



# Whittell Forest & Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

**Present:** Sarah Bisbing (Chair); Hunter Noble (Secretary), Anna Belle Monti (Fuels Forester, USDA), Pat King (Community Member), Chris Pritsos, (Associate Dean, College of Agriculture Biotechnology and Natural Resources), Vic Redding (VP, Administration and Finance), Ahmad Itani (AVP, Research), Mridul Gautam (VP, Research & Innovation) and Administrative Assistant: Kayla Armbruster

**Absent:** Norm Azevedo (Community Member), John Christopherson (Deputy Administrator, NV Division of Forestry)

## Welcome & Introductions

The Associate Vice President for Research, Ahmad Itani welcomed the Advisory Committee and each individual present introduced themselves.

The Vice President for Research & Innovation, Mridul Gautam thanked the committee for their time to support of the strategic plan for the Forest to become a state-wide program known for instruction, research and fellowship form disciplines across the University.

The Vice President for Administration and Finance, Vic Redding reiterated the University and in particular his office commitment to the Forest and its leadership.

## Forest Planning & Progress Updates

Sarah Bisbing reviewed the agenda for the meeting, presentation attached.

Professor Bisbing introduced the new Manager of the Forest Mr. Hunter Noble. He is a forester and researcher who began his career at [Blodgett Forest Research Station](#), a UC Berkeley research Forest. For three years, Hunter worked on variety of applied forest research, public outreach and education activities, forest management and timber harvests, as well as fuels reduction projects. Hunter will be dealing with day-to-day operation of the Forest.

Professor Bisbing presented the new [Forest website](#) and the new [visitor reservation system](#).

Long term development of the Forest

### a) Access to the Forest

Access to the University property remains on the front and central issue. Access to the property should be through University land. This is the most urgent issue for the Forest and will investigate various scenarios of funding opportunities (proposals and fundraising) to do that.

Professor Bisbing summarized the current and future access roads to the property:



- i. Maps of northern “Arm” and southern access points shared and discussed with committee.
- ii. Current access point at Hobart Tanks road.
- iii. Previous access point at Cliff Brothers Ranch, accessed off Franktown road with limited access agreement. No longer have access, outreach to the residents in repairing the relationships.
- iv. Big Canyon and Musgrove Canyon Road- University Legal was working on an agreement with Mr. Azevedo for limited access to protect all parties. Noted that the most challenging part of the road is USFS road and would need to be passed in this route or Hobart Tanks road.

**Discussion:** Franktown to Big Canyon Road to Musgrove Aspen Creek road is privately maintained. Residents who live in the Big Canyon area maintain these roads privately. There have been community discussions about gating the privately maintained road. Committee discussed ideas about engaging residents and discussing a joint agreement by which UNR would assist in the cost of maintenance if a right-of-way agreement could be negotiated. There was discussion about the need to provide a cost-benefit analysis for each access point, which is currently in progress via development of a formal Master Plan. Mr. Vic Redding provided an overview of the Forest Master Plan that his office is spearheading. H+K Architects of Reno, NV is being retained by the University to develop a Master Plan for the Forest.

- v. Reviewed additional access through the eastern arm (approximately 1 mile) of the Forest property that adjoins private property. Missing access of approximately 5 acres west of Franktown Road from JS Bar ranch road.
- vi. Moundhouse parcel is currently for sale, but a road would need to be built. The University would need to secure additional funding.
- vii. President Johnson allocating just under \$100,000 to the Forest as part of property capital improvement toward development of a Master Plan.
- viii. Proposed outreach to Tom Hall to discuss a limited access agreement, but long-term solutions still needed.

**b) Infrastructure, campground repair and upgrades**

- i. Campground is built on a wetland and is also in avalanche path. During high precipitation years, the campground becomes flooded, and there is risk of loss or damage in unstable snow years, which are common in the eastern Sierra.
- ii. Future development of facilities to the east of the current campground. H+K Architects providing a cost benefit analysis and bid for building an optimal location for “Research Base Camp.” Long term development looking toward 2023 Legislative session for state funding possibilities.
- iii. Current funding from Dean Payne, College of Agriculture, Biotechnology & Natural Resources \$225,000 for the research structure for personnel management position.
- iv. SAF student chapter for the logging team at the University is exploring possible ways to generate club revenue through logging.

**c) Funding sources and extramural funding**

Proposals to Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) funding and proposals to the Western State’s Fire Managers Association (through the Nevada



Division of Forestry) to implement a corridor of hazardous fuels treatments across different properties at a greater scale.

- d) [Whittell Forest & Wildlife Area](#) website and [Graduate Research Fellowships](#) available to all students in NSHE getting a masters or PhD. Two fellowships will be funded for Fall 2020- Spring 2021

### Strategic Plan Overview

Reviewed Strategic plan, attached and sent to advisory committee prior to meeting. Chair Bisbing asked for suggestions and feedback in this meeting or to be emailed to [Sarah Bisbing](#). Discussion: Suggestion to include expansion of community service groups and local tribes. The goals and initiatives in the strategic plan are all important and on similar priorities. Suggestions to include the conditions in the forest and Develop a Forest Management Plan for researchers and add subcommittee to get faculty and researchers involved in the Forest.

Comprehensive geodatabase available at [Whittell Data & Maps](#) to develop research protocol and planning.

Graham Kent, Director of the Nevada Seismological Laboratory and [ALERT Wildfire](#) installs fire cameras across the landscape to catch fires as they start for emergency responders to prioritize and plan. Currently looking at installing a camera on Slide Mountain to view into Little Valley. Discussion about the importance of outreach and community relations, suggestions of putting out a newsletter to community to share aspirations and intentions of the University and the Little Valley. Ideas were discussed about planning an event for spring 2021 reserve public space such as Bowers Mansion. The University and become involved in planning an event for the community and include the US Forest Service and NV Department of Forestry. \*COVID permitting.

A brochure is in development with marketing to support information to the community at large to share aspirations of the forest and to be distributed at fundraising opportunities.

### Master Plan Overview

Mr. Vic Redding discussed a brief overview of the proposed Master Plan that is being developed by H+K Architects. His office has secured funding to conduct this Master Plan. The scope of the Plan entails providing the University access road scenarios, research camp ground location recommendations, research facility programming, site infrastructure investigation, cost estimating, phasing and scheduling. He discussed each item in more details.

### Open discussion

- a) Committee members agreed about the importance of repairing and building relationships and being transparent with the community.
- b) Presentation to the Board of Regents, at December or March meeting to share the Forest to NSHE. Agenda items need to be submitted by October for December meeting.
- c) Continue to build relationships with Forestry Community
- d) The Forest has potential to involve the entire University across multi-disciplines; history, English, Basque studies, logging etc.



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**Meeting adjourned**

The VPRI and AVPR thanked the committee members for their willingness to serve and provide advice to the University on matters related to the Forest. Next zoom meeting will be in December 2020.