feedback gathered through the neighborhood listening session and the public open houses were captured through note-taking on flip charts, dot voting results on flipcharts, comment cards shared during the open house, and online or written surveys (see Appendix II). In addition to this, the audio discussion during the neighborhood listening sessions for riverfront property owners were also recorded (not transcribed in detail – for full access, please contact Town of Camp Verde staff).

This appendix summarizes the notes and input provided through the listening sessions and open houses. The conversations during the neighborhood listening sessions tended to be organic, back-and-forth discussions and Q&A sessions with the Town of Camp Verde staff and residents. The notes captured during these sessions does not reflect the verbatim transcription of those conversations, but rather touches on major themes and concerns shared by the residents.

June 22, 2015 Neighborhood Listening Session – Fort River Caves

Steve Ayers with the Town of Camp Verde gave an introductory briefing on the River Recreation Plan process and thoughts & ideas to date. Susan Culp with American Rivers recorded the session and took notes on the conversation. Approximately 8 residents in the area participated in the listening session.

- Comments/Concerns:
 - People coming down the river are not an issue
 - People coming onto private property to access the river can be an issue – leave a mess, etc.
 - There are a number of really nice, responsible people who do this – a small number are a problem
 - Shooting on the river near residences is an issue

- *Question from resident: About the empty lot that the Town of Camp Verde owns in the neighborhood – is there a way to abandon that back to the neighborhood so that it can be taken care of? That is what neighborhood might like to see – or at least find an appropriate management plan for that parcel. It is a fire hazard when the weeds grow, and there is some traffic on that lot. It should be closed to the public because there are no bathrooms, no parking, etc. Used to have parties, drug use and fires there. **Need to have a community conversation about that parcel.

- Concerns:
 - Concern about put-ins and take-outs and people getting in and out of the river on private property.
 - Impacts of recreation on wildlife in the area
 - Question about access to the caves. Some say have to go to Rezzonico Park, but currently there doesn't seem to be public access? Steve said there is a possibility of a USFS loop trail that can reach the caves.
 - Don't want to see commercial traffic
 - ATV use is a problem – 4-wheelers rip up the area and would like to see a stop to that. Motorbikes can also be an issue.
 - Question – who handles liability? ** Steve to share statute on landowner liability with residents.

- *Question – do you have to have “No Trespassing” signs posted to be held harmless from liability? Don’t think you have to post to not have liability.
- *Question – on meander land – who owns it? Believe it is private property.
- What can be done about the other empty parcel back there that is owned by the dentist – Dr. Noon? That can also be a hazard with weeds, and fire danger.
- Transients a concern on the empty parcels.

June 23, 2015 Neighborhood Listening Session – [Linda Harkness Host]

Steve Ayers with the Town of Camp Verde gave an introductory briefing on the River Recreation Plan process and shared some thoughts and ideas to date. Chip Norton with Friends of Verde River Greenway assisted in answering questions, and Susan Culp with American Rivers recorded the session and took notes. Approximately 6 residents in the area participated in the listening session.

- *Question from resident – Are there physical barriers to boating from Black Bridge? Too easy to disembark onto private property. However, there is USFS land near Fort River caves (caves not neighborhood). Is it ok to do it there?
- *Question – Yavapai Apache Nation have a canoe route through their reservation – has the Town talked to them?
- Concerns:
 - Everyone has lost stuff along the river – lawn chairs, kayaks, canoes, etc.
 - Theft is a concern with river traffic – people passing through and stealing
- *Note: Send residents a copy of the statute that indemnifies private landowners from liability associated with public trails or access through the property.
- Concerns:
 - With walking trails – there will be campers, squatters, etc. Neighbors concerned about potential camping, vagrants sleeping at public parks
 - Concern about fire risk – camp fires & drinking
 - If hiking trails are neat & well liked, it will end up on Trip Advisor and there will be a huge rush of people coming to use them, and you’ll get condoms, dirty diapers, ATV use, drug use, etc. As the volume of traffic goes up, degradation increases. Need to have limitations on the number of people coming through.
 - Public parks sound neat, but then you have the impacts of beer bottles, fights, more people coming through and more problems.
 - It is unfair to ask people to give up their privacy, their piece of peace and quiet and solitude in these pristine areas.
 - People will fictionalize how neat the area is and how good it will be for Camp Verde. Don’t need theories – need to know how this has played out in other areas.
 - People recreating in water will pee/poo in the water – will have water quality impacts.
 - Education doesn’t work – doesn’t stick with people, and you don’t reach everyone.
 - Other view – river people tend to have a different outlook on taking care of the resource. Need to have a sharing ethic with the resource.
 - Short term info doesn’t help – people are pigs, even with education – but it is why education is important

- Shooting parties, drinking, squatting – all problems. There are particularly issues with the parcel owned by YAN – need some interagency agreements on enforcement there for dangerous activities (shooting at/near residences, etc.). Can Town approach them about that issue?
- One landowner has had two canoes stolen.
- *Question: What is the legal standing of meander land? Believe meander land is private property, and owners don't have to allow access. The only thing you can't stop is having someone pass through on the surface of the water – can't stop them in a boat.
- Concerns:
 - Garbage, dump sites – those are real problems already. **Two choices – can ignore it, and hope nothing bad happens; or can manage it.
- Other concerns:
 - Some like the idea of riverside trails (others not so positive).
 - There should be access to the river – shouldn't be stingy about letting people get to the river.
 - People go through private property to get to things – most of the time they do it responsibly.
 - With parks/river access, could make it day use only with management & enforcement to help solve some problems.
 - Lots of people are using the ditch to float as well as the river – would be good to have an access for portage, signage showing boaters where to get out and how to avoid the culvert.
 - Concern raised with boaters and their dogs. When dogs are off leash and hop out of boat, can be a real problem – harass neighborhood dogs, livestock, people. Animal poo a problem too.
 - Issues with poaching and shooting.
 - Wildlife impacts with recreation a concern – could there be seasonal closures for bald eagles, other wildlife?
 - Don't want vehicles down on public land and on trails near the river – make a mess, there is pollution, etc.
 - What are the options for civic involvement in stewardship – community river patrol? Could be one way to address some of these issues.
 - Need for signage marking where toilets are and where private property is
 - There is a difference in the ethic between commercial outfitters (who have an interest in being good stewards to keep their permits) and independent private boaters
 - Don't want the Lower Salt mentality – drunk tubers, etc. 2 men drowned on river in the past – don't want the party mentality. Would rather have the Wild & Scenic, leave no trace ethic.
- Residents Want to See:
 - Enforcement on tribal land along the river
 - Signage for no river access (or that marks appropriate river access?) and indicates no vehicular access
 - Day use only areas to discourage squatters – municipal properties could/should be day use only

- Ordinances for Camp Verde to allow law enforcement
- Signage on ditch for how to get back to the river for boaters or how to detour around it – the ditch is dangerous
- Need public education on what can/can't do on the river – a good signage program

July 28, 2015 – Public Open House for Riverfront Property Owners

Steve Ayers, with the Town of Camp Verde, introduced the session with a short PowerPoint presentation summarizing the process to date for the Verde River Recreation Master Plan. Chip Norton with Friends of Verde River Greenway and Susan Culp with American Rivers assisted in facilitating the listening session and writing flip chart notes of community responses and feedback.

Concerns with River Recreation

- On Rustler Trail – quad & motorcycle racing, traffic on private property to access the river – a night and day problem
- Fires
- Trash
- No bathrooms
- No patrols of the area
- Traffic problems
- Trucks full of trash doing illegal dumping
- Parties
- Duck hunting in city limits – shooting across private property
- Want no motor vehicle access – should be non-motorized vehicle access only – hiking & equestrian
- Barbed wire
- Need monitoring of the area
- SRP access across private property? Question for follow up
- Drug exchanges
- Graves on the land – question – are they real?
- Incident with kids on dirtbikes – spooked a woman's horse and she got thrown off
- People in distress coming to the door for help
- Question about meander land... for follow up
- Need education of recreators
- Need to focus on preserving quality of life for the people in Camp Verde
- Q: shooting at wildlife legal? Sometimes hits houses – unsafe Follow up on laws about shooting firearms in Town limits
- Butchering of livestock on riverside lands – involving shooting livestock
- Q: What is the plan? Response: There is no plan yet.
- Trespass problems
- Security of private homeowners a big concern
- For one who lives upstream of Black Bridge – there is no identification of public vs. private lands, so people don't know
- Having to rescue people who get in trouble or stuck on the river
- Squatters on private property

- Camping on private property without permission
- Theft of personal property
- SRP brushhogging meander land
- Rezzonico Park access – agreements with the Town were made to develop the park but never completed... Neighbors want Town of Camp Verde to honor agreements about plans for public space. Rezzonico Park is not patrolled, there are transients, drug activity, trespass issues, fires, drinking & trash, dumped animals. Need to resolve
- Q: Where will access and parking be? There are traffic issues & lack of privacy for homeowners
- Q: What happens when the grant for planning is used up?
- Dog recreation/dog waste
- Loose dogs – harassing people, pets, livestock

Potential Solutions/Ways to Address Concerns

- Education of river users
- Signage – A BIG ONE
- Marshals have to enforce the rules
- Education – Engineering – Enforcement
- Sign at the top of Rustlers Trail – “Dead End”
- Shut off Roundup? Make a gated area? But preserve pedestrian/equestrian access.
- Provide an alternate place for people to go away from private property areas
- Speed bumps
- Q: How well does the signage for Bell Trail work? Is that an effective way to do it? Follow up
- Identify a collector place outside of the flood area where people can park, and beyond that only foot traffic and equestrian traffic available. Provide a place to focus the cars and the traffic
- Q: How well does the Verde River Greenway work at these challenges in Cottonwood? Follow up
- Need maintenance plan for these areas
- Advertising was a problem for Fossil Creek

Opportunities to Provide the Right River Recreation & Increase Quality of Life in Camp Verde

- 80 acres – wildlife viewing trail – access and trailhead at the end of Homestead Pkwy
- Black Bridge/Rezzonico needs its own full plan
- I-17 property – acceptable use? Parking issues there...and noise, especially on the weekend. What about a gated area?
- What areas should be fee areas?
- Rustler Trail not a good river access – BUT others do like to put in and paddle from I-17 to Black Bridge... is there a way to balance those interests?

October 15, 2015 – General Public Open House

The Public Open House was convened at the Camp Verde Schools cafeteria, and facilitation for the event was provided by the National Park Service’s RTCA staff. Steve Ayers, with the Town of Camp Verde, provided a brief PowerPoint presentation about the planning process at the beginning, and RTCA and American Rivers provided facilitation for the listening session for the open house. The following notes were captured based on the public’s input, questions, and suggestions.

1) What Opportunities or ideas are you most excited about in plans for river recreation?

- Having volunteers to help with enforcement – we need more volunteer stewardship
- Develop and plan the boat launches and have information with details about where you can go and where you can get out.
- Camping opportunities at Homestead and elsewhere (there are few opportunities along the river)
- The more investment and excitement we have around the river, the better we can protect it – so, increased opportunities for these things will lead to better protection.
- Excited about more public access points to the river
- Ability to continue to ride horses from Black Bridge to I-17
- Salt River Project (SRP) allows foot traffic but fallen trees are a problem. SRP land connects to Symington Ranch.
- The Annual River Run needs to be promoted more aggressively.
- Excited about Homestead Park – Arch Center, Camp Verde stepped up to improve/build the access road.
- It's an economic development opportunity
- Community connections
- Web of trails going away from the river as well

2) What Concerns do you have about river recreation?

- Commercial boating that does not lead to over-use, private boaters 1st priority
- Can they make man-made rapids out of the diversion dams?
- Are there thoughts of a continuous trail along the river? (with ability to cross when encounter private properties)
- Can there be a pamphlet or handouts developed with pictures showing all the access points, rules, take-outs, places, and other information?
- Need to think about alternative for homeless.
- Is there a plan for a continuous trail?
- The stretch of river between Black Bridge and White Bridge is not the best for kayaking – needs signs warning people.

- Is there a plan for removal of river hazards? Downed trees, strainers (underwater trees)
- Clarkdale Ambassador program to help manage the river
- Noise, shooting, ATVs (people and wildlife affected)
- People parking across from house to access river. Marshall's office patrol.
- Concerns with commercialization of the river
- Law enforcement – more response
- More access; and post float time estimate information and take-out locations. Distribute widely.
- Public is not aware of how long it takes to kayak or where it is safe to boat
- Promote principles of Leave No Trace to recreation users
- Motorized vehicle impacts, fire, someone shot a beaver, set up a tent – all on private property

3) What Ideas or Solutions to address those concerns would you suggest to the Town of Camp Verde?

- Regarding hazards – commercial outfitters' interests are education and safety...
- Take care of the wildlife
- Outreach to the youth to get them involved (trail construction, trash pickup)

The Public Open House also incorporated a series of “feedback stations” each focused on a particular site or potential project priority. After the listening session, participants were encouraged to review the materials available at the feedback stations, ask questions, and provide additional input. Each station was set up to ask feedback from the public on four points: 1) Describe what you like, 2) Describe what you would change, 3) How do you see yourself using the site, and lastly 4) List what amenities are most important to you. Feedback stations were set up for the I-17 property, Homestead Park, Rezzonico Park, and Rockin' River Ranch.

I-17 Property (owned by Town of Camp Verde)

- Describe What You Like
 - Nearness to boat launches from I-17
 - Parking elevated from flooding
 - Better parking area away from the edge of the highway
 - I like the idea to plant a lot more shade trees here
 - Picnic areas (especially if there are ramadas or shade trees)
- Describe What You Would Change

- Limit roads but have good pathways to launch boats/kayaks
 - First concern is the access to the site. Have multiple alternatives for access been explored? Why is the access through Rustler Trail Road? Is there some reason it can't be accessed from just north of the bridge, where there are already entry areas? How would you keep people out, and from not parking in the existing areas off the road?
 - Why is the boat launch located in the spot indicated? Is that the best location for it? How do people get their smaller watercraft to the river? Are they carrying a long distance? Can they drop somewhere then park? Can the parking be closer to the middle of the site?
 - May be good and a health and safety feature to provide more shade here, either with native trees or ramadas.
 - I suggest exploring whether there is a need to include natural looking/simple climbing structures like metal ladder wall and bouncing posts (and shade them with plants or long-lasting roof). This can provide another option for parents with young children who are not yet water safe. A good topic for further exploration.
 - Consider using N. Long Rifle Rd and N. Rawhide for road access into site. These two roads seem to have less impact on residential development.
 - Give stronger emphasis to linear/corridor recreation planning/design. Depending on 100 year flood plain and development restrictions I would recommend locating parking as reasonably near the river as possible but still provide a substantial green zone.
 - Consider creating a substantial "green" buffer west of I-17 to screen out the interstate and traffic noise and north of site to create a buffer between the residential development and the recreation site.
 - I would forget stuff like "native garden" areas because of the site's remoteness and higher maintenance, etc. Folks are interested in the river not gardens in my view.
 - Eliminate or avoid pathways crossing roadways.
 - Keep it simple, parking, river access, dispersed recreation.
- How Do You See Yourself Using The Site
 - I would like to see I-17 area connected to Rezzonico/Black Bridge with trails
 - Boat launch
 - Kayaking
 - Picnicking – (x2 responses)
 - Exploring the waterway
 - Fishing
 - Bringing my (out-of-town) family to enjoy the water
- List What Amenities Are Most Important To You
 - River access
 - Bathrooms – (x2 responses)
 - Shade trees
 - Tables– (x2 responses) "tables for sitting"
 - Drinking water
 - Access to launch kayaks and boat
 - If you look at the responses above it seems to support the idea of providing easy access to the river, river oriented recreation, and basic amenities.

Rezzonico Park (owned by the Town of Camp Verde)

- Describe What You Like
 - I love the natural feeling that's there now.
 - Bathrooms
 - I love the grassy/shady area
 - I like the idea of a "beach," if it means shallow area where small children can access the water without being restricted to wading on the narrow 2 foot shallow area available just down from a small portion of the bank. Parents have to work hard to keep young children from stepping back into the deep drop-off to swift water. It would be really helpful to remove the goat head weeds in that area so people can walk barefoot along the river to wade- the inevitable run in with them can be (was) a painful adventure-ender.

- Describe What You Would Change
 - Pecan Trees!!!
 - All Grass!!!
 - It would be nice to have a lot more tall native trees for shade in that large trampled area east of the shady area down by the river.
 - I like the idea of places to sit facing the river for a picnic, but I am not sure about the terraces shown here. They look like they are suggesting a massive change to the ground, and they go over the existing road and parking area. It seems like low walls to sit on woven into the existing slope would fit more smoothly into the landscape. Do they have some other purpose? Why so extensive?
 - I would not construct a River Service Access Road down to the water/beach. If a vehicle needs to access it to construct the beach, it could be done with least amount of impact possible (sand carried by wheel barrow possibly even?), then the damage could be rehabbed and route only used in the future for emergencies. This is such a nice semi-natural grassy area and I feel a road would cause a great deal of negative impact.
 - The proposed pedestrian bridge appears to go right over the best area to sit. Can this go elsewhere so that its construction does not mean that trees in the area's best spot must be removed? or that the riverside area there is changed because of a bridge overhead? Can the bridge be "light on the land" and on the airspace? Could it be located in any other spot?
 - Consider integrating parking to serve the park and library needs?
 - Terminate Black Bridge Lane Rd at the north end and encourage limited-use by residents only.
 - Create a "buffer" on the east side between park and residences?
 - Try to minimize need for roads and large paved areas near the river. Keep as natural and park like as possible?

- How Do You See Yourself Using The Site
 - I would like to see I-17 area connected to Rezzonico/Black Bridge with trails
 - I like the idea of a big open grassy space to toss a ball or Frisbee.

- I see myself (an out-of-towner) coming here with young children to let them experience a stream. They play in the water- wading, looking for bugs, water creatures, fishing, laying in the grass, picking up leaves.
 - I am not a strong advocate for a community garden because of the maintenance requirements.
 - Both the I-17 and this site would benefit from a focused community planning/design effort. This is something RTCA could help with.
- List What Amenities Are Most Important To You
 - Bathroom
 - Shade trees
 - Shade structure with table
 - Natural-looking riverbank with plants
 - Parking
 - Riparian/Environmental Education – Pre-K through Post-secondary
 - Drinking water spigot
 - Other simple seating that doesn't change the existing grassy hillside or topography so much.
 - Places to sit with small children and fish fairly safely
 - Places to lay on a blanket and look up at the sky
 - Different areas for different kinds of users to spread out (families vs teenagers vs seniors vs others)
 - Soft grass without cockle burs

Homestead Park (managed by joint agencies)

- Describe What You Like
 - Love the Plan!
 - Like the idea of elevated wildlife viewing platform
 - River access x 6 places!
 - Does the windmill power the lights or pump water to the water tower? It seems it would be a great opportunity for interaction and interpretation of water conservation, grey water or alternative energy demonstration.
 - Can people climb up the water tower? It could be the viewing platform- wildlife, stars. People will want to climb up either way, so it might be a good idea to plan it that way, so the climb could be made safer.
 - Chickens...I love the idea, maybe you were just trying to depict the historic story you want told here, but if there are really going to be chickens, is there a caretaker that will live here? Would perhaps be a coveted VIP position similar to campground host arrangements?
- Describe What You Would Change
 - Would like to see camping and some amenities like Dead Horse State Park as an example
 - Some places near, but not too near to the water to sit at tables, maybe grills.
- How Do You See Yourself Using The Site

- Boat/kayak access
 - Playing in the river
 - Wading
 - Picnicking
 - Wildlife watching
 - Fishing
 - Camping
- List What Amenities Are Most Important To You
 - River access
 - Trails cleared of weeds, trash
 - Wildlife viewing
 - Bathrooms
 - Drinking water
 - parking
 - Parking for horse trailers
 - Campsites
 - Picnic table/grill sites
 - Would this be a good venue for canoe/kayak rental?
 - Nice places to sit on to fish – flat rocks or placed logs would be helpful
 - Shallow areas modified to facilitate wading could benefit a variety of user-groups: children, waders, injured/physically-challenged recreationists, beginning anglers. Shallow areas could be a safer place for many to enjoy the water.
 - Little extra things that are really great for children, and simple and cheap – with a big bang for the buck are things like paths designated by railroad ties or similar material- even rocks that can be used like a balance beam while walking down the trail; wooden or pipe fences that can be climbed on- however short; trees that produce plenty of sticks, fallen branches, logs and huge timbers than can be climbed on; trees that produce nuts/fruit/pods that can be collected and possibly even eaten.
 - Give stronger emphasis to linear/corridor recreation planning/design. Depending on 100 year flood plain and development restrictions I would recommend locating parking as reasonably near the river as possible but still provide a substantial green zone.
 - Consider creating a substantial “green” buffer on the east, west, and south ends of the site.
 - Eliminate or avoid pathways crossing roadways.
 - Keep it simple, parking, river access, dispersed recreation.
 - I would recommend limiting camping at RRR State Park and keep the other three sites as day-use.

Rockin’ River Ranch State Park

- Describe What You Like
 - Camping
 - River access
- Describe What You Would Change

- A large RV park with so many tent sites could create an over-use environment.
- How Do You See Yourself Using the Site
 - “Boat-in” Camping
 - Possibly replacing the Clear Creek RAP
- List What Amenities Are Most Important To You
 - (Ranked amenities from one respondent): #1 – Horseback/canoe concessionaire
 - #2 – “Boat-in” camping for overnight river trips. You could manage it online with a first come, first serve permit system. Each camp site would have a name and sign viewable from the river.
 - #3 – River access points
 - #4 – Equestrian camping & day use opportunities
 - #5 – Amphitheater
 - #6 – 20 Cabins
 - #7 – 80-120 RV/Tent Sites

One of the feedback stations was also set up to incorporate a dot voting exercise to hone in on priorities for the public. The results from the dot voting are tabulated in the charts below.



