

STEP INTO CUBA E-LETTER #1 – 12/17/2008

Contact List

A contact list of all individuals with interest in Step into Cuba is included as a second attachment with this e-letter. This should really help us stay in good communication. Inevitably there will be mistakes or omissions. Please bring them to Dick Kozoll's attention and I will correct the list. I will distribute new lists as we make revisions.

Step into Cuba Steering Committee

The scheduled meeting 12/16/08 was cancelled because of weather difficulty. The meeting has been re-scheduled for Tuesday 1/13/2009 at 5:00 PM at the Cuba Health Center. Because of our agreements and several funding possibilities, we need to establish a formal name for the group. We should also decide on a regular meeting time, as developments "pop-up" quickly and there are many decisions to make. This group is intended to represent Cuba area agency and individual interests in the project. Planning for our National Park Service/RTCA technical assistance award, USFS trail planning, and relationship with the UNM Prevention Research Center as core research project 2009-2014 will be the major agenda items.

Cuba Mesa Flagged

A truly beautiful route from the USFS Cuba administrative site to the mouth of the Chijuilla canyon is now flagged and has GPS location points. Groups of us have examined sections of the route, but we await a future USFS planning process for next steps. In the meantime, members of the "advanced" weekend hiking group will use portions of the route – along with other available areas – over the next year.

VIVA – Step into Cuba

Our project has been chosen by the UNM Prevention Research Center (PRC) as its core research project for 2009-2014. A continuation grant application has been submitted to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) by the PRC for its next 5 years of activity. A major portion of the grant award (announcement in early 2009 for the five year period beginning 10/09) will be for Village Interventions and Venues for Activity – Step into Cuba. This name was chosen by the center to distinguish the research/evaluation aspects of our project we will do with the Center. We are already receiving technical assistance from the PRC in advance of the expected award.

NPS/RTCA Assistance Agreement

The US National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program selected our project for its technical assistance by competitive application.

RTCA will assist Step Into Cuba by:

- Recommending and assisting with community involvement and outreach techniques for citizens, civic and educational organizations, health partners and community leaders.
- Providing technical expertise for trail design, construction and

maintenance of community paths and trails.

- Developing strategies to engage adjacent land managers (USFS, BLM) in the Step Into Cuba planning effort
- Identifying funding strategies for project implementation.
- Providing graphics support for project outreach materials.

In return, the Nacimiento Medical Foundation, Village of Cuba and other project partners will be expected to:

- Identify a local lead or chairperson for the project duration (Dick Kozoll has no plan to move elsewhere) .
- Contribute necessary staff time, in-kind resources and continued commitment to the success of this project.
- Pursue funding opportunities to implement projects or programs that can demonstrate short-term successes.

Attila Bality is our contact and technical advisor and we are already working with him on several aspects of the project.

Northwest New Mexico Preventive Health Project Application

This is an interesting situation. The Nacimiento Foundation submitted an application in response to a NM Department of Health (DOH) request for proposals (RFP) for a project to address social determinants of health in three northwest counties (including Sandoval). The expected early December notification of award has been delayed – perhaps indefinitely – by the current NM budget shortfall. Nevertheless, DOH has, with our agreement, included Step into Cuba support as feature for a required Healthy Communities portion of a large and complex 5 year grant to the CDC. It will be submitted this month and announcement of award would occur by April 2009. Funding through either or both of these sources would secure support for our champion led activities for at least several years. We are awaiting the outcome with great interest.

Your Town Workshop Application

Our RTCA and UNM PRC partnerships has already brought a wonderful opportunity to us. Attila's identification of the a Your Town Workshop grant – support for bringing together Cuba representatives with New Mexico and national walkway, park and trail design experts for a 2 ½ day workshop – resulted in our follow-up application. Thanks to some amazing work (speed and quality) by Susan DeFrancesco, Emily Piltch and Sally Davis (among others) of the PRC, we have a fantastic workshop proposed to take place in Ghost Ranch and Cuba in late summer or fall of 2009. More to come...

NM Volunteers for the Outdoors Project

This organization has membership from across New Mexico and provides advocacy and volunteer project manpower for efforts such as ours. John Thomas, this year's VFO president, has experience hiking and leading volunteer projects near Cuba. John and I have planned a Friday to Sunday project 9/11-13/2009 for VFO involving landscaping at St. Francis Park and constructing walkway adjacent to the Sandoval County Fairgrounds

on County Road 111. Phil Rios, County Public Works Director, Mark Hatzenbuehler, County Fairgrounds Manager, and Attila have offered to assist with the project.

CDTA Board and Planning Meeting in Santa Fe

The Continental Divide Trail Alliance (CDTA) took advantage of new NM funding and its “one of a kind” state representative, Bob Woods, to focus attention on planning NM portions of the Continental Divide Trail (CDT). A ½ day planning meeting followed a Board meeting in Santa Fe, and resulted in many recommendations to better connect New Mexico communities, such as Cuba, to the CDT. Dick, Bob, Greg Warren (USFS lead for the trail), Teresa Martinez (CDTA Field Operations Director, CDTA’s new Director (Steve Dudley) and several Board members participated.

Meeting with Regional Forester’s Office

Dick and Bob had an excellent meeting with Deputy regional Forester Gilbert Zepeda and Regional Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Trails Coordinator Tom Dwyer this month. Our discussion centered on need for more USFS hiking opportunities and a better connection of Cuba to the CDT. We were informed that \$15,000 has been proposed to continue planning for the CDT near Cuba for 2009. This would be a welcome resource for the Cuba Ranger District and our project.

Public Meeting on US 550 Speed Limits and Safety

USFS Planning

Diane Taliaferro (Santa Fe USFS Recreation Program Manager), Roger Norton (Santa Fe USFS “easement/land ownership specialist”) and David Allen (Cuba forester) spent a day surveying proposed routes for the CDT near Cuba. They will formulate recommendations for the Cuba Ranger District that will be important for future planning of our project.

Kodak American Greenways/Conservation Fund Award

Our project received \$1000 to use for surfacing and landscaping the St. Francis Park nature trail. We will plan for its use in “good weather days” in 2009.

American Hiking Society/Nature Valley Contest

As many of you know, Step Into Cuba was one of 20 finalists for 10 \$5000 grants. Winners will be selected on the basis of public voting results on the Nature Valley website in October. Thanks to all of you who “got out the vote.” We will hear in April 2009 if we have won. If successful, we will use the funds for St. Francis Park improvements and support of a local volunteer to construct and maintain local walkways and trails.

Achieve Grant Opportunity

Yet another grant opportunity has surfaced. Ten achieve grants will be awarded by the CDC to municipalities to plan for park improvements that will further community health. Representatives of the Nacimiento Foundation, Village, PRC, and RTCA program will

discuss the possibility of an application (due 1/16/09) at a meeting this Friday. Again, more to come....

Google Geo Challenge Grant

Because of my “abundant spare time,” I have decided to follow a lead provided by Susan DeFrancesco of the PRC, to do a quick application for grant money that can be used for mapping activities associated with Step into Cuba. Google is interested in applications of its Google Earth software by non-profit organizations to improve communities throughout the world. It’s a long shot, but you never know...deadline 12/22/08, award by the end of February...stay tuned.