

# Fact Findings and Status: Verizon~RV Waste Dump~Trail System



The Board has been approached on three topics: (1) cell phone/internet service, (2) a potential RV dump site, and (3) a recreational trail system that is being developed in areas surrounding Timberlake.

A questionnaire was sent in the August Timberlake Times and electronically to all landowners asking for feedback on these topics. The

following is factual information gained from the questionnaire and subsequent meetings.

The Board wants to thank everyone who took the time to respond with their feelings/opinions on all of these topics. Additionally, we received some positive comments on road maintenance, the newsletter, the website, volunteer-sponsored activities, Ranch House and Bath House renovations. We appreciate your recognition of a job well done.

## Cell Phone/Internet Service

Landowner's Feedback: total 40: 31 yes and 9 no

Concerns: Ugly and obtrusive, cancer risks

Potential: Better cell phone service, 3G and 4G capability, for internet service, increased communication for safety purposes.

It was first thought that maybe a joint effort could be made between McKinley County Fire Dept. and Timberlake Volunteer Fire Dept. in upgrading their system along with Verizon. However, there is not enough real estate on the lot that would allow a tower as it has to be at least 200 feet from a structure. According to Verizon's restrictions there are set standards on distance from paved roads and accessibility through private land. **This is an on-going investigation process.**

## RV Dump Site:

Landowner's Feedback: Total 16: 10 no, 1 maybe and 5 yes

Four members of the Board met with John Rhoderick (Environmental Specialist with State of New Mexico Environmental Dept. District V Field Office) on 9.30.11. Mr. Rhoderick explained two different systems which were available with associated requirements and regulations.

- Can't be in a flood zone
- Minimum size tank required is 1,000 gallons - size should be based on the design flow.
- Pad needs to be sloped so waste flows to the tank. Pad would need to be about 20' and RV's cannot drive on top of the tank.
- At 80% full, there is an audible alarm and flashing light, which gives time to contact company to pump out the waste. Two companies mentioned were: GPS and POTCO. POTCO charges an annual fee plus a per occurrence fee. GPS charges \$250 pumping fee. (1,000 to 1,500 gallons).
- Holding tank, electricity, concrete work, etc. would need to be done with an estimate of at least \$30,000 to construct and \$2,000 a year to operate on a constant flow system. An initial water tightness test would have to be performed. If water level doesn't drop, the system is ok.
- A single tank system would run about \$2,500 including installation but not including cement work, electrical wiring and plumbing to site.
- Tank can be constructed of concrete or plastic. A septic tank with no hole can be used.
- Detailed reports have to be maintained, with special emphasis on spills. We would have to pay someone to come out and take samples.
- The City of Grants does random testing, so if there was an improper liquid in the waste, they would stop immediately.
- The question was asked about the website that lists dump stations all over the U.S. Mr. Rhoderick told us that private locations, like TRLA, would not be included.
- We have a lot of fractured bedrock in our area.
- Blackwater can go down 4' and then it seeps. Sink water is considered blackwater. There really is "no such thing as gray water" because all sinks, etc. have organic materials in them. Although a washing machine is considered gray water by most people, it should go into a holding tank and through a drip system.
- Question was asked about whether or not an RV using a septic system on their property was effective. Answer is yes, as long as the water/liquids stay full in the holding tank. If water isn't full, it could crush the tank and leak.
- Since we don't have a full time employee to monitor the system, campers would have to have a key. However, we have a big liability issue if there's a spill and it's not reported. Proper clean-up could be a problem if the pad isn't constructed properly.

At the TRLA Board meeting on 10.15.11, the pros and cons were discussed.

## Pros:

- Advantage/Convenience to Recreational Landowners
- Discourage the temptation to spill Blackwater on raw land

## Cons:

Initial installation cost as well as the on-going expense to

- maintain for limited few
- Requires routine pumping
- Requires electrical wiring for alarm system
- Requires documentation
- Requires a keyed system to secure the sight
- Requires a sloped concrete 20' square pad 20' from tank to avoid driving over
- TRLA could be assessed a fine if spillage occurs on the ground
- If sampling showed contamination material, e.g., illegal disposal of engine oil, TRLA is liable
- Could not prevent non-landowners or landowner from just dumping on cement pad

It was determined that the cost was prohibitive and the liability for accidental spills was too great. Hooking up to our present septic system isn't an option. El Morro Campgrounds only charge \$5. The Board voted not to pursue installing a RV Dump site.

### Ramah Trail System/TRLA Access Points

Landowner's Feedback: Total 35-- 13 No, 12 Yes, 9 Maybe (almost all of the "Maybes" didn't want to answer until more information was available) and 1 No Comment.

Back in August, Larry Winn, Board Member for Adventure Gallup and Beyond, and Olin Clawson, President of Adventures Gallup & Beyond, made a presentation to the Board concerning a Master Plan in conjunction with the National Forest Service that they hope to achieve over the next 10-12 years. Matt Riedy, Cibola Head Ranger is heading up the environmental studies along with Strider Brown, professional trail builder. Doug Decker, McKinley County Attorney is also involved. 300 miles of multi-use trails will be developed between Gallup, Grants and Ramah with 175 miles being considered out of the Gallup area and south to Ramah and 125 miles out of the Grants/Zuni area (to match up with the west side). Three years ago the Adventure Gallup & Beyond Group and the Zuni Mountain Trail Partnership started discussion with the Ramah Land & Irrigation group along with the Soil & Water Conservation Board.

As some of you may know, there is already 26 miles of single track mountain bike trails out of the McGaffey area. Depending on the terrain, trails will be developed for more hiking, horseback riding, mountain bikes and ATV's throughout this 300 mile trail system. In some areas, they will utilize roads/trails already in existence (i.e., part of Forest Road 157) to access the forest or private property where easements have been/are being obtained.

A \$25,000 grant was obtained last year to develop a trailhead (for parking) in Ramah on the west side of the old rodeo grounds. Originally, it was reported that the trailhead would be built this past spring, but it was deferred until next spring (2012). Trails potentially will go out through Pasture Hollow (old rodeo ground area), up through the Box S, Blind Canyon and eventually end up going towards McGaffey. Another trail is planned to go on top of the Mesa and pass by the Natural Bridge area. The ATV trail is planned to go through Pasture Hollow on the existing road and not on top of the Mesa. A mountain bike

trail is also being planned in this area. Before any trails can be built (with the help of Youth Corp groups), environmental/archeological studies will begin this November to ensure that endangered animals and plant species are not affected. \$300,000 has been earmarked for these studies and \$200,000 has been earmarked for trail construction.

Olin and Larry indicated that if TRLA wanted to be involved with this project, they would support whatever part we wanted to play. It was suggested that if we wanted to have any access points **for TRLA landowners only** through our Common Land/Horse Easements up to the Mesa/main trail system, they would include our request. Thus, an appropriate amount of the grant money would be used to construct a trail(s) through our Common Land and take care of the environmental study on our Common Land.

At the September 17th Board Meeting, the Board voted to establish an Ad Hoc Trail Committee, with Rhett Renoud being named the Chairman. The purpose of this Committee was defined as informing the landowners about the trail system and to get thoughts and ideas from them for ways to get to the main trail system. The Committee would report their findings to the TRLA Board.

An October 1st meeting was set up so that further information could be provided to landowners. No decisions were to be made at this meeting. As it turned out, the meeting lasted much longer than anticipated because of so many questions being asked of Olin and Rhett. To date, the following landowners have expressed their desire to be a part of the Trail Committee: Nancy Dobbs, Mary Jo Wallen, Steve Wills and Rhett Renoud. **No Committee meetings are being planned at the present time because further research is being done. Several legal and financial questions need to be answered by our legal counsel before the Trail Committee can proceed.**

In reviewing all of the surveys that were returned as well as the notes taken at the October 1st meeting, the following is a list of the major opinions/pros/cons of TRLA exploring the opportunity to participate in the proposed trail system (primarily-- whether or not we want to establish a trail(s) through our Common Land in order to access the main National Forest Trail System)

### Pros

- Professionally-built trails at no cost to TRLA.
- Archeological/environmental study done at no cost to TRLA.
- Enhance the TRLA Vision Statement, which is "To enjoy the recreational areas within Timberlake". Common Land/Horse easement areas have not been developed. In some areas, they are grown over or washed out and it's difficult to determine where private property/Common Land begins and ends. This could be alleviated with professionally-built trails.
- No additional insurance coverage/cost is required to our Liability Policy.
- When designated trails are established, people have a tendency to stay on the trail and not wander off on private property.



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## Fact Findings and Status ~ *Continued*

- Many landowners like to hike for the enjoyment of the outdoors; plus it's a healthy hobby and is a family activity that does not cost anything.

### Cons/Opinions

- Many landowners voiced their opinion that they did not want ATV's or any motorized vehicles on Common Land. In 2000 the Board of Directors adopted a policy regarding the use of Equestrian Easements which was published in the August 2000 Timberlake Times stating that vehicles are prohibited.
- Many landowners are concerned about the extra traffic that could occur in Timberlake. The only trailhead in our area will be developed in Ramah on the old rodeo grounds. No trailheads for parking would be allowed in Timberlake. Since Timberlake Road is a County Road, we cannot control the amount of traffic now, or in the future.
- Several expressed the concern of increased vandalism/burglaries. Timberlake is not a gated community and the main road is a County Road. Thus, we cannot keep people out of our area. The best way to help alleviate vandalism/burglaries in our area is to "watch out for your neighbor" and report suspicious persons/vehicles to a Board Member and/or law enforcement.
- Opposition to opening up our Common Land to the public was expressed. We have no intention of opening up our Common Land to the public. If a trail went up the Mesa to intersect with the Main Trail System, we would have to work out something with the Forest Service to indicate that our trail was not open to the public. This question is on our list of concerns with our legal counsel/Forest Service. It has been suggested that signage could be used indicating that "going down" the trail into Timberlake is "Private Property" or a "Closed Trail" sign could be used, which is a common technique to make sure only approved trails are being used.
- Increased concern over more litter. Again, Timberlake Road is a County Road where there is always going to be trash. Seldom if ever, do we see trash on our Common Land/Horse Easements (unless it is right next to the road). We have a great group of Volunteers who pick up trash along the road and this will certainly continue.
- A concern was voiced about a decrease in the value of our property. With the present-day economic situation in the U.S., we don't feel this is a valid point. If you talk to real estate agents, their opinion is that values go up when there are more recreational opportunities close to home.
- A comment was made that we could build our own trails and a concern was brought up about the maintenance of the trails. The only landowner (that we know of) who has experience with building forest trails to proper standards (to avoid erosion, etc.) has his home for sale and he is not living here at the present time. He has tried in the past to get some interest in clearing some of the brush on our Common Land and could never get any help. Volunteer help is getting slimmer every year. As far as maintenance, this is another question that needs to be answered by our

legal counsel/Forest Service. Since Youth Corp groups are involved in building/maintaining trails all over the country, we could anticipate being able to get their help.

- A question was asked about Federal Government involvement. There's no way around this-- once trails are constructed, National Forest rules apply. This is another question the Board is researching.
- Are trails being considered on the south side of the lake? There are already trails from the Ramah Lake Dam area going into/towards TRLA. "If" TRLA would allow access down the road to Timberlake Road in order to tie up with the eastern section of the trail that is suppose to end at the Notches from the Grants area, the trail would only be for hikers or horseback riders. Several landowners who live on the south side of the lake were totally against this access point.
- Landowners at the October 1st meeting wanted to know if we would all vote on this, or if the Board would make the decision. When the Board is tied, the President has the right to break a tied vote. However, with such a controversial topic as this, most experts say that it's wise to gather more facts and continue investigating. This is the Board's present mode of operation. Once the Board feels that they have all the facts, the landowner's will be provided with more information. Voting can then take place.

While the Board is in the "research mode", if anyone has a question or further comments, please contact Mary Jo Wallen at [mrsdw19@aol.com](mailto:mrsdw19@aol.com), or HC 61 Box 845, Ramah, NM 87321. She is maintaining the file of all the information for us. Also, if you wish to look at the websites that refer the trail systems in our area, they are: <http://www.adventuregallup.org>, [www.zunimountaintrailpartnership.com](http://www.zunimountaintrailpartnership.com) and <http://www.galluptrails2010.com>

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## ***Board Applicants Wanted***

Suppose a farmer has some land, and it's good, fertile land. The land gives the farmer a choice; he may plant in the land whatever he chooses. The land doesn't care. It's up to the farmer to make the decision. Now, let's say that the farmer has two seeds in his hand-- one is a seed of corn, the other is nightshade, a deadly poison. He digs two little holes in the earth and he plants both seeds- one corn, the other nightshade. He covers up the holes, waters and takes care of the land... and what will happen? Invariably, the land will return what was planted. Remember the land doesn't care. It will return poison in just as wonderful abundance as it will corn. So up come the two plants-- one corn, one poison. The land doesn't care what we plant... success... or failure. But what we plant it must return to us. It will return anything we want to plant.

In May 2012 there will be three Board vacancies due to the expiring terms of Don Parry, Linda Pedersen, and Dale Spencer. There is currently a vacant 2 1/2 term which the Board can fill now. Timberlake can and will parallel the above story. If there are not landowners willing to serve and plant corn, apathy will produce nightshade. Please contact a Board Director if you are interested.