

Appendix IV – Public Land Management Agency Stakeholder Meeting Notes

Verde Ranger Station Friday May 29, 2015

Attendees included:

- Ruth Valencia and Heather English, Salt River Project
- Keith Ayotte, Arizona State Parks
- Joe Yarchin and Tom Bagley, AZ Game & Fish Department
- Todd Willard and Tom Palmer, Prescott National Forest
- Jennifer Burns, Coconino National Forest
- Caleb Kesler, National Park Service

Representatives from the USFWS and The Nature Conservancy were not able to participate.

The Stakeholder Meeting for Public Land Management agencies convened on Friday, May 29, 2015 accomplished the outcomes set out in the agenda, specifically:

- To develop a common understanding of the group's role in developing a Town of Camp Verde River Recreation Master Plan
- Present the Town of Camp Verde's current vision for recreation in the Verde River
- Get feedback on the proposed planning process and timeline
- Present contractor's findings and get feedback from group about findings.
- To understand the recreation management goals/strategies of the group and how that aligns with the Town of Camp Verde's goals/strategies
- Develop a collective understanding of any new efforts that might impact, be impacted by, or inform this river management planning effort

After introductions and an over view of the project, Joe led an exercise to prioritize the goals of the various agencies, specifically to:

- Improve land access (trails, roads, parking)
- Improve river access (for riverside recreation as well as boating)
- Protect ecology and restoration
- Encourage economic development near the river
- Protect cultural resources
- Security for nearby property
- Provide safety information
- Security for nearby property
- Increase parkland along the river
- Wildlife protection
- Develop carrying capacity guidelines

That exercise led to four priorities they all shared:

- Protect ecology and restoration
- Interpretation/Education
- Security for nearby property

- Wildlife protection

Public land management agency participants also shared their issues and concerns at the meeting. They are:

- The need for agency law enforcement personnel to collaborate
- The need to consider “seasonality” when we discuss recreational opportunities and uses
- Near the river we need to deal with homeless people, fires, drug users and private property trespass
- Don’t forget about the equestrian community and their needs
- Always be aware of private property
- We need to continue long-term collaboration among the agencies—through the Verde Front and other collaborative
- Carrying capacity of the land and river and the speed at which the planning process is addressing the issue

Under “lessons learned,” meeting participants noted;

- The river is self-regulating
- Tourism dollars seldom make their way back to the agencies responsible for managing the resource

The USFWS, which was not available for the meeting sent the following comments via email from Brenda Smith:

“The main issue we have heard about from the public is the amount of use the river is getting and potential disturbance to wildlife. It is good you are engaging the public as part of this planning effort. From my perspective, if you have designated access points for the public to use and discourage people from landing anywhere along the river, that should help to limit disturbance to wildlife habitats. For controlling numbers, I don’t know what ability you may have other than limiting parking spaces at access areas.”

Other items:

Agencies were also asked to provide any river management documents they may have (it was their homework assignment). Among those who noted they have river management plans were: SRP, AGF (for fish) and AZ State Parks. Prescott National Forest and Coconino National Forest both mention recreation, river and land, in their forest management plans.

Overall, the meeting was a success and the attendees felt so also. There was overwhelming support for the path the Town of Camp Verde is taking, specifically taking a pro-active approach to managing recreation in the Town. The possibilities that the Rockin’ River Ranch property of Arizona State Parks will offer as far as absorbing the bulk of the river recreation traffic, when it is up and running, were discussed. Keith from ASP told us the agency has made the property’s development a priority and has formed a committee to begin work.

Meeting adjourned.