

Ridge to Rivers
2nd Quarter Partnership Meeting

MINUTES

February 5, 2014

Partners present: Scott Koberg, Ada County Parks and Waterways, Doug Holloway and Julia Grant, Boise City Department of Parks and Recreation, Larry Ridenhour and Michelle Ryerson, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Stephaney Church, Boise National Forest, David Gordon, Ridge to Rivers. Kristine Smith, minutes recorder.

The meeting began at 8:08 a.m.

- 2nd Quarter Budget and Work Plan Review

D. Gordon explained that \$5,000 was added to the budget from Ada County and that the BLM funding was reduced to \$42,000. D. Holloway questioned the amount that BLM reduced their funding, he thought it would be a significant decrease. L. Ridenhour responded that at the last meeting they did not know if they would be able to provide any funding. BLM decreased their funding by \$550.

- Winter Trail Conditions Report

D. Gordon explained that the Idaho Statesman issued a press release related to the misuse of foothills trails, the information was included on the front page of February 5, 2014 issue. The reporter for the article will also be doing a feature article on the muddy trail issues. Staff will meet with the reporter onsite to take photos and to try to engage some of the trail users for the article.

D. Gordon regularly posts trail condition updates on both the Ridge to Rivers website and Facebook page. On the Facebook page, many trail users had posted photos of the damage occurring on the trails. Some of the photos were shown. Even when the ground was frozen users were running on the side of the trail to avoid being injured, contributing to trail widening.

It used to be that when a trail condition was posted on the Ridge to Rivers Facebook page it would show up in the newsfeed of all the Ridge to Rivers Facebook page followers. Ridge to Rivers has approximately 4,500 followers. Facebook made changes to their site and the number of views for each post decreased to approximately 2,000 views. D. Gordon purchased Facebook advertising which increased page views to approximately 16,000 views, on two occasions.

Chains that easily clip on and off were placed across some of the slow approaching trailheads, serving as temporary gates. The location of the temporary gates was chosen to reduce risk to users who may not see the gate in time. Chains were also wrapped with reflective material for early morning and evening trail users. A muddy trails informational sign, as well as a sign requesting users to close the gate after crossing, was included at each gate location. The purpose of the gate was not to close the trail to users, but to instead make users stop and decide if it was appropriate trail usage. If the gates appear to have been successful at the end of the year then staff would work to add them to more trails.

- R2R Crew Winter Activity

D. Gordon explained that the crew had been working in the shop due to the weather. A cart to load and unload the sprayer from the truck was being constructed by staff, and would be helpful to reduce the risk for injury to staff. Staff worked to place the gates on the trailheads and have helped with public education at the trailheads when the weather is warm—trying to educate trail users on appropriate trail use and asking them to turn around at some places. The Safety Data Sheets for pesticides, paint, and other chemicals were updated to be compliant with code. Staff was also working to map the Bucktail and Hillside to the Hollow trails. Will Taliaferro, Ridge to Rivers crew member, would be working with first and second graders from Anser Charter School to complete a Public Service Announcement on responsible trail use.

- 2014 Trail Race Update

The Race Committee met on January 8, 2014, to review the received race proposals. The applications for the two reoccurring races, the XC12k organized by the Idaho Nordic and the Foothills 50k Frenzy, were received. Krista Muller, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, had requested in 2013 that the Foothills 50k Frenzy change their date to avoid conflicts which may occur with hunting season—the date was changed to October 4 for 2014.

Two applications for new events were received. The first application was for Resort to Rock, an ultra-marathon, submitted by PULSE Running and Fitness. The proposed race would have been allowed by the Ridge to Rivers Foot Race Policy, which specified that four foot races a year are allowed. However, Megan Impson, U.S. Forest Service, Boise National Forest, explained that USFS staff would not have the needed resources to complete the required NEPA for the event this year.

S. Church explained that the Farm Bill was signed and would be a huge relief to staff workloads – lessening the NEPA requirements for appeal periods, for events such as races. After multiple fire years on the forest, all available resources were dedicated to fire recovery.

The second application received, was for the Boise 464 Enduro Mountain Bike Race. The application was denied due to the race location crossing through the lower and mid foothills which is not allowed under the mountain bike race policy. There was concern with the training that would occur on those trails both before and after the race. There was also concern with the transfer stages, which would have 150 riders crossing through some of area's busiest trails on an extremely busy weekend.

The Race Committee suggested that both event organizers team up with Bogus Basin to hold their events. Both events decided to not work with Bogus Basin. It was noted that since the denial of the enduro mountain bike race, the event organizers have posted an online petition urging Mayor Bieter to change the existing Mountain Bike Race Policy. The petition doesn't explain opportunities that are available for mountain bike racing, which includes Bogus Basin, Avimor, and the Eagle Skate Park area.

Two letters were written to the Mayor's Office from constituents who supported the existing Mountain Bike Race Policy and who were opposed to the petition. D. Gordon assisted with the response and explained that Ridge to Rivers was a partnership and the policy was being followed by each of the agencies. While one agency could decide to not follow the policy, it would be difficult to hold a race on a single agency's property, as most trails cross over multiple agency properties, which is a strength of the partnership.

M. Ryerson explained that if a statement on BLM's positions for the policy would be helpful she could work with staff to have one provided. D. Holloway responded that showing the support of the partners, and the strength of the partnership, would be helpful and requested that each of the partners provide a letter for Mayor Bieter to take into consideration if the petition was submitted.

- R2R Program Budget and Work Plan/Trail Expansion

D. Gordon explained that opportunities to expand the Ridge to Rivers Trail System have been suggested by some of our partner agencies. In 2003, when the Ridge to Rivers program began, there were approximately 100-miles of single track trails and there was room to expand the trail system. Approximately 50-miles of trails were added, and the estimated number of trail users increased from approximately 250,000 trail users per year to approximately 400,000 trail users per year. If Ridge to Rivers were to take on additional areas, while continuing to have the same budget and number of staff, then the partners would need to decide what areas they no longer wanted to be managed in order to have the needed resources to maintain trails correctly.

A handout was provided by D. Gordon which showed the percentage of trails per agency, taking into consideration trailheads that were managed and the funding from each agency. It was explained that Ridge to Rivers also maintained the dispersed sites in Rocky Canyon and upper 8th

Street and was responsible for a lot of undeveloped work, which was part of the agreement when BLM became a partner.

M. Ryerson questioned if Ridge to Rivers was looking to apply for grants. D. Gordon responded that for construction projects he routinely applies for grants, however he has not for annual maintenance.

D. Holloway explained that from the City's perspective, it was recognized how underfunded the Ridge to Rivers program had been. Staff would be working to determine the actual cost of maintaining a reserve. Before the Parks and Recreation Department would take on a piece of property an Impact Study would be completed and a Capital Budget for the Major Repair and Maintenance projects the property would need in future years would be established. To receive proper funding, the associated costs for maintenance should be known. City leadership understands that the entire trail system is benefitting both the City and the County. The study should be completed by the end of 2014 and the results would be provided to the partners. It would then be staff's job to take the results to the appropriate leadership to show the cost to maintain the entire system, it wouldn't make sense to maintain one portion of trail, but not the rest.

L. Ridenhour explained that BLM funding had been close to the same amount since the beginning of the partnership. New management may offer a new perspective of how important the Ridge to Rivers program is and how little funding BLM provided compared to the amount of work done through the partnership.

J. Grant explained that it seemed to be the right time for the Master Plan effort in the foothills to help determine where expansion should occur, as well as consideration for different funding opportunities to be made. In the Parks and Recreation Department, Zoo Boise is half funded by the Department and half funded by Friends of Zoo Boise, a non-profit organization. Many similar programs are common within the Department, and should be a component of the Ridge to Rivers Master Plan.

S. Church explained that she knew that the Forest Service did not contribute a large amount of funding. However, they are continually undergoing budget cuts and it has been a challenge to keep the small amount of funding they have provided available. She will be combining trail crews with Idaho City, and will be required to maintain approximately one-million acres of land with very limited staff.

- Possible Ada County Trail Expansion – Scott Koberg

S. Koberg explained that increasing management without increase funding would be a challenge, however, opportunities for expansion were coming available. Ada County recently increased their funding to the partnership and was looking to contribute by helping with regular maintenance at a few of the trailheads by adding tasks to existing Ada County crews. The trails receive a lot of use, and some trails are over used, westward expansion may provide an opportunity to disperse the use of some trails. At the November meeting the partners discussed the County contributing an additional \$5,000 in funding for Ridge to Rivers to provide assistance to trail management at Avimor. He had planned to discuss possible regional connectivity opportunities from the existing Ridge to Rivers trail system to Avimor on County property located between Hidden Springs and Avimor. However, he was recently informed that Ada County would be entering into a lawsuit with the prior property owner and it would not make sense to make plans for the property until the legal standing of the property was known.

L. Ridenhour explained that BLM would have to be involved with the development of the Avimor trail system as many of the trails are on BLM property. The BLM Travel Management and Land Use Plans for the area needed to be developed before staff could localize site specific plans.

D. Gordon explained that there had been discussions on which trails could provide regional connectivity—some of the trails are almost solely on BLM property. From a partnership standpoint it would make sense to be involved with the development of Avimor. D. Gordon urged Ada County and Avimor to examine the COTA model to see if something similar could be put together at Avimor with SWIMBA and possibly the City of Eagle. Ridge to Rivers could be involved with the property to a limited extent, assisting with planning and design or signage and possibly having a crew go to the site to a limited degree.

S. Koberg explained that the expectation of the County would not be to have Ridge to Rivers maintain a select number of trails, but instead to make considerations for regional connections.

J. Grant explained that, as a partner, she would prefer Ada County to list how they would like the extra \$5,000 to be utilized, which could be reviewed by staff to determine if it was feasible. A list would provide understanding for what the funding was being used for to all of the partners.

- Hillside to Hollow Open Space Planning Process Update – Julia Grant

J. Grant explained that the public process for the Hillside to the Hollow property was expected to begin in early March. It would include a public meeting, as well as an online portion which would allow users to point out their favorite trails and list how they accessed the trails. Postcards were also mailed to neighbors within a one-mile radius to the property and requested feedback. Feedback will be used to help develop the property Master Plan.

The Land Trust of the Treasure Valley (LTTV) owns 58-acres adjacent to the City's Park and Recreation Department's 260-acre Hillside to Hollow Reserve. The Department has been working with LTTV as well as other surrounding property owners to determine if they were interested in having the trails cross their properties. The decisions of the private landowners' would play a major role in determining how the system will connect to other trails.

L. Ridenhour questioned if the developed trails would be added to the Ridge to Rivers Trail System. J. Grant responded that Ridge to Rivers would be responsible for the maintenance of the trails, however, discussions were still occurring to determine who would be responsible for the maintenance of the trail access points/trailheads.

- Polecat Trailhead Update

J. Grant explained that the Polecat Trailhead project would go to bid in February, and would include adding a solar panel to the existing gate so that it would close at night—a unique feature and unlike any other area in the foothills, which can be accessed at any time. The gate would lock and close after sunset with a walk through gate that would remain open at all times. Cars not out before sunset would be locked in for the night. Trailhead construction should be completed by June 2014.

- Camel's Back Mitigation RTP Grant

D. Gordon explained that he had applied for the non-motorized RTP grant at the end of January. There was a large article issued in the Idaho Statesman towards the end of December, 2013 which explained the project. The information was also forwarded to the North End Neighborhood Association—very few comments on the project had been received.

Public works completed the design. The mitigation project would include large sandstone steps that would be approximately 60-inches wide. Retaining walls would be installed towards the top of the chute to reestablish the shape of the top. Engineers expect that fewer retaining walls would be needed from what was originally proposed, which would lower the total cost of the project. The area along the chute which would not include the steps would be closed and re-vegetated. The expected cost for the project was \$83,000. The RTP grant required a minimum of a 20% match—the submitted grant request was for \$54,000, the Parks and Recreation Department would match \$19,000 and Ridge to Rivers would provide \$10,000, which would total a 35% match. The results of the grant should be known by late May. If the grant was received then the project could be completed in the fall of 2014.

- Bucktail Trail Major R&M Project

D. Gordon explained that Ridge to Rivers received \$15,000 from the City for Major Repair and Maintenance of the Bucktail Trail in Military Reserve. The crew was looking to have a contractor come in to continue to infill the trail which had major cupping due to the heavy use of the trails. The project would include adding rock substrate and a soil overlay to areas cupped four-inches or greater. To make the project cost effective the contractor would be allowed to bring in an ATV with a dump trailer.

D. Gordon explained that while the contractor was on-site, crews would close the trail. In 2013, volunteers worked to fill in some of the cupped areas using wheel barrows, however, while they were on site trail users would go off trail to get around the volunteers, resulting in trail braiding. The project would take approximately one-two weeks, and the trails would be reopened in the hours when the contractor was not onsite.

- Trail Ranger and Adopt-A-Trail Increases

D. Gordon explained that the lead trail ranger had decided to go into full retirement, and would finish working through the month of February. The advertisement to fill the position had been posted. The position would be part-time, up to 19 hours per week, working 2-3 hours per day. The lead ranger would also be responsible for a number of presentations on behalf of the Ridge to Rivers program. The 2014 Trail Ranger Program would include fifteen trail rangers - six new rangers and nine returnees, as well as the lead ranger.

D. Gordon has talked to Bogus Basin Brewing and they agreed to give a portion of their proceeds from the sale of their Hard Guy Ale to the Ridge to Rivers program. The City of Boise and Bogus Basin Brewing should enter into an agreement by late spring 2014. L. Ridenhour questioned if the Ridge to Rivers logo would be placed on the Hard Guy Ale product. D. Gordon responded that the logo would be included on the product with text that needed to be finalized.

M. Johnson explained that he was one of the individuals who approached Ridge to Rivers to start the Trail Smart program. He had worked with similar programs for ski areas in the past. Due to the lack of enforcement on the Ridge to Rivers Trail System, it would be important that the Trail Smart program create a social standing to encourage users to be part of the program. The focus of the program would be to educate trail users to become "Trail Smart" through the trail etiquette videos and other educational materials and would include users paying a fee for the program, and in exchange they would receive coupons and other items provided by local business that are supportive of the program.

The majority of the funding received through the program would go towards trail maintenance, which would be the reason to encourage trail users to take part in the Trail Smart program.

Maureen explained that there are many teaching opportunities through the Parks and Recreation Department, including the mountain bike classes. Boulder, Colorado, had done a similar program which required a dog owner to pass a test to earn a tag for their dog's collar to show that they were trail certified and could be off-leash. It would be important for program participants to receive a t-shirt or similar item with a trail smart logo to wear on the trails, promoting the program.

J. Grant explained that the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands would be the holder of the funding and would release the funds to Ridge to Rivers a few times throughout the year. All of the funding provided to the program would be tax deductible for donors.

J. Grant questioned if it would be possible to include the Trail Smart logo on the Trail Rangers jerseys. D. Gordon explained that due to the cost of the jerseys they could not be changed, however, the rangers could be included in the outreach for the program.

M. Johnson explained that it would be useful to include a link to the program's website on each of the partners' websites.

The meeting ended at 9:40 a.m.