

East Jemez Resources Council Meeting Minutes

February 19, 2009

Attendees:

John Boe	US Forest Service
John Hogan	US Geological Survey
Sandy Hurlocker	US Forest Service
Brian Jacobs	Bandelier National Monument
Sam Loftin	Ecology and Air Quality, LANL
Craig Martin	Los Alamos County
Brian Montoya	San Ildefonso Pueblo
Bob Parmenter	Valles Caldera Trust
Dan Pava	ENV/LANL
Ana Steffen	Valles Caldera Trust
Neil Weber	San Ildefonso Pueblo

River Otter Reintroduction Project

Melissa Savage (Four Corners Institute) and Brian Long (NM Game and Fish).

Melissa started the presentation with a brief history of otters in NM. Apparently, they were often found in association with beaver and used abandoned beaver lodges for shelter and beaver ponds for foraging areas. Otters were trapped to extinction in NM with the last known otter killed in 1953.

The reintroduction program is led by Amigos Bravos and relies largely on volunteer help and contributions. Priority areas for reintroduction are the Upper Rio Grande and the Gila River. To date, a total of 10 otters have been released on Taos Pueblo property. All released otters came from Washington State. Because radio tags were not used on the released otters, the program is relying on track and scat sightings to monitor otter movement and activity.

The project is now working toward acquiring more otters from Oregon and releasing them in other areas. They hope to use tracking devices on these releases to better monitor otter movement. Anyone interested in volunteering or donating to the project can find contact information on the Amigos Bravos website (below).

Brian Long led a discussion on identifying otter tracks and scat. With snow on the ground, otter activity is relatively easy to distinguish from other aquatic mammals. They like to explore the riverbank areas and make slides down snow banks, otter tracks and slides can be seen from great distances. The River Otter Alliance (not affiliated with the NM project) maintains a website that shows examples of otter scat and tracks and can be seen at :

<http://www.otternet.com/ROA/Fall2001/trackingtips.htm>

To find out more about the project check out the Amigos Bravos website at:

<http://www.otternet.com/ROA/Fall2001/trackingtips.htm>

Round Table Discussions:

Bob Parmenter (VCT):

The VCT has a new Executive Director, Gary Bratcher.

Former sportscaster and Intel public relations manager, Terry McDermott, will be managing public information for the VCT.

The VCT is currently working on an Environmental Impact Statement for public access and use specifically related to facilities and public program development including a potential education center and an administration center.

The Grazing EA is close to a decision and there should be a grazing program in place this summer.

The NM EPSCoR Program (<http://www.nmepscor.org/>) was funded at a rate of \$3million/yr for 5 years to study climate change impacts on upland water resources in northern New Mexico. One of three experimental watersheds will be in the Valles Caldera.

Brian Jacobs (BNM)

Approximately 2,500 acres have been cleared in 11/2 years time under the P-J Restoration Project. There is potentially another 2,500 acres that could be thinned if funding is made available.

Dan Pava (LANL)

Dan noted that the new LANL Site-Wide EIS along with the first Record of Decision was released by DOE/NNSA in September 2008. The "no-action" alternative with some specific additional projects was included. The no-action alternative equates to the expanded operations alternative in the 1999 Site-Wide EIS. Dan noted that a second Record of Decision is forthcoming from the NNSA. He also provided a brief update on the LANL Trails Management Program.

Neil Weber (San I)

Neil reported that the Pueblo now has a fully staffed Environment Department with the addition of Brian Montoya in Cultural Resources.

Sandy Hurlocker (USFS)

Travel Management is a big issue for the SFNF and they are in the process of reviewing over 1500 comments on the Proposed Action scoping exercise.

The SFNF has identified one dozen watersheds for restoration funding. (more here?)

The Forest Landscape Restoration Act:

- proposed funding for 10 projects nationwide
- up to \$2 million per year for 10 years with matching funding from Region
- areas must be at least 50,000 acres in size
- removed from current “recovery” funding but may have another opportunity later in the year.

San I Land Transfer:

- The EIS is complete and the FS is now dealing with cultural resource issues.

The current Recovery/Stimulus Funding may provide around \$250 million for NFS restoration/fuels reduction projects and \$650 million for facilities.

The SFNF is participating in NRDA activities with the DOE

The Forest is also working with the DOE to explore options for bringing an overhead powerline through the Caja to the Pajarito Plateau.

John Boe (USFS)

John is the new Fire Management Office on the Espanola District and reported that the District is planning a 6,000 acre spring burn north of Los Alamos(?)

Ana Steffen (VCT), Cultural Resources Subcommittee

LANL – focusing on trails work

Bandelier – Cultural Resources work in support of the Restoration Project and prescribed fire projects on Scooter and Rabbit Mnts.

- scanning historical photos

- Vanishing Treasures Projects

Santa Clara Pueblo – YCC projects at Puye Cliffs

- Puye opening in May for guided tours

VCNP – Check website (<http://www.vallescaldera.gov/index.aspx>) for archeological tours.