

GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
February 8, 2018

The February 8, 2018 Gunnison Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Tourism Committee (STORC) meeting was conducted in the Gunnison County Blackstock Government Center, 2nd floor meeting room, located at 221 N. Wisconsin #D, Gunnison, CO 81230.

Committee Members Present:

Voting Members:

John Messner, Chair, Gunnison County Commissioner
Kevin Alexander, Vice Chair. Professor of Biology WSCU
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Commissioner
Erica Mueller, Crested Butte Mountain Resort
Christi Hicks, Crested Butte Nordic
Chris Parameter, CPW
Ben Breslauer, GOATS
Elijah Waters, BLM Field Manager
Frank Kugel, Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District
Joellen Fonken, Gunnison Nordic
Matthew McCombs, USFS District Ranger
Dave Ochs, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails
Kristi Murphy, Bureau of Land Management
Noel Durant, Crested Butte Land Trust
Paul Merck, Crested Butte Town Council
Navid Navidi, Gunnison community member and business owner
Scott Borden, Graduate Faculty at WSCU
John Norton, Crested Butte Tourism Association
Bruce Noble, National Park Service
Nicholas Kempin, Town of Mt. Crested Butte
Mallory Logan, Gunnison City Council

Staff Members Present:

Cathie Pagano, Director of Community and Economic Development
Rachel Sabbato, Planner II

CALL TO ORDER:

Messner called the February 8, 2018 meeting of the Gunnison Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Tourism Committee to order at 2:00 P.M.

Approval of Minutes:

Navid Navidi submit changes via e-mail which were addressed in digital copy.

Review of Revised Goals and Identification of Top Priorities by Committee:

Pagano explained that she provided an updated version of the STOR Committee Strategic Plan to the group via e-mail, earlier that day. The plan included the top-rated priorities for each of the four goals based on the committee members' votes. Pagano explained that committee members were e-mailed two documents; one with each goal and its top priorities, and one which included all priorities, allowing committee members to see which items were removed. Pagano asked that the committee confirm the chosen priorities to ensure they are reflective of the group's desires and capacity. Additionally, Pagano suggested that the group discuss which agencies/organization should commit to being the team lead for each goal. Based off the structure, the group can then work through the necessary implementation strategies.

Pagano concluded by recommending that the committee avoids deep discussion on each priority, and instead approach the discussion as an overview at this time. Durant asked what the group's time horizon is for the strategic plan. Pagano confirmed that it can be flexible, but could be three years. She added that the time frame discussion will be re-visited.

Goal 1: Ensure the Valley's tourism sector of the economy is resilient, vibrant, and supports our community values.

The committee briefly discussed whether to keep "tourism" in the goal. Pagano suggested leaving it because the Committee is not considering economy as a whole. The group agreed to keep "tourism" in the phrase.

The top three rated priorities included:

- 1. By (date), support and enhance a sustainable, diverse and adaptable array of tourism and recreation offerings and opportunities.**

Messner asked if the definition of "product" should be considered as the activity/experience, or as an amenity? The group discussed the concept of a product versus an amenity and how the quality of an *experience* is shaped by the *amenities* available to users. Hicks questioned whether the committee's previous discussion on the valley's ability to offer multiple activities, relates to this topic. Houck stated that we are unable to be all things to all people, and that there is a need to focus on what amenities we can provide. Therefore, he suggested the committee focus on determining what those amenities are, and what we need to do them well. Navidi suggested that certain uses, such as mountain biking, may be more valued by the upper valley, and that the sustainability of amenities focused on by the group should align with the needs of both ends of the valley.

Parmeter suggested adding the word "adaptable" to the goal to address one of the priorities which was left out.

- 2. By (date), connect Western students as year-round community members.**

Pagano noted that this priority was very popular and voted for by many committee members. Logan explained that the Gunnison Vibrancy Initiative (GVI) has identified a strong need to connect the Western student body to downtown. The GVI, Logan explained, is currently in the design phase and working towards establishing a more direct, physical connection from campus to downtown. This connection could include improvements such as lighting. Muller added that Western is currently working on their Strategic Plan, which includes enhancing its community involvement. Pagano asked the committee if they felt this priority is a good fit. Kugler recommended replacing the word “customer” with a community-related term. The committee agreed on using, “community members”.

3. By (date), develop a comprehensive branding and wayfinding strategy for County recreation amenities, as measured by:

Messner explained his rationale for wanting to pursue this priority stemmed from the need to assist visitors and to help direct them to areas that can sustain visitation numbers. Currently, Messner added, there is no collective wayfinding platform. Norton suggested that certain activities, such as fishing, are challenging to adequately apply boundaries to. Logan added that there are currently multiple but individual messaging efforts being pursued by organizations and that a need exists to combine them. Pagano noted that the need to develop a community calendar was folded into another priority.

Cathie listed the priorities that were not included and the committee agreed it was comfortable with the format. The committee briefly discussed methods for folding some of the left out priorities into other goals and priorities.

Goal 2: Foster a resident and visitor culture that demonstrates respect for our community, culture and environmental stewardship.

1. By (date) the STOR Committee will communicate a consistent sustainability and stewardship message, including elements of Mountain Manners, SHIFT principles, Stay the Trail, and Leave No Trace, as measured by:

Borden noted that Western students can be used to help address and accomplish this goal. A committee member suggested including, “Stay the Trail” principals. The committee briefly discussed the importance and challenges that will come with combining stewardship messaging of all agencies and groups to brand as STOR’s own while also still upholding other’s messaging.

2. By (date), the STOR Committee will have a thorough understanding of current efforts of all stakeholders.

Pagano listed the priorities left out and the committee agreed on the chosen priorities.

Goal 3: Support collaboration between federal land agencies, local government, nonprofit and user groups to improve management of recreation and natural resources.

1. By (date), create a funding plan and budgeting for STOR Committee projects.

2. **By (date), STOR Committee members will continue to engage at state and federal level to advocate for our community on related funding and policy decisions.**
3. **By (date), a page on County's STOR Committee website will be created which includes a clearinghouse of plans and proposals, related to outdoor recreation (federal, state, local, nonprofit, etc.).**
4. **By (date), establish coordination and collaboration for special events in Gunnison County.**

Pagano reviewed the priorities left out and the committee agreed on the chosen priorities.

The committee discussed pay to play mechanisms being implemented nationally. Examples of such were given by several committee members. It was noted that the No Fee Coalition is based in Colorado. McCombs added that the process to request such mechanisms can be very challenging politically, but that the USFS is looking for demonstration projects with broad-based support on lands administered by the USFS and BLM. Noble explained that the NPS is in a very different situation and is being encouraged to increase park fees. Murphy concluded that the pay to play discussion has been a hot topic and is worth re-visiting.

Goal 4: Be proactive in management of private and public natural and recreation assets to minimize degradation and enhance quality.

1. **By (date), develop management, maintenance, and implementation plan for recreation infrastructure to ensure a sustainable and high-quality experience.**

The committee reviewed the overlap of priority #1 with priority #4 and considered the potential for them to be approached as one. Pagano also asked whether the same group should be tasked with both priorities. Pagano added that the need to implement the 2016 Master Plan was moved to a bullet point for this priority.

2. **By (date), update and implement 2016 Trails Commission Master Plan to include updated priorities and winter trails.**

The committee briefly discussed how the consideration of winter travel logistics change how the committee approaches this priority.

3. **By (date), conduct analytical assessment of natural resources and recreation and carrying capacity of County.**

The need to establish baseline measures to better understand what is currently available was discussed amongst the committee. Several committee members noted that this will likely require heavy lifting. A committee member noted that without understanding the carrying capacity, we will not know when to apply the breaks or accelerator in regards to use. Messner asked how we envision determining the carrying capacity. McCombs noted that, in his experience, carrying capacity studies are often quickly suppressed by human and social pressures and that they seem to have the most success for managing areas such as rivers where permits can be used. Messner also asked whether this effort could tie into STOR's marketing and way-finding tools by suggesting that such a process could identify where we need to direct our resources. The committee discussed other ways in which carrying capacity study results could

be used. Houck asked if amenities should be addressed before carrying capacity, and noted that we must consider the impacts of adding infrastructure to a natural environment to prevent an area from being over built. It was added that there is a tipping point where too much infrastructure takes away from the experience. Noble added that the NPS is in a political spotlight to maximize visitation numbers, and that the issue of carrying capacity vs. providing a positive user experience is two-part. Messner stressed the need to evaluate areas in our region based on high, medium and low use levels. Navidi suggested that the Valley has had enough marketing and could benefit from less. Ochs asked if evaluating high and low use areas is something that can be done by individual committee members for their respective trails/land. McCombs added that there is likely enough anecdotal knowledge in the room to inform the group as a whole on what infrastructure is needed to uphold quality experiences for locals and visitors.

- 4. By (date), prepare a recreation infrastructure assessment and implementation plan identifying recreation assets in Gunnison County and gaps and/or needs in those assets, along with alignment of those needs with other priorities in this Strategic Plan.**

Pagano listed the priorities left out and suggested ways for them to be folded into the existing priorities. The committee discussed the need for enhanced enforcement and how it relates to broader stewardship education. A committee member asked if there is a need to develop funding to help agencies meet their enforcement needs. The committee briefly discussed the state of Mountain Manners and noted that it may not be as readily available as previously thought. McCombs explained that the USFS cannot afford temporary, seasonal employees to help with enforcement, but asked if funds could be directed towards the Crested Butte Conservation Corps' (CBCC) effort. It was agreed on by several committee members that a human presence on the land is a very transformative tool. Pagano asked if this issue aligns more with goal #2, for stewardship goals.

The National Forest Foundation was suggested as a strong potential partner for STOR as the committee moves towards defining its goals and objectives that will require financial resources. The committee discussed how the Recreation Master Plan could tie into the current USFS and BLM plans. It was noted that no additional resource plans will be started until 2020. Murphy added that it is key for BLM to move towards a common vision, and that flexibility will be key to avoiding planning themselves into a corner. Additionally, Murphy noted that there are other interests not represented in this room that may not be compatible with our plan, which underlines the need to remain flexible.

The committee agreed that overlaying all master plans is intimidating and will be complex, but is necessary. Pagano added that Hugh Osborn's assistance may be needed.

The meeting concluded with the presentation of BLM's Volunteer of the Year Award to the Gunnison Nordic Club.

The meeting adjourned at 3:50 pm