

Best Practice: Community Collaborative Develops Process to Orient New Members

Summary

The Diablo Trust, inspired by the Forest Service's handover memo, developed their own orientation document to help new agency staff and others learn about the group.

Keys to Success

Proactive effort to help new people understand the group's mission, structure, projects and history (rather than relying on the new person to approach them).

"Maintaining continuity with agencies when key people retire or move away is one of the most significant obstacles to successful collaboration. While our 'handover memo' does not solve that problem all by itself, it does at least help keep everyone moving in the same direction."

—Derrick Widmark,

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Diablo Trust's Transition Document Smooths the Way for New FS Staff and others

The Diablo Trust is a nonprofit collaborative group that describes itself as a "land management team created to ensure the social, biological and economic sustainability of 426,000 acres of intermingled federal, state, and private lands southeast of Flagstaff, AZ." The group formed in 1993, and over that time period have seen many staff changes at the Coconino National Forest.

The Diablo Trust recently learned about the Forest Service's "handover memo," in which agency staff develop a transition document when leaving a post in order to assist their replacement in understanding the partnerships and collaborations important to the position. The group decided they could do something from their end to support new agency staff and other new members of their collaborative. They took the proactive step of developing their own orientation document, called the "Diablo Trust: History, Purpose and Overview."

The document includes information about the Diablo Trust's mission statement, purpose and goals, organizational history and structure, board members and staff, contact information, and describes key strategies the group uses to meet goals.

The document doesn't stand alone, however. The Diablo Trust's orientation process also includes a courtesy call to the new Forest Service staff person and invitations to participate in regularly-scheduled Diablo Trust meetings.

Benefits

- New Forest Service staff are immediately welcomed into the Diablo Trust, begin building relationships, and are able to participate effectively in group process more quickly.
- The Diablo Trust provides a resource document that the new staff can refer to when needed.

Links

Diablo Trust: www.diablotrust.org

Coconino National Forest: http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coconino/Forest_Service_Handover_Memo_Can_Ease_Staff_Transitions

MISSION STATEMENT

The Diablo Trust is a 501(c)(3) land management team created to ensure the social, biological and economic sustainability of 426,000 acres of intermingled federal, state, and private lands southeast of Flagstaff, Arizona, by engaging in a collaborative stewardship process that is in harmony with the natural environment and the broader community.

PURPOSE, GOALS, ORGANIZATION

The Diablo Trust is the forum for the collaborative management of our intermingled ownership land area. We bring together a wide range of land managers and stakeholders in order to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of a collaborative stewardship process that has a proven track record of making a difference on the land.

We are **comprised** of ranchers (the Prossers of the Bar T Bar and the Metzgers of the Flying M), Federal and State agency personnel, environmentalists, university scientists and students, recreationists, and other citizens working together to achieve a variety of goals by engaging a collaborative stewardship process.

Land type varies from eastern desert grasslands (5,010 feet elevation), through east-central shrub-grasslands, central woodland/ grassland, west-central woodland (PJ)/ forest, riparian canyons, Western forest (ponderosa pine) up to 7,660 feet elevation.

Key goals are sustaining open space (preventing land fragmentation); sustaining biological diversity; sustaining multiple-generation stewards working on the land; producing high-quality food; protecting watersheds with stable living soils; restoring historic grasslands; enhancing wildlife corridors; achieving community of place.

Name: "Diablo" refers to Diablo Canyon which forms the main watershed drainage of the area and is the boundary separating the Bar T Bar and Flying M ranches. "Trust" refers to the trusting relationship that holds the collaborative group together (Diablo Trust is not a land trust in the fiduciary sense of the word).

Organization: The Diablo Trust operates as an informal collaboration of land managers, and other interested stakeholders which meets monthly to discuss and work on issues of mutual interest and benefit to the land.

- Diablo Trust maintains an **office** on the NAU campus in Peterson Hall.
- Derrick Widmark is the full-time **coordinator**, and can be contacted at (928) 523-0588; P.O. Box 3058 Flagstaff, AZ 86003.
- The **website** is www.diablotrust.org, and contains a full listing of programs and archives of hundreds of photos highlighting activities.
- The Diablo Trust was legally **incorporated** as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in 1998 under the name Diablo Canyon Group.
- **Board of Directors** (alphabetically): Drew Barringer, Becky Daggett, Maury Herman, Jim Highsmith, Norm Lowe, Jack Metzger, Kit Metzger, Mandy Metzger (president), Joan Murphy, Bob Prosser, Judy Prosser, Helen Sisk, Tom Sisk, Carl Taylor, Bill Towler, Norm Wallen, and Stephen Williams.

- Diablo Trust is not a **membership** organization, and no fees are attached to participation. All are welcome to attend meetings and functions, and may be included on the mailing list by request.
- **Funding** is through donations, fundraising events, and grants for operations and special projects. Volunteer labor is provided by many participants for events and land projects.
- **Committees** or working groups (listed below) are formed as needed to work on goal areas and special projects and issues.

Key collaborators:

Diablo Trust is open to all who wish to attend and participate – to create a place-based democratic community participatory process involving stakeholders and citizens. Participants include:

- 1) **Land & resource owners & managers:** Bar T Bar and Flying M ranches, and directors and staff of Coconino National Forest, Arizona State Land Department, and Arizona Game & Fish Department
- 2) **Directors, staff, students and members of non-owner land and resource agencies, institutions, and formal groups** including: Coconino County, Natural Resource Conservation Service, US Geological Survey, Northern Arizona University, Prescott College, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, Museum of Northern Arizona, Merriam-Powell Center for Environmental Research, Hopi Tribe, Arizona Wildlife Federation, Arizona Antelope Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Coconino Trail Riders, among others
- 3) **Other non-formal participants** including: concerned citizens, environmentalists, recreationist, public school teachers and students, artists, neighboring ranchers and businesses.

Key strategies and activities to meet goals:

One of the key components of Diablo Trust's success is the work that has been produced from cooperative planning and action. Committees form and select leadership as needed to do focused activities. Following are key groups, listing their main purpose and types of work they do.

- 1) **Meetings:** Needed to facilitate collaboration of diverse groups and individuals. An Operations Team does monthly coordination.

Types of meetings include: Monthly or bi-monthly public meetings on topics of interest; an annual meeting with keynote speakers; an annual campout; land tours for various focus issues; fundraising events.

- 2) **Ranch and land management:** Needed to facilitate planning to comply with regulatory requirements and to meet sustainability goals of the ranches. Ranchers and regulating agencies take the lead for this work.

Types of activities include: Intensive livestock rotation under Best Management Planning for livestock maintains healthy plants and soil cover. NEPA environmental assessment needs, including comprehensive EIS and Range Management Plan for multiple ownership jurisdiction on the whole 426,000 acre land area covering six ecological zones; Biological Assessment & Evaluation. Ranch beef is being marketed locally.

3) **Land and Watershed Projects:** Needed to implement land improvement projects. A Projects working group prioritizes and coordinates this work.

Types of work done includes: Juniper removal for winter range and browse improvement for wildlife and livestock as well as erosion abatement and watershed stabilization. Much of this work is done for wildlife priorities as articulated by Arizona Game & Fish Department, funded by Game & Fish, NRCS and supported by stewardship agreements with the Coconino National Forest.

4) **Wildlife:** Needed to restore deteriorated habitats and attain biodiversity goals. A Wildlife working group prioritizes and coordinates this work.

Types of work done includes: Anderson Mesa antelope study (including collaring and tracking of animals by AZG&F); prairie dog studies; extensive fence reconstruction for antelope passage; major water hauling efforts for drought relief (1 million gallons hauled in 2002); 17 year continuing rancher/multiple agency Forage Research Study Group (FRSG); riparian survey and stock pond fencing; and thousands of acres of land treated to improve key winter/spring habitat and migration routes for antelope.

5) **Monitoring:** Needed to check progress towards land health goals, and obtaining data for replanning. A Science and Monitoring working group coordinates this work.

Types of work done includes: Eleven year continuing study plots read by NAU's Sisk Lab and Prescott College to compare types of grazing impacts to land; comprehensive Holistic Ecosystem Health Indicator (HEHI) survey and monitoring program, including establishment of 85 long-term ecological monitoring transects; forest and grassland health research by NAU Forestry Department.

6) **Roads and Recreation:** Needed to monitor and control effects of heavy recreation impacts. The Operations team coordinates with Recreation specialists.

Types of work done includes: An off highway vehicle (OHV) study and large meetings held in cooperation with local mountain bike, motorcycle groups and Forest Service. A Recreation Planning Process Panel (RecP3) funded by the National Forest Foundation.

7) **Land Use Planning:** Needed to assure rural lands receive planning to promote and sustain long-term values. The Operations Team coordinates with agency planners.

Types of work done includes: A Rural Planning Area (RPA) plan document developed under State Statute and in coordination with Coconino County to address alternatives for sustainability and stewardship issues, including protection of open space values; planning for development of wind energy farms; exploration of ecological services Diablo Trust can provide society.

8) **Education:** Needed to inform and involve diverse publics of all ages. An Education working group coordinates this work.

Types of works done include: Production of a one-hour interactive video and curriculum notebook produced in cooperation with NAU TV for grades 6-12, and presentation to many area schools, including several field trips; production of brochures and fact sheets.

9) **Artists:** Needed to involve creative interests of hundreds of people in appreciation of diverse resource values. An Artist working group coordinates activities.

Types of works done include: Over 100 visual, literary, and performing artists have participated in 2004, 2007 and the upcoming 2009 "Reflections on the Land" programs which have culminated in exhibits at the NAU's Art Museum.

Notable Awards

USDA Forest Service 2006 National Rangeland Management Award

"In recognition of your outstanding efforts to promote sound rangeland stewardship on the Coconino National Forest"

National Cattlemen's Beef Association 2006 Regional Environmental Stewardship Award & 2006 National Award Finalist

"In recognition of your outstanding stewardship practices and conservation achievements protecting the environment, improving fish and wildlife habitats, and leaving the land in better shape for future generations while also inspiring the next generation of land stewards"

Arizona Cattlemen's Association 2006 Environmental Stewardship Award

"In recognition of your outstanding contribution to environmentally beneficial stewardship of natural resources"

Natural Areas Association 2006 Carl N. Becker Stewardship Award

"The Diablo Trust confronted several seemingly intractable issues and used the diverse skills of its membership and an open approach to consensus-building to identify solutions to protection of wildlife habitat on the Colorado Plateau. We acknowledge the dedication and sustained commitment of the Diablo Trust which has insured that thousands of acres of habitat will sustain viable wildlife populations for the enjoyment of future generations of Americans. In building effective conservation partnerships, the Diablo Trust serves as an example to other groups of what can be accomplished by working together in support of conservation. The Natural Areas Association 2006 Carl N. Becker Stewardship Award honors the dedication, commitment, vision and leadership of the Diablo Trust to conservation and stewardship of natural areas."

Arizona Association for Environmental Education 2004 Organization Award

"In recognition of valuable contributions to Creating Land Stewardship in Northern Arizona"

Arizona Farm Bureau 2003 Environmental Award

NAU Center for Sustainable Environments' Treasure Keeper Award

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Award, 1998

"In recognition of your efforts to protect and preserve the environment."

National Partnership for Reinventing Government Laboratory

"The Diablo Trust is hereby designated a Reinvention Laboratory to demonstrate innovative approaches to restoring and maintaining the natural processes that create and protect a healthy, unfragmented landscape to support a diverse, flourishing community of human, plant and animal life in the Diablo Trust Land Area. Through mutual support and cooperation with the local community to insure the future of:

- Sustainable long-term health of the natural resources
- Sustainable rural economies from natural resources management
- A community-based forum for resolution of resource issues
- Recognition of the landowner/producer as a keystone in the long-term health of natural resources, the production of food, and stability of the community
- A productive and appealing environment

All federal agencies are requested to cooperate with the Diablo Trust within the constraints of statute as set forth in the President's memorandum to all executive departments and agencies dated April 21, 1998."

Diablo Canyon Rural Planning Area (RPA) Awards

Arizona Governor's 2006 Excellence in Rural Development

In the Economic Development category for "Innovative Economic Development Practices"

Western Planners Association Sheldon D. Gerber Merit Award for Excellence in Environmental Planning, 2006

Diablo Canyon Rural Planning Area: Evolving Traditions in a New Economy
Bar T Bar and Flying M Ranches, The Diablo Trust, and Coconino County
"For Outstanding Achievements in Environmental Planning"

Arizona Planning Association Award