Gonzales Canyon Enhancement Planning

DRAFT Notes for Agenda, Workshop 1

October 22, 2014, Carmel Valley Library, 6:00pm to 8:00pm

Stakeholder Attendees

Ed Christensen, Senior Park Ranger
Trish Boaz- Executive Director, San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy (SDRVC)
Jess Norton, Conservation Manager, San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy (SDRVC)
Shawna Anderson, Principal Planner for the San Dieguito River Park
Genia Ram, Resident
Barbara Gillespie, Resident, Gonzales Canyon Friends Group,
Ann Rushin, Resident, Gonzales Canyon Friends Group
Joanna Kuo, Resident, Gonzales Canyon Friends Group
Linda Zlotnik, Resident
Steve Blanchard, (Mesa College GIS Mapping Intern)
Colleen Wisniewski, (Mesa College GIS Mapping Intern)
Andra Davis, Resident, Gonzales Canyon Friends Group
Natalie Borchardt, Senior Ranger for coastal areas of the San Dieguito River Park

San Diego Canyonlands Staff

Eric Bowlby, Executive Director
Freddy Arthur, Field Supervisor
Dave George, GIS/Ecologist

A. 6:00pm Brief Introduction to CEP - Opportunities and Constraints

Eric Provided brief intro to the CEP process, introduces Steve Blanchard and Colleen Wisniewski as the creators of the existing conditions maps/handouts (Mesa College GIS Mapping Interns). Eric discussed the importance of supporting organizations such as Open Space Rangers, San Dieguito River Park JPA and San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy (SDRVC) to the project. Coastal Conservancy is another potential partner The importance of the balance between recreation and enjoyment of the canyon and the sensitive wildlife habitats was covered, as well as the importance of safe access and educational activities.

B. Self Introductions and Statements from Stakeholders

Ranger Ed Christensen discussed the Torrey Pines Loop (TPL) trail and the connection to the SD River Park. He mentioned the sub-area plan calling for a trail heading west to El Camino Real. He mentioned that Rocks Biological Consulting is studying wildlife in the canyon/River Park.

Jess Norton mentioned the SDRVC Citizens Science Project... uses photos with GPS coordinates. All ages, including Girl Scouts can help.

Shawna Anderson is working on restoring wetlands adjacent to the canyon, -glad to see the community coming together to provide planning input and stewardship for the canyon, discussed the coast to crest trail link and the lagoon connection.

Ann Rushin -a neighbor and volunteer, has noticed wildlife being pushed out of areas of development an into the canyons. Can some trails be closed to give territory back to the wildlife?

Barbara Gillespie -a neighbor and volunteer, learning the trails, suggested maps be available, improved signage, Park and Rec. website access to info., concerned about fires.

Linda Zlotnik -resident/neighbor -loves the idea of the connection to the river park and its trails to the ocean and the mountains.

Genia Ram -neighbor, the canyon is an incredible amenity, noticed improvements on the Torrey Pines Loop in the last year, would like to see things cleaned up and more signage would help, including maps on kiosks, complemented management of the canyon.

Colleen Wisniewski - discussed the pleasure of exploring the canyon as a GIS intern and what an asset it is to the Del Mar/Carmel Valley community.

Joanna Kuo – cares about the future of the canyon, she's an avid volunteer.

Jess Norton - interested in the trails tie-in with the River Park. Citizen science project director-can assist with this?

Senior Ranger Natalie, serving the coastal end of San Deguito River Park - agreed trail link over El Camino Real is important. As many as three bobcats are present along with a new cub. They travel from Gonzales Canyon down to the coast. Camera documentation would be helpful to track wildlife.
Discussed the need for better quality/standards for developer-built trails.

Trish Boaz- SDRVC – 20 years, Tech trek suggested as assistant to GIS planning etc. Complemented the support of the neighbors.

Andra Davis- friends group volunteer since 2003, it's important to deal with invasive plant species. She suggested that contact information should be readily available to report vandalism and other issues. Plant identification, signage, and a brochure would be helpful. She mentioned that poison oak is present and spreading in some areas of the canyon.

Steve Blanchard – discussed his hiking hobby, Gonzales is such a beautiful spot. Eric thanked Steve and Colleen for their amazing mapping skills and thanked the group for coming to the meeting.

C. Photo tour of the canyon highlighting issues in the canyon & notes in ensuing discussion.
Trail Comments
- Erosion – carries sediment into the ocean, damages lagoon habitat. Serious trail erosion needs attention,
- Trails – some in good shape, some not, Private land trails need standards, Crosby Estates, Del Dios Hwy. switchbacks are an example. Connections-fences and gates are important. Photo Sword Way,
- Pedestrian tunnel by Cathedral Catholic church under the 56. Was supposed to link to Carmel Mountain. Ranger Ed said that links were never completed for some reason.
- Bridges have been repaired (maintenance). When bridge is over 36" above the streambed we need railings,
- Multi-use is very important, must accommodate horses and bikers as well as hikers. Trails should be marked clearly for approved use. Mountain bikes are allowed on ALL trails, horses are not allowed on some trails in the canyon. Trails are a maximum of 4' wide in Multiple Habitat Planning Area (MHPA).
- Private and willing property owners could be invited to join as contributors to the trails, with liability releases etc.,
- Brochure racks for Kiosks with maps and plant ID brochures
  Invasive/Problem Plants
- Invasive plants and poison oak need to be addressed,

- Invasive ornamental plants such as ice plant, Pampas grass is a big problem,
- Water hookups are available **and mapped** if needed for restoration,
- Trail consistency is important- Gravel trails around the new development are not good.
- Natalie mentioned "What's invasive" app- "wild SD.org" plant ID and geo location apps-.

Other Issues Raised

- Sword Way Fire- photo of May 4, 2014 burn, Friends Group working to thin the eucalyptus forest,
- Canyoneer hike photo- Education opportunities...
- Party/hang out spots
- Graffiti and vandalism
- Debris – old farm equipment
- Could murals be painted to cover graffiti in tunnel, elsewhere? Yes!
- Incorporate vistas into the plan
- Signage and fencing improvements needed, kiosks
- New wildlife tunnel/culvert under El Camino Real has silted in and isn't being used by wildlife. USFW grant money maybe available Carolyn Leiberman-contact Funds for Wildlife Grant. Note: Maintenance may be the responsibility of the City Streets Department, Ranger Ed is looking into it.
- Vacant land was discussed as something that can be purchased to add to the Gonzales canyon land collection.

- **Eric went over the legends for both maps, access points, _potential_ encroachments, trail categories, utilities etc.**
- Geo-Topo map legend was discussed, with highlights on the steep slope definition >25% gradient, and color coded categories for slopes found within the canyon.

Wrap Up Discussion/Questions

- Eric clarified to the group what CEQA is and how it is needed for projects in sensitive habitat areas. SD Canyonlands is seeking a blanket, "programmatic" permit for all San Diego canyon projects including trails, habitat restoration (uplands and wetlands), and other amenities. This permit will cut the time and cost in half for projects that meet the permit criteria.
- Many tech suggestions for engaging volunteers in data gathering, virtual tours, etc.
- Trish - What's the story on the natural gas property? Steve found a court proceeding and will forward it to the group. Bowlby will forward to the SDRVC.
- Engage the equestrian community.
- Engage the mountain bike community

- **Next meetings and Stakeholder field trips-** Field trips on weekdays ok- **Wednesdays Eves** are agreed as a good day for everyone –
- **First Field visit** is scheduled for: **Nov 12, 9:00 am at Old El Camino Real, south of San Dieguito Road.**