

Ridge to Rivers
1st Quarter Partnership Meeting
Minutes
November 3rd, 2015

Partners present: Scott Koberg, Ada County Parks and Waterways, Sara Arkle, Boise City Department of Parks and Recreation, Stephaney Church, Boise National Forest, Tate Fischer and Larry Ridenhour, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Steven Dempsey, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, David Gordon, Ridge to Rivers. Others present: Mark Tate, Southwest Idaho Mountain Biking Association (SWIMBA), Tim Breuer, Land Trust of the Treasure Valley and Mark Iverson, minutes recorder.

- **FY 16 1st Quarter Budget and Work Plan Review:**

D. Gordon began the meeting by discussing special projects which Ridge to Rivers spent working on during the summer months. He said that they still had work to do on Hillside to Hollow, the extent of which was undetermined. He explained the need for a few reroutes within the Hillside to Hollow System and that a volunteer effort, organized for Saturday, October 31, 2015, had been cancelled due to the size of the project. The rehab of non-system routes were identified in the master plan as well as Full Sail Trail. He also explained the plan to construct 2 – 3 bridges in Dry Creek the following summer. He mentioned the need to armor entrances and exits of trails and the priority of crib work where trails were eroding into the creek along Dry Creek as well. In upper Shingle Creek, he voiced his hope to get a reroute in along the upper section of trail. He clarified that Shingle Creek would still be an aggressive system up until the reroute point. He informed the Ridge to Rivers partners that a trailhead would be installed where Sweet Connie exited onto lower Bogus Basin Road, with Dry Creek trail tying into that same location. This trailhead would be built next summer. He explained that they would be replacing a bridge on the Deer Point Trail, due to a tree that had fallen onto it. One thing that they were starting to do more of was identifying locations where they needed to do outside edge repair, adding that he had found that drain dips worked well sporadically, but that trails needed to be out-sloped to really get rid of water. He informed them that most of the Ridge to Rivers trails are cupped.

S. Koberg asked if Ridge to Rivers crew and volunteers did re-vegetation work since they were widening the trails.

D. Gordon answered that they would typically take the outside berm, which was usually like sod with vegetation, and would put it on the cut slope. He clarified that the strategy was that the trail was to be moved a foot and half over. S. Dempsey asked if the strategy was effective.

D. Gordon replied that, at the right time of year, it was effective.. He added that the wider the trail, the more erosion, and erosion could be avoided by this process.

D. Gordon mentioned that they were acquiring a Ford F-250, with towing capacity, to replace a used truck they had retained from Idaho IceWorld.

- **Mountain Bike Race Policy Variance Requests:**

D. Gordon updated the partners that the Idaho High School Racing League had requested to use REI and Rabbit Run Trails for a fall race. James Lang, of Dirt Bag Promotions, wanted to use almost the same section of trails for a race next year, along with a section of Eastside (two separate events). He stated that he had responded by sending these organizations the Ridge to Rivers' Race Policy and put them in touch with the specific Ridge to Rivers management agency personnel. In the recent survey conducted by Ridge to Rivers, there did not appear to be clear support, either for or against, the current race policy. D. Gordon asked the partners what their thoughts were on the policy and survey data.

S. Koberg replied that as far as Rabbit Run and REI Connection Trails were concerned, it was important for the group to understand what was going on. The bike park started on Eagle property and the trails that were primarily being used for these races ran on Ada County property. He stated that, as representative of Ada County Parks and Waterways, they were still trying to figure out how to manage the bike park collaboratively with the City of Eagle, as well as how to manage special use permit fees and race applications. Eagle was leading the way on the permitting process, due to the infrastructure that was set up on Eagle property. Eagle was really encouraging racing events at the bike park. He suggested that, before races were allowed on the Ridge to Rivers System, they should learn from the events held at the Eagle Bike Park because these events definitely had an impact on the trail systems. He expressed his interest in the information that would be gained by the Ridge to Rivers' open houses.

T. Fischer added that he wasn't comfortable clearing any races or events on his own and when these events were finally cleared, that he wanted to make sure it was a collaborative decision among all R2R agencies.

S. Church added that, from the Boise National Forest's standpoint, there always seemed to be a portion of the race request that involved an unauthorized route and she stated that they would not authorize that. She informed them that she did not possess the authority to clear these routes for event use. Any requests for events on those trails would be denied until the routes were incorporated into the Ridge to Rivers System and they could all decide.

D. Gordon reaffirmed that they had come up with the race policy as a unit. He informed them that he and Ellen Campfield-Nelson, of Agnew::Beck Consultants, had met and discussed the trail plan. They had a draft for a workshop, but realized, after the meeting, that they had not discussed transferring the race policy from survey level to workshop level. He stated that the workshops were going to run three hours or more in length, but that the race policy needed to be addressed in order to ascertain whether it was a policy to move forward with.

S. Church asked if the question, pertaining to races, was broad on the survey. D. Gordon replied that it was fairly broad.

S. Koberg added that the races at Eagle Bike Park were both positive events. He was hopeful that Ridge to Rivers would learn from these race events. He informed them that races had given the trails notoriety and led spectators to ask for more trails. He was of the opinion that the trails needed a management plan first, in order to hold up to the use that they would get with more races. D. Gordon stated that the trails near Eagle were made of better soils than the soils to the east, above Boise. He added that the soils around Table Rock were also better for racing.

He highlighted the volunteer program and the thirteen-hundred additional volunteer hours for last year. He noted that this was a substantial increase and worth mentioning to the public. The hours included trail group hours, special projects, and Eagle Scout projects, in addition to other volunteer work. The total number of volunteer hours was approximately four-thousand hours and saved Ridge to Rivers significantly in costs.

He said Cartwright Trail, Peggy's Trail, Sweet Connie and Chukar Butte were landslide successes. He informed them that these trails were getting much more use. On weekends, parking lots were much fuller and had gotten nothing but positive feedback regarding these trails.

D. Gordon explained that Cartwright Road was dangerous, even with trail signs, and that a crosswalk may be found necessary. He added that in addition to a crosswalk, an expansion plan for the current trailhead is necessary, likely including a restroom. S. Church asked if the parking issues at Lower Bogus Basin would alleviate some of the parking concerns at Cartwright Trailhead.

D. Gordon answered that he believed it would eliminate some, but that a lot of people started Peggy's Trail, cut over to Chukar Butte, and then came back. He stated that users could do the same loop from Lower Bogus, but it was a longer drive for most people. He added that the popularity of these trails would slacken, but they still needed to meet the higher capacity levels.

L. Ridenhour explained that the BLM had a meeting with their operations employees, several weeks prior, and had reinstated a projects checklist, from initial concept to approval, as well as meeting the National Environmental Protection Agency's (NEPA) standards and to getting projects on their schedule for construction.

L. Ridenhour explained that a Parks and Recreation grant or outside funding may speed up the process.

D. Gordon informed the partners that he had looked at Boise Parks Planning and Design helping with the plan from a design standpoint. He asked T. Fisher and L. Ridenhour if it would be possible to start the Cartwright Trailhead expansion planning this winter.

T. Fischer answered that he didn't know, but that this would be where the BLM operations checklist would be used.

S. Church reconfirmed that a grant or some type of public funding may speed up the process. T. Fischer agreed and added that the BLM had a new process called the Gold List which focused upon cooperating agencies and that he would contact Idaho State to try to get the project on this list.

D. Gordon clarified that the BLM had taken the first step, but that Ridge to Rivers could apply for a grant for a trailhead expansion.

L. Ridenhour replied that there would need to be a rough idea of what the project's impact area would be.

T. Fischer compared it to the Black's Creek project. He stated that the issue would be scheduling with BLM's engineers, if Ridge to Rivers decided to go further with the trailhead expansion.

L. Ridenhour added that if Ridge to Rivers decided to go ahead with the expansion and if there was funding to contract out, they would not need to schedule the project with BLM Engineers.

S. Church stated she believed the BLM Engineers would still be needed by Ridge to Rivers. L. Ridenhour stated his belief was that the engineers would only be needed to sign off on the main trailhead design.

S. Church commented to be cautious of the project's specifications because her agency had confronted this issue with the Eastside Trailhead, when a member of SWIMBA had designed the trailhead that eventually did not meet Forest Service engineering standards and was required to be completely redone.

D. Gordon specified that a grant application would require a design.

T. Fischer said the specifications of the project needed to be correct and detailed. D. Gordon asked if he should move forward with the design. T Fischer suggested wait until they had heard from the BLM State office.

D. Gordon added that they had until the end of January to complete project grant proposals, which would require a few weeks in advance to put the proposal together. T. Fischer said they would look into other funding possibilities.

- **Fall Work:**

Bridges -

D. Gordon informed them that they had installed two footbridges in Five Mile Gulch, at the first and third crossings. Land Trust of the Treasure Valley also helped R2R staff put in a footbridge over Shingle Creek, which had been identified during the stream assessment conducted by Boise State University and College of Idaho, as in need of a crossing. A bridge had been completed over Dry Creek, on Peggy's Trail, and this bridge was the same style; forty-two inches wide and made from pressure treated rough cut pine. There was a photo on the Ridge to Rivers Facebook page of the bridge.

Cottonwood Creek –

D. Gordon informed the partners that a beaver dam had been built and then later dried up. When the trail was underwater, they had laid cobble stone down to raise the surface up and had returned when it was dry, to place finer material on top of the surface to make it less rough. He

had questioned adding a turnpike to the one-hundred and fifty feet of trail, but they decided to wait to see if the beaver reappeared next year and if the trail was under water again. He informed them that if the beaver reappeared, the trail most likely would not be under water with what the crew had added. It would be a tremendous investment to turnpike the trail without knowing if the trail was covered by water again.

Table Rock Trail –

D. Gordon mentioned that Table Rock Trail mitigation was completed last month, through a trail contract and a lot of work by the Ridge to Rivers crew as well. He stated that Trail 15 had become increasingly wide and the crew had spent three weeks closing off a section of this trail that had become thirty-five feet. Crews then worked to narrow the trail and added a sturdier soil mix that allowed better drainage during the muddy season. This work required a significant amount of post and rail fencing and coconut matting in between these rails. In this area, re-vegetation was occurring and trail users seemed to be respecting the trail borders.

Trail Maintenance –

D. Gordon asserted that Ridge to Rivers had a long list of trails that needed maintenance this fall. He informed them that they were prioritizing and they would work hard and fast with maintenance until the ground froze. He explained they were on Trail 5, in lower Military Reserve, and from there they planned to continue on to Crestline and Sidewinder. Trails in the Table Rock system also needed work and that after a three week period his crew would be down to three fulltime employees, until seasonal staff returned again next spring.

S. Koberg asked about maintenance of trails in the Veterans Trailhead system, voicing special concern about Rabbit Run being in poor condition.

D. Gordon replied that Big Springs had been worked on by volunteers the week before and that Rabbit Run and other trails were on the list for maintenance work too.

S. Dempsey asked if D. Gordon was using the same contractor, for any projects over the winter, and if they had any big projects like the Homestead Trail project.

D. Gordon replied that same company had a contract to maintain Trail 4 and Trail 6; they completed Trail 4 before conditions dried out. They were going to return in the fall, but were unable to so. They planned on returning in the spring to Complete Trail 6. This project was it, in terms of big, maintenance contracts.

- **Winter Work:**

D. Gordon stated that developing the trail plan was going to take up a significant portion of his time. He also stated that the BLM had been working on a revision of the Ridge to Rivers Trail Maps, which were going to print within a few weeks. He added that once the maps were completed, Ridge to Rivers needed to begin updating the maps at area trailheads to include trail additions. One of the trails that would be worked on over the winter, was the Bob Smylie Trail in the Hillside to Hollow system. He informed them that this trail ran through parcels that the

City initially thought that they might trade or sell, but that this now appeared unlikely, making it possible to run the trail through those parcels. D. Gordon explained the two routes Bob Smylie Trail could then take; one being a route with steep inclines over a series of ridges and another being single tracks going around these ridges, the more sustainable choice.

D. Gordon said that they received a grant for the Full Sail Trail, but hadn't started because a portion of the trail ran above an area involved in a lawsuit. S. Arkle explained that the City was involved in a lawsuit with a property owner, adjacent to Hillside Junior High School District property. The process of discovery had occurred several weeks before and the case had been cleared by a judge to proceed. The City litigation team had asked for trail construction to halt on that portion of trail until the legal proceedings concluded.

D. Gordon informed the group that the Hot Springs Trail hardening project began on November 3, 2015 and was funded by a North-end Neighborhood Grant to put road mix down on the far, south end of the Hot Springs Loop that can be accessed via Coston, on an old road surface also constructed of road mix.

- **Trail Plan Update:**

D. Gordon explained there would be a meeting that coming Thursday pertaining to the trail plan. Survey results for the plan had been sent out to the partners. He mentioned that at the meeting, the survey data would be discussed as well as how the workshops were to be conducted. He also mentioned that the survey results were added to the Ridge to Rivers website.

- **Federal Healthcare for Seasonal Staff:**

D. Gordon commented that they had worked hard to get their seasonal employees to eight month long positions, making it possible for the project to retain staff. He mentioned that his crew this year had been really good and he hoped to get them all back next season.

S. Koberg asked D. Gordon what the rate of pay was for seasonal crews. D. Gordon replied that the lowest paid position was \$11.00 an hour and the highest paid seasonal position was approximately \$13.00 an hour.

He informed them that they could not have seasonal staff work for more than six months, without health insurance. The City is now required to offer health insurance and the plan is basically a "catastrophic" policy – such a policy covers serious health concerns and cost the City and employees a fairly substantial amount. Essentially, the City could not offer insurance to all seasonal employees, so they needed to consider six month seasonal work terms instead. He believed that this would lead to a decrease in production and the decline in the quality of the program, at a time when more and more miles of trails were being added to the system. He explained that this was a partnership-wide problem.

S. Arkle informed the partners that the cost of insurance for the upcoming year, would be \$384.00 per employee per month for the City, and the cost for the employee would be \$167.00

per month. She explained that the City was trying to get seasonal staff in other departments covered so they could work when the City allowed them work.

D. Gordon stated that the Ridge to Rivers budget would be short \$12,500.00 next year if the four seasonal employees accepted the insurance. He explained, if these particular employees were to come back, that none of them were planning to take the insurance benefits offered.

S. Koberg clarified that the objective was to retain seasonal staff for eight months. D. Gordon agreed. S. Koberg asked whether Ridge to Rivers had tried or considered hiring seasonal staff for three month blocks.

D. Gordon answered that Eden Belanger, with Boise City Parks and Recreation (Parks), had studied the pros and cons of this system and come to the conclusion that the City would not likely be able to attract quality employees and that it still required a month to train them.

T. Fischer asked S. Church if the National Forest Service had experienced these types of problems as well. S. Church replied that she hadn't heard anything about this yet.

T. Fischer explained that the BLM was facing a similar issue for seasonal BLM employees. The cost was substantial.

S. Arkle stated that the BLM had rolled their healthcare program out more aggressively. T. Fischer agreed and believed that this was true.

S. Koberg explained Ada County's use of seasonal employees and their reliance on temporary staffing agencies, to recruit part-time labor.

S. Arkle stated that there were restrictions to using temporary staffing agencies, in order to get around the requirement offering health insurance. She added that the City had employees who were already employed for eight months and to scale back to six months, they would need to make a business argument to do so.

S. Church added that Forest Service's seasonal staff was allowed one-thousand and thirty-nine hours and no more. Anything above that was considered a permanent employee and had health benefits.

S. Arkle stated that Parks had been surprised when they were required to convert from seventy percent of employees covered with insurance, to ninety-five percent.

S. Koberg asked if Ridge to Rivers needed eight month seasonal employees. D. Gordon replied they did. S. Koberg stated that more money was needed. D. Gordon answered they did, in order to keep seasonal staff for eight months.

S. Arkle informed them that the City was working on a way to cover some of the costs.

S. Koberg asked if there was a point at which these positions went to eight months.

D. Gordon explained that, a few years ago, they had enough money for one eight month employee. Last year he had a meeting with Doug Holloway, Boise City Parks and Recreation Director, where he requested to hire more employees and D. Holloway had agreed to put more

money towards seasonal employees. He explained that seasonal employees all start at the same time, so a full crew could begin maintenance when the weather turns and a full crew would last into the fall or as far as the weather allows. He said that in the past, R2R was bringing on much of its seasonal staff well after they were needed and laying them off long before the work was completed. D. Gordon stated last spring he had a full crew and the work was entirely finished before trails dried out and the trails turned out really well. He added that projects keep growing, citing Hillside to Hollow as an example of adding trails onto the maintenance schedule, making him manage trails he never considered before. To try and maintain the entire Ridge to Rivers trail systems, eight months was essential. He mentioned that some trails such as Trail 5, needed annual maintenance because of the heavy use and erosion it received.

S. Koberg asked D. Gordon how many eight month employees he had. D. Gordon replied that he had three eight month trail crew positions and one eight month front country position.

S. Arkle added she had been receiving questions regarding how many additional resources crew had been receiving in order to maintain the growing system.

S. Church stated that Boise National Forest's budget continues to go down, but that she was required to maintain six-hundred and fifty-thousand acres with one position. Adding \$4,000 to Ridge to Rivers was problematic.

T. Fischer explained that the majority of the BLM seasonal employees returning, were one or two pay grades lower, and he was internally dealing with which priority positions he could fill.

T. Fischer stated the BLM leadership team was looking to try a different hiring practice.

D. Gordon added that Ridge to Rivers had experienced an increase in volunteer hours primarily with Hillside to Hollow.

S. Church said that the trails were continually expanding, but the budgets for maintenance kept decreasing. This was something trails users did not understand.

S. Koberg mentioned that Ada County complimented Ridge to Rivers to many different groups because they believed in the project. He added that they had to factor in managing the Oregon Trail Reserve Trails and the Eagle Bike Park along with Ridge to Rivers.

D. Gordon explained he wanted to make everyone aware of the seasonal employment issue and if they were required to make due with six month seasonal employees then they would.

- **Partner Updates:**

S. Koberg informed them of the agency's newsletter, passing out copies. He added that this had been printed and distributed prior to the Ridge to Rivers User Survey. He noted the inclusion of an article covering high school mountain bike leagues. He also informed them of Ada County's photo competition for pictures of any Ridge to Rivers Trails.

L. Ridenhour stated that new maps were being drafted for the Ridge to Rivers System and he was considering two or three different options for the cover art. He added that one of the more

difficult aspects of designing the map was adding the legend and compass. With more trails, it was making it a challenge to get everything on the map.

D. Gordon asked if the entrance and exit to the 8th Street ATV trailhead would have some deep ruts fixed. L. Ridenhour said he would check to see if they would do anything during the fall.

S. Arkle informed the partners that the Idaho State Historical Society had approved the placement of a restroom at the Table Rock Trailhead. The City and the Historical Society's attorneys were in the process of drafting an agreement.

L. Ridenhour added that the BLM managed fifty-three restrooms in the area and each one averaged between \$1,000.00 and \$1,500.00 annually to maintain.

S. Arkle explained the East End Neighborhood Association was already doing fundraising to fund maintenance of the restroom. She also stated that the Reserve Management Plan for the four-thousand acres owned by the City, was going before Boise City Council (Council) for review and approval. She explained that the City was involved in a fire mitigation project at the Oregon Trail Reserve, that had begun with goats grazing and reducing grasses and were spraying the pre-emergent, Imazapic, in the area. She noted this as an opportunity to gauge the efficacy of Imazapic in reducing the cover of non-native grasses and was planning a monitoring project with the Boise School District. She stated that the City had closed on the Idaho Humane Society property above Dry Creek on the Daniel's Creek side of the road, and that it would become a new City reserve. This land totaled three-hundred acres.

T. Fischer asked how the hazardous fuels mitigation in Military Reserve was progressing.

S. Arkle answered that it was going well, but that progress stalled with Boise Fire Department (Fire). She explained that there had been some interest by Fire to license or approve some management activity by landowners with adjacent properties to City reserves. She informed the partners that landowners were already practicing management activities, so it was necessary to control the process more. S. Koberg asked if people were mowing a buffer. S. Arkle replied that they were mowing and watering the buffer.

S. Dempsey voiced his concerns with individuals, not knowing proper land management skills, managing these lands. S. Arkle answered that the City was attempting to manage the situation by properly training these individuals.

She also mentioned that a little girl involved in a school field trip at Castle Rock, had found an obsidian arrowhead. The arrowhead had been taken to the Idaho State Historical Society and they authenticated the relic and dated it at four-thousand years old.

S. Church informed them the Shoshone and Paiute Tribes wished to meet with Ridge to Rivers. This meeting was important to conduct, prior to the NEPA trail plan process. She explained that the National Forest Service was progressing on the Bogus Basin Forest Health Project and scoping would be coming out in November. This project would involve public feedback on haul routes for trees to be cut around Bogus Basin Forest. She said the project was directed at taking out the worst infestation of mistletoe and bark beetles, while continuing to protect the investments at Bogus Basin. In addition, they would reforest the area with native plant species and devise strategies for reintroducing Douglas fir trees.

S. Arkle voiced her appreciation of the National Forest Coalition's presentation.

D. Gordon asked for an update on the NEPA process for Sweet Connie Trail and Dry Creek. S. Church replied that she had not seen a report and asked L Ridenhour if the BLM's archaeologist had gotten back to him. L. Ridenhour answered that he thought he had, but he was going to ask.

T. Breuer asked what a NEPA report involved.

S. Church informed him these reports involved archaeology, plant life analysis, fishery analysis, wildlife analysis, hydrology, and the big three – the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and the Archaeology Resources Protection Act. She added that Sweet Connie was the only trail reported on at that time.

D. Gordon asked if Shingle Creek had been cleared. S. Church replied that it needed to be. D. Gordon asked if 2016 was a reasonable date to achieve for clearing Shingle Creek and Dry Creek. S. Church replied that she thought they would be able to do that.

T. Breuer asked if the trail that led more directly to Stack Rock was in consideration. S. Church answered not as of then, but it could be added. She added that all of the National Forest Service specialists were being used on big projects.

L. Ridenhour asked who to send GIS data to. S. Church said the data could be sent to her and she would get it to those who needed it.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:35 AM