



Meeting Minutes  
Friends of the Rio de Flag Membership Meeting  
6 April 2017, 6-7:30PM  
Montoya Community Center, 245 N. Thorpe Road

**Agenda: Update from the Board of Directors**

No. people in attendance: 29

List of acronyms:

USACE: US Army Corps of Engineers

CECs: Compounds of Emerging Concern

COF: City of Flagstaff

FoRIO: Friends of the Rio de Flag

LID: Low Impact Development

Please refer to this [PowerPoint](#) for additional information regarding the topics discussed during this meeting.

Events and Volunteer Opportunities:

- 4/22, 9-11AM Earth Day Cleanup at Heritage Square
- 4/22 11AM-2PM Earth Day Celebration at Heritage Square
- 4/29 9AM-12PM Arbor Day Event at Picture Canyon with Flagstaff Open Space Program
- 5/4 6-7:30PM FoRIO Membership Meeting at Montoya Community Center
- 5/6 9AM-12PM Science Saturday: Rio de Flag Celebration at Willow Bend
- [AWWE-some Summer Series 2017](#) with Arizona Watchable Wildlife Experience
- [Summer 2017 Volunteer Events](#) at Picture Canyon with Flagstaff Open Space Program

**1. Draft Master Rio Plan**

- Board Member Malcolm Alter presented the general idea for the draft Master Rio Plan and briefly described the criteria being used to describe each reach of the Rio de Flag; the Board of Directors sought input on these criteria from membership
- Reach by reach organization of the Plan using specified evaluation criteria (see slides 3-19 of PowerPoint) to describe each reach and identify opportunities and challenges
- Criterion 1: Restoration Opportunities
  - We will use historical aerial photography to help guide restoration to the most natural extent possible where possible (e.g., Picture Canyon)

- For areas like Coconino Park (i.e., location of Late for the Train on Fort Valley Rd), where there used to be a huge meander in the Rio, we will be limited in our ability to restore the geography of the Rio
- *Member comment:* one project under this category that should be considered is the relocation of manholes that are currently in the middle of the channel to just to the side of the channel
- The City is aggressive with rural floodplain designation which protects areas of the Rio de Flag outside of City boundaries
- Partnerships with City and County provide important input and buy-in from the relevant entities that manage the watershed
- Criterion 4: Development Standards
  - Malcolm: we might exclude this as one of the criteria and instead include it in the Master Rio Plan as a broader topic of discussion
- Criterion 6: Relationship to US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Flood Control Project
  - The USACE project needs to be addressed for certain reaches of the Rio
- Criterion 7: Green Belt-Open Space Opportunities
  - We would like to include not only the 100-year floodplain in preservation goal, but also the cliffs/escarpments that make up the wider riparian area (i.e., the whole river system)
- Criterion 8: Public Education and Civic Engagement
  - The best way to take care of the Rio is to make sure people know about it which will give them a reason to care about it
- Criterion 9: Desired Channel Morphology
  - We want the channel morphology to be as natural as possible which means we (the City) might have to buy up property along the Rio
- Criterion 10: Desired Water Quality
  - The world is moving in the direction of addressing Compounds of Emerging Concern (CECs) and Flagstaff should do so as well
- Criterion 11: Invasive Weeds and Reintroduction of Native Species
  - We will include plans to remove invasive weeds and replace with native species
- Criterion 12: Wildlife Habitat and Movement
  - We seek to avoid wildlife “dead ends” in order to facilitate necessary corridors for wildlife
- Criterion 13: Opportunities for Scientific Study
  - We will include discussion of opportunities for using the Rio de Flag for scientific studies such as the work being conducted by Tom Whitman (which involves using the Rio de Flag as a repository for genetic variation)
- Criterion 14: Return of Reclaimed Water to Establish Perennial or Semi-Perennial Flows

- Work with the City to identify new areas for releasing reclaimed water into the Rio to create a more perennial stream and contribute to groundwater recharge
  - Bryan Bates: we need to address water quality (CECs) before moving forward with promoting groundwater recharge using reclaimed water
- *Member comment:* FoRIO should align the Rio Master Plan with potential sources of funding in order to meet the visions the plan outlines (such as flood control, restoration, education, etc.)

## 2. Stream Team Data Collection

- FoRIO will be partnering with Coconino County to collect Stream Team data on sections of the watershed outside of City of Flagstaff limits
- Volunteer trainings will be scheduled over the summer and promoted on Facebook and FoRIO's website
  - Data collection events will be scheduled and sent out on email for those interested in participating
- These efforts will contribute to the Master Rio Plan document

## 3. Low Impact Development

- Low Impact Development (LID), also called green infrastructure, includes both active and passive water catchment controls
  - Detention: the capture and release of water at a natural rate
  - Retention: all water is kept on site
- The Water Commission called for a subcommittee of consultant engineers, FoRIO, and others to address the need for readdressing LID rules (this was brought to light because developers had complained about the rule so Council called for LID to be looked into)
- The subcommittee is pushing to keep the 1" rule: this requires that developments must design sites to capture the first 1" of runoff from impervious surfaces on all properties
  - This mimics natural runoff conditions
- The subcommittee is proposing one critical modification: when a developer has a "difficult" site (i.e., a site whose upper land surface is naturally composed of impervious rock [and this includes most of the sites left to be developed in Flagstaff]) then the developer could buy another plot or make a deal with another development and do their required LID offsite at a nearby location
  - this modification would address the high cost of removing impervious rock on site which is the biggest complaint from developers
- Once the subcommittee approves the LID rule with its modification, then it will go to the Water Commission and then to Council for final approval
- *Member comment:* Has FoRIO looked at the literature on LID? Because (the member) heard that LID was not supported well in the literature

- Response: there have been a lot of cost studies that show that it might not be cost effective, but LID does seem effective at addressing urban water runoff issues
- Demonstration sites for LID in Flagstaff include landscaping around the Montoya Community Center, the rain garden across from the Montoya Community Center, and the area at Lower Coconino, among others

#### 4. Rio de Flag Flood Control Project

- Refer to slides 20 and 21 for more information on the project
- FoRIO believes that an open, stepped approach should be further explored in a conceptual manner and information should be provided to the public
- FoRIO in support of flood control but would like to see a design that is as natural as possible
- FoRIO believes that further evaluation of the economic value of a healthy, balanced, vibrant and flowing Rio de Flag should be considered as an option to provide flood control as well as many other important ecosystem services.
- Mayor Coral Evans and City Manager Josh Copley went to Washington DC in March to request \$1 million needed to complete the flood control project design
  - FoRIO is under the impression that this visit was unsuccessful in obtaining these funds
- Next step: FoRIO will follow up with Evans and Copley to confirm our presumption and request further discussion on the plan
- *Member comment:* FoRIO should include non-traditional partners in watershed planning, such as the Chamber of Commerce, because they might be interested in the economic draw that an open channel design could bring (such as increased tourism)

#### 5. Community Outreach

- Refer to slides 22 and 23 of the PowerPoint for an diagram of our outreach planning process
- FoRIO received a grant of \$3,000 through the Arizona Community Foundation to conduct public outreach
- FoRIO will hire Southwest Decision Resources to facilitate this process
- FoRIO is drafting a questionnaire to be sent out to residents of Flagstaff area to better understand their priorities for watershed planning
- FoRIO has partnered with COF and Coconino County to ensure we include questions that these entities hope to have answered in the survey
- Next steps: 1. finalize survey; 2. Meeting with FoRIO, COF, and Coconino County to determine survey implementation and data gathering; 3. Send out survey (FoRIO is still not sure if we will send out online or via postcard w/link to survey); 4. Collect and compile survey response data and share during a Key Partners Meeting (to include other stakeholders as well as FoRIO, COF, and County)

- The survey will be provide a broad understanding of people’s values, and after we collect this data we will use it to target specific neighborhoods where we’ve determined we need additional information
- FoRIO plans to seek additional funding to support public meetings or focus groups to gather additional information

## 6. GoFundMe

- GoFundMe: FoRIO is conducting a fundraising campaign to support another service term for Chelsea Silva
  - We’ve reached nearly 60% of our fundraising goal of \$4,500 (including on and offline donations)
  - Deadline to contribute is Earth Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>
  - Follow us on Facebook during our simultaneous Rio Awareness Campaign to learn something new about the Rio every day

## 7. Adopt-the-Rio de Flag Stewardship Program

- Seven schools currently in the program
  - Flagstaff High School, Sinagua Middle, Kinsey, Knoles, DiMiguel, and Flagstaff Middle School (both elementary and middle)
- Chelsea doing presentations and field trips at Flag High, Sinagua, and Kinsey in April and May
- *Member comment:* Are general community members allowed to join this program?
  - *Chelsea:* The program is currently targeted at schools, but there is real potential for community members to be included in the program in the future