

GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 9th, 2018

The August 9th, 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
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Commissioner
Dave Ochs, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association
Christi Hicks, Crested Butte Nordic
Bruce Noble, National Park Service
Ben Breslauer, GOATS
Kevin Alexander, Professor of Biology WSCU
Frank Kugel, Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District
Matt McCombs, USFS District Ranger
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails
Noel Durant, Crested Butte Land Trust
Navid Navidi, Gunnison community member and business owner
Chris Parmeter, Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Kristi Murphy, Bureau of Land Management
Mallory Logan, Gunnison City Council

Others in Audience:

Marlene Crosby
Ashley Hom
Molly Susla
Glo Cunningham
Dave Weins

Staff Members Present:

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

Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve minutes:

Upon Motion made by Frank Kugel and seconded by Tim Kugler, the Committee voted all in favor to approve the following:

Voted:

That the STOR Committee hereby approves the Minutes of the meetings of the STOR Committee held on July 12th, 2018.

Kevin explained that two guest speakers will join the group; Emily Olsen with the National Forest Foundation and Dean Winstanley, with Volunteers for Outdoors Colorado (VOC).

Emily Olsen, Colorado Programs Manager for National Forest Foundation (NFF)

Emily shared a slideshow with the committee, titled: Developing a Gunnison County Stewardship Fund.

Emily provided a high level overview of the NFF model. She noted that it was chartered by Congress in 1993 and stands as the only national level organization dedicated entirely to national forests and grasslands. The organization receives funding from Congress through federal appropriations and its focus is to build collaborative relationships with a heavy focus on on-the-ground projects. Emily added that NFF has over twenty years of experience managing projects.

Nationally, NFF has just under 30 staff members and Emily is the sole Colorado staff representative. Emily added that their model allows them to work nation-wide because of their reliance on local community governments, non-profits, and National Forest offices. They frequently take on the role of general contractor to fund and implement projects and work to engage volunteers.

NFF Stewardship Fund: Emily explained the most popular NFF stewardship fund is the ski-conservation fund. In this scenario, NFF partners with ski resorts that operate on land administered by the National Forest. Typically, a voluntary donation is included on resort bills. However, Emily noted that every partnership is different and that there is room for flexibility. The NFF collects the funds and are matched \$0.50. NFF and sometimes the ski resorts work to find the best structure for granting the funds raised back to the community. Emily added that Colorado has had the most success with NFF's ski conservation fund. The White River National Forest is one of the most successful areas and has partnered with several resorts in Eagle County. Emily briefly reviewed fund statistics from multiple partners.

Why Important: Emily stressed the need for communities to develop diverse and consistent funding sources, especially in a time with steadily increasing use.

Gunnison Specific: Matt McCombs explained that he contacted Emily to discuss the potential of NFF playing out in Gunnison. Since then, Emily has met with County Commissioners and other local leaders to discuss whether the NFF model and mission would be a good fit for the community. These conversations, she explained, led to the Gunnison County Stewardship Fund. Emily emphasized that this model would be something new for NFF and if prioritized could potentially launch in 2019. She explained that potential partners could consist of local businesses, guides and of course the national appropriations.

Fund Governance and Decision Making: Emily explained that questions around governance and decision making came up immediately. The stewardship fund would be unique, including how the funds are allocated. Based off of conversations, Emily believes it makes sense for the decision making of fund allocation to be local. Typically, the decisions are made by NFF and the partner resorts. Emily proposed the concept of STOR being the decision making body. With this in mind, Emily asked for feedback on what STOR's role and/or involvement could be. She provided several examples; STOR serving as a project selection committee, or, ensuring that there are STOR representatives on the selection committee in addition to other contributors/partners. Emily underlined the fact that involving STOR could make for a very transparent process.

2018 Pilot Project: Emily used the West Maroon Pass trailhead improvements as a pilot project, noting that it showcased the type of work that could be implemented through the stewardship fund. The project, she explained, will occur in the Fall of 2018 and has been made possible by pledges from several local organizations, including in-kind work by the USFS.

Emily asked the committee for feedback and questions.

STOR Committee Questions:

Navid: Will the funds be available to Gunnison on an annual basis?

Emily: Ideally, it would be an annual fund in perpetuity.

Frank: Does NFF work only on USFS lands?

Emily: Typically, yes, but sometimes where there is adjacent public land. However, typically, the funds are not used for private lands.

Noel: To clarify, what about publically accessible private lands? Emily said she will have to get further clarification on this.

Chris: Do funds have to be used on USFS lands specifically?

Emily: Projects need to be in USFS scope of work, but there is room for determining how this can be adjusted.

Kevin: Asked for clarity on the voluntary donations from businesses.

Emily: Donations could be collected for several different entities. Some groups prefer to make an annual contribution, however, the model typically works best as an opt-out donation. It really depends on the business, added Emily. Right now, they are most focused on outfitters and guides, as well as ski resort. Emily added that they would avoid going to businesses that are already strong partners with 1% for Open Space.

Matt: Gunnison has a very large guide and outfitter program, and there is a huge opportunity to leverage that with visitor's contributions to a stewardship fund. There should be a focus on groups that are most reliant on USFS lands.

Christi: What would the donation model look like? For example, would it be \$1 per trip, or, \$1 per receipt?

Emily: It really depends, but there is a lot of room for flexibility in the mechanics. Again, it ultimately comes down to what works best for the business/outfitter.

Christi: How might NFF interface with the mission and model of 1% for Open Space?

Emily: The two entities should connect outside of conference, but thinks there is room for both missions to play out.

Molly Susla: How much does NFF plan to match?

Emily: If we were to partner with CBMR, it would be a guaranteed 50 cent match on every \$1 collected. This is not guaranteed for other businesses. What they are able to match for other local businesses would have to be an annual discussion.

Tim: Are our outfitters/guide services diverse enough to cover all issues we need to address?

Emily: She believes so, and thinks there would be a diverse slate of projects implemented each year that across different recreational uses and land uses. Emily has mentioned idea of STOR being decision making body with guides/outfitters represented on the committee.

Matt: In his experience, the funds have been used for a variety of projects, from watershed health, to restoration work and trails.

Kristi Murphy: How broadly are we using “adjacent lands”? Gunnison is largely surrounded by BLM. Therefore, is this fund truly a USFS fund, or is it a County-wide fund?

Emily: The focus would be on National Forest lands, but they’ve always said they could fund projects on land adjacent to USFS land. There is not a set boundary.

Matt: He would be happy to encourage NFF to fund projects on adjacent, non-USFS lands.

Noel: Asked for clarity on how NFF works to “increase non-profit capacity,” as was listed in one of Emily’s slides.

Emily: When a group or organization submits a grant, it could include necessary staff time (for an on-the-ground project). So, this would mean supporting the staff time for a project.

Frank: Where can we see what has been implemented elsewhere via NFF partnerships?

Emily: She can provide a link to Cathie that shows examples of NFF projects implemented elsewhere.

Cathie: How exactly are the funds allocated after the first \$100,000?

Emily: Because the funds raised in the White River National Forest were above \$100,000, they developed a competitive granting process. However, that does not mean that the Gunnison stewardship fund would be tied to the same model. Funds could be distributed through a granting process, or be ranked. Ultimately, Emily noted that there is flexibility for how it could be structured.

Mallory: Does the USFS have a current maintenance schedule?

Matt: Yes, and much has gone unmaintained due to lack of capacity.

Glo: She feels reassured after hearing more about the NFF model and would like to continue to learn more about the process before it's finalized.

Christi: What percent of funds collected here go back to projects?

Emily: At least 85% of funds collected go back to projects. Some fees are needed to cover NFF's administrative costs. Of course, Emily stressed that the local community should also discuss this structure.

Cathie: What next steps should STOR take in this process?

Emily: The STOR committee should discuss what they would like their role to be in the process. Emily offered to provide monthly updates on the development of the stewardship fund.

Cathie suggested re-visiting the topic at the September meeting.

Dean Winstanley, CO Outdoor Stewardship Coalition & Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC), Director of Statewide Stewardship.

Also visiting with Dean was Dan Williams, VOC's Senior Projects and Trainings Manager.

Dean explained that VOC has worked and partnered with the Gunnison Valley in the past. Today, they are here to discuss their work to enhance stewardship efforts. VOC started as a trail club and is now the largest state-wide volunteer stewardship organization. They have 12 fulltime employees based in Denver and help execute almost 100 projects a year. Dean added that he supports the efforts of NFF and noted that they are a fantastic funding source.

Dean explained that his reason for visiting today is to discuss how the work of VOC could potentially interface with STOR. He explained that the CO Outdoor Stewardship Coalition was developed 10 years ago and that VOC serves as the convener of the coalition. More recently, research has underlined the need to enhance the stewardship movement in Colorado, and the coalition has been working to implement a number of steps to do so based off of a recent capacity study. The need for increased stewardship work has been prioritized in GOCO's 5-year strategic plan, which is encouraging. Dean explained that \$100,000 was given to VOC from GOCO to determine how VOC can help build capacity on the front end to grow volunteer stewardship capacity. GOCO asked that VOC include ideas for how they

can demonstrate what large-scale projects exist in Colorado, one of which was STOR's proposal. GOCO has \$1.2 million allocated for the large-scale projects and decisions will be made in December. Dean added that it has taken GOCO longer than anticipated to determine what measurements will be used to determine a grant's success.

Cathie added that GOCO didn't necessarily want to fund another on-the-ground project, rather a programmatic/structural approach to stewardship work. The committee continued to discuss VOC's approach to expanding their programming to help increase volunteer capacity in areas. Dean explained VOC's Volunteer and Partnership Coordinator position that they implemented in the San Louis Valley, and asked if the committee felt that such programming would be helpful here. Dean added that training programs can be offered for crew leaders, ecological restoration work, project management and more.

Dean explained that GOCO recently passed a Board resolution enabling them to fund work on public land.

Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails Request:

Tim explained to the committee that Gunnison Trails received a signed record of approval on June 20th to build and maintain ~20 miles of trail on Signal Peak. He reviewed the trails that they seek to build/maintain, including a segment of trail behind Tomichi Heights as well as the Chicken Scratch trail, which will be worked on at the October 6th Gunnison Trails Day.

Tim explained that Gunnison Trails is applying for a large construction grant through CPW's State Trails Program. He is looking for a letter of support from STOR. The most an organization can ask for is \$250,000. Tim noted that their funding request amount is still being determined. Cathie suggested that each STOR representative would probably want to receive sign-off from their individual entities and or Board of Directors. Tim noted that the grant is due on October 1st.

Mallory asked for a brief, five-sentence ask for STOR members to present to their entities/Boards.