

## Meeting Minutes

### **OLIVER RANCH CORE GROUP UNLV Paradise Campus Tuesday, September 21, 2004**

The meeting commenced at 8:35 a.m. with the following persons in attendance:

Loretta Asay, Blaine Benedict, Kim Blanc, Bob Boyd, Paul Buck, Bill Cates, Dale Etheridge, Nancy Flagg, David Frommer, Pat Fleming, Megan Iudice, Jeanne Klockow, Angie Lara, Richard Leifreid, John McCarty, Helen Mortenson, Tim O'Brien, Alan O'Neill, Jackson Ramsey, Michael Reiland, Henry Tom, Markus Tracy, Les Wallach, Debbie Wright, Billie Young.

#### 1. Introductions

The group welcomed Debbie Wright from BLM and Markus Tracy from the City of Las Vegas.

#### 2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the August 17, 2004, meeting were approved with no changes.

#### 3. City of Las Vegas Artist-in-Residence Program

Markus Tracy from the City of Las Vegas made a presentation to the Core Group on an artist-in-residence program that he coordinates, in which artists from throughout the United States are invited to Las Vegas to teach local youth at cultural centers and within the Clark County School District. The program has been in existence 8 years and focuses on artists who have an interest outside of the arts; for example, they may combine the arts with the sciences and fuse the two into a workshop for youth. The workshops typically include field trips, visits to museums, trips to Red Rock Canyon and Valley of Fire, etc., but creativity plays a role in all core learning in the program. Mr. Tracy provided photos from past programs and described a recent outing to Red Rock Canyon, in which each child was given a disposable camera, learned about the geology and history of the area, developed the film, and created a photo collage by cutting the prints into 1-inch squares. The collages were displayed in a gallery, and Mr. Tracy is now developing a series of murals to be displayed around the city in the coming year.

Michael Reiland said this program held exciting possibilities for future partnerships with the Red Rock Desert Learning Center, especially since one goal of the school is to mix the sciences with the arts. Michael invited Markus to attend future Core Group meetings.

#### 4. RRDLC Curriculum Matrix

Nancy Flagg provided the group with an overview of the curricular task laid out in the university's agreement with the BLM and introduced Dr. Jeanne Klockow, UNLV's new educational curriculum coordinator for its SNPLMA Education in the Environment Initiatives.

Jeanne said she was honored to be a part of the project. She had visited the site the previous day and was impressed by the location. Jeannie noted she has been asked to provide a consistent framework for various SNPLMA programs that have an educational component. These include the RRDLC, Forever Earth, and Wonderful Outdoor World on the Water, among others. Her goal is to have her work be a reflection of the core group's mission, and, similarly, her role is to serve as a collaborative partner with the project managers of the other SNPLMA educational programs.

Jeanne provided the group with a draft rationale for the curricular design of the Red Rock Desert Learning Center as well as a structural matrix for the curriculum, using the Earth Systems Approach. The matrix showed how a sample Life Science Strand developed by the Educational Programs Committee will fit into the overall curriculum template. Jeanne also demonstrated how the matrix responds to the architectural design of the facility as well as to the common curricular experiences that still need to be developed.

Jeanne reviewed a sample web page for lesson plans that would be designed with links to provide teachers with background information prior to bringing their classes out to the school. She also provided the group with a sample of what the daily schedule at the school might look like. In general, it allows for block scheduling with flexibility within each block for teachers and students to circulate thru various activities. She then asked the group for feedback.

Angie Lara said she liked the matrix but noted that many of Jeanne's samples were written in teacher-education language that the lay person may not understand. On the curricular design rationale, she pointed out that the RRDL mission statement and the mission statement for Forever Earth did not appear to be reflected. Angie also noted that the federal agencies need to be listed as partners on the matrix, because it is important to the core mission of the school that students learn what the BLM wants them to learn. Under "audiences" on the matrix, Angie indicated that out-of-state students and web learners should be added. On the subject of web access, Dale Etheridge said that wireless webcams will be better than web-based text. Michael Reiland said that the logistics of getting technology out to the facility still needs to be investigated. Jackson Ramsey asked about the correlation between this curricular work, the statement of work for the school operator, and what the operator will be asked to do. Michael said he sees Jeanne's matrix being included in the statement of work. The operator will have a say in how the curriculum will be implemented.

##### 5. Discussion of Policy-making Board for the Center

Michael Reiland led a discussion about the group's preferences for an advisory board to work collaboratively with the BLM and the school operator. He noted that he does not have a specific model in mind. Michael encouraged everyone to think about this as a future discussion topic, including whether the board operates independently, what kind of people should be on it, what structure it should have, whether it should have a formal mission statement, and so forth. Michael noted it can be difficult to set up a formal group under government regulations. Some other facilities of this kind have independent, non-binding boards that let the partners know if they think the mission is being met. This structure gives them the ability to be objective because they are not tied to any one partner.

Nancy Flagg asked Michael if other boards have a fund-raising function, because that can affect the kind of people asked to serve; he was not sure. Paul Buck said that in visits to other schools he recalled they were operated by a non-profit organization that had its own board. Paul also indicated that a lot of rules will be built into the operator's contract, which will give some measure of oversight. He was not convinced that an advisory board would be necessary, although he acknowledged that some type of oversight would be desirable. Jackson thought much of this would be governed by the contract between the BLM and the operator, because no operator should be asked to take suggestions from 15 different people. Angie suggested that Michael research 3 or 4 different models for discussion at the next meeting, and she asked that the models also address the oversight needs for the Wild Horse and Burro Facility.

6. Discussion of Observatory Location.

Michael Reiland informed the group that the new Red Rock Visitor Center Core Group meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month, and he invited anyone to be added to the e-mail list. At the last Visitor Center Core Group meeting, the participants discussed the location of the observatory. There are advantages to locating it at the visitor center – for example, it is a more public place, the sharing of space is good, and it allows more people to use it. The disadvantages are that there is more bleed-through of city light at the visitor center than at the Oliver Ranch site, the students at the school would not as easily be able to experience the equipment, and the conservation area has a day-use mission whereas the observatory would increase night-use of the area.

Paul Buck asked if the RRDL would we still have a platform area for smaller telescopes. Les Wallach replied in the affirmative, but they were exploring whether to locate the major telescope at the visitor center, primarily because parking at the school is a problem, as is student safety. Helen Mortenson argued that the observatory was budgeted into the RRDL project, not the visitor center. Michael pointed out that the monies would not be commingled between the two projects. The observatory would still come from the Oliver Ranch budget but it was simply a question of whether it could be more economically located at the visitor center. Les reiterated that the plan is to have an observatory at the school with multiple telescopes that would be smaller and age-appropriate, which would still provide the full range of astronomy. The current design calls for a protected, enclosed area with a roof that can roll back at night. Alan O'Neill pointed out that using smaller telescopes can build interest in the larger scopes. He agreed that the telescopes should be age-appropriate and he did not like the impact on the school site that the large telescope would presumably create. Dale Etheridge clarified that his original proposal was for 8-10" scopes but then also something a bit larger to allow viewing like real astronomers do. As originally envisioned, the primary use was for students, with secondary use by the public.

Jackson Ramsey noted that astronomy is a small part of the program at the visitor center, and there has been no discussion of increasing it. He is not convinced that there are a lot of resources to support it at the visitor center; however, he thinks it should be there because of parking concerns. Tim O'Brien noted that it is the cost savings that make the visitor center an attractive location. Blaine Benedict said that the nomination did not call for a public observatory, so he did not feel there was an obligation to provide public access. Pat Fleming said he had a problem with re-opening this discussion, as it was his understanding that a decision was made last April to locate the observatory at the visitor center.

The Core Group discussed the possibilities of remote viewing, with Loretta Asay noting that students could potentially remotely control this telescope and compare it to another one in Australia, for example. Angie Lara said that the students should be provided with a mix of opportunities. The visitor center would be more educational and interpretive; it is free and allows for people who want to share their hobby and enthusiasm. She sees the two functions – student access versus public access – as different.

7. Standing Reports

A. *Line and Space Architects*

Henry Tom and Les Wallach of Line and Space Architects provided an update on recent activities (*on file in UNLV Public Lands Initiative office and BLM office*). The architects met with a civil engineer on Aug. 17, who indicated that it was possible to build in the flood plain if certain requirements are met. The architects also met with personnel from Spring Mountain Ranch State Park and informed them of the plans for the school. The park staff had a few concerns about impact on their Summer Theatre program and Living History program. They also questioned

whether there would be noise impact from the Wild Horse and Burro Facility, and they asked whether students hiking to the state park would have to cross the Bonnie Springs property. They were open to the possibility of locating an educational kiosk on their site. In general, they were enthusiastic about the overall project.

Line and Space also toured the site with Clark County School District risk-management personnel. In general there were few concerns, although some questions were raised about the flood plain. They discussed American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements as well as emergency evacuation plans, especially plans for a mass evacuation.

The architects recently met with UNLV to tour the site and to review the curricular plans and matrix. They asked the university to identify by October 1 the common curricular experiences envisioned at the school and whether those activities would potentially impact the current design.

Les Wallach provided an update on the school's conceptual design. Drawings first go to the Building Committee and then will be brought to the Core Group. The programming document has been uploaded to the BLM website with sketches. The first part of the work involves site planning, followed by schematic design of the buildings. They will look at such issues as arrival and exiting, housing, eating, teaching, administration, and maintenance. Several design concepts have been pursued: (1) using the existing ranch site; (2) focusing on the maximum disturbed area; and (3) using a view site that more fully immerses students into the outdoor environment.

After meeting with the Building Committee last month, the "maximum disturbed" site was discarded and further consideration is being given to the existing ranch site and the view site. The ranch site design would cluster the dormitory and administrative buildings within the main ranch site, with the flex labs farther out, but it would require taking out the historic remnants of the ranch. The view site locates housing and labs further out in the desert and within the flood plain, which would require an elevated solution (approximately 18" above the high-water mark – or about 4-1/2 feet high). This design would allow historic remnants of the old ranch to be preserved, where they could be used for science or art activities.

In other updates, Henry Tom reported that the concepts for the wild horse facility are progressing nicely; the architects and BLM personnel recently visited a facility in Oregon. Line and Space will hold an energy conservation workshop Oct. 11-13 to help determine the energy infrastructure at the complex and how to incorporate these elements into the curriculum in an age-appropriate way.

#### B. *UNLV*

Nancy Flagg provided an update on UNLV's activities related to the RRDLC. She introduced web coordinator Megan Iudice. Megan showed the core group a sample of the proposed RRDLC website. Michael noted that the BLM's public affairs specialist is currently reviewing the text, and plans call for the site to go live by the first of October. He congratulated Megan on the design.

#### C. *Red Rock Canyon National Recreation Area*

John McCarty of Otak Inc. provided a report on the Environmental Assessment (*on file in UNLV Public Lands Initiative office and BLM office*). Phase I is a discovery phase. Phase II is preparation of the written environmental assessment. Thirty elements have been identified for investigation. Field surveys of biology and cultural resources have been completed. At the end of Phase 1, they will reduce the 30 original elements to 15 critical elements for further study.

Another element to the environmental assessment is benchmarking, wherein Otak looks at a comparable facility and the process they went through. At present, they have developed benchmarking criteria and a list of questions for BLM review. They then plan to review two comparable centers or, if it proves difficult to find directly comparable locations, they will visit more than two and pull out applicable pieces from each.

Update on Monitoring Wells. Bob Boyd reported that three wells were installed at the Oliver Ranch site over Labor Day weekend. The pumping test will start September 21. Data collection will occur over the next 2 days, followed by data analysis. The ranch house well has already produced 30 gallons per minute sustained over several hours; the preliminary analysis appears to indicate sufficient water for the projected needs of the school. Two other wells are intended primarily for monitoring but will also be available for curriculum purposes and research.

BLM Update. Michael Reiland reported that he and Billie Young met recently with the Western Veterinary Conference regarding potential partnerships with the Wild Horse and Burro Facility. It was a positive meeting and the start of a good relationship. Michael and Bill have been invited to speak at the February 2006 Western Veterinary Conference, co-presenting with Dr. Rick Redden. The focus will be on why the facility is important to veterinary science.

8. Committee Reports

Committee reports were deferred due to time constraints.

9. New Business

Billie Young announced that the National Wild Horse and Burro Association and the BLM were hosting a booth at the Clark County Farm Festival over the next couple days. They will have gentled wild horses on display. She thanked the Friends of Red Rock Canyon and the Red Rock Interpretive Association for providing funds for informational packets. Billie also distributed fliers announcing the annual wild horse adoption on October 9-10.

Angie Lara notified the group that BLM Field Office Director Mark Morse has announced his retirement effective January 2005.

Nancy Flagg reminded the group that the October 19 meeting will begin at a new time -- 10:30 a.m. -- at the BLM Interagency Office.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.