

GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 13th, 2018

The September 13th, 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
Christie Hicks, Crested Butte Nordic
Sandy Snell, National Park Service
Ben Breslauer, GOATS
Kevin Alexander, Professor of Biology WSU
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
Scott Borden, Graduate Faculty at WSU
Joellen Fonken, Gunnison Nordic
Paul Merck, Crested Butte Town Council
Matt Feier, Crested Butte Mountain Resort

Others in Audience:

Chris Haarver, Crested Butte Town Council
Mel Yemma, Town of Crested Butte
Corey Wong, USFS

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 Navid Navidi and seconded by Scott Borden, 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 August 9th, 2018.

Signal Peak Trails- CPW Grant Application, Gunnison Trails

Kugler explained that Gunnison Trails plans to submit a grant request for \$225,000 to CPW's State Trails Grant program. The funding, he added, would go towards trail signage and the mapping, alignment and building seven miles of new trail at Signal Peak. Trail work would be completed by a youth corps as well as the funded Gunnison Trails youth corps. Kugler emphasized the importance of a paid trail crew and explained that they would be hired for 10 weeks in 2019 and 10 weeks in 2020. Kugler added that the BLM has requested Gunnison Trails have a weed management crew in 2019 and potentially 2020. With that, Kugler noted that he is open to suggestions for other elements worth incorporating into the grant. To conclude, Kugler reminded the group that he is looking for a letter of support from the STOR committee.

Pagano suggested that Kugler draft a letter to be signed by the committee chair, which would list the STOR member names. Kugler explained that he understands not everyone is in support of a trail system at Signal Peak, but the compromise is that the project comes with significant wildlife protections as well as it being a trail system in close proximity to Gunnison. With the grant due in two weeks, Kugler said he would be happy to draft a letter for the committee.

Navidi noted that the group he represents does not support Gunnison Trails getting the grant. He added that they were told by BLM that it would take up to 10 years for the Signal Peak trail plan to be developed. Navidi added that this grant will expedite the development of trails, which goes against what they believe is right. With this, Navidi questioned the committee's goals. Kugler noted that the grant calls for building seven miles of new trail, which is 1/3 of the proposed trails for the area. A bathroom will also be installed at Western.

Houck reminded Navidi that the original concept for Signal Peak was proposed in 2006. Now, after 12 years of debate in the community, elements of the plan were opposed by CPW, but not all. As a result, a plan has been approved that meets many concerns. He added that it was approved by a transparent, public process. Houck added that elements of habitat protection, including sage grouse, were paid close attention to.

Navid questioned whether this committee should be involved in the letter, as it ultimately speeds up the project, which he explained is not the goal of the committee. As a representative of the Gunnison Wildlife Association, Navidi noted that his biggest concern is that once this project is developed, they will look towards developing other projects.

Houck stressed that the County seeks a spirit of compromise, and that Signal Peak represents a massive compromise for recreation. The amount of wildlife protection resulting from this project is stronger than if the plan had been denied.

Durant voiced his support of the project. He added that the Crested Butte Land Trust's mission supports both wildlife and recreation, and therefore is also in the position of having to take a balanced approach to projects.

Alexander added that he felt that the wildlife protections, in the end, were stronger than if the plan had been denied. In particular, he drew attention to the complete closure for sage grouse, and the no mechanized use in areas of big game. He added that none of this existed until the plan went through. The trail use is focused towards times when it gets the least amount of wildlife use.

McCombs asked whether the six year build out that Kugler explained sounds more reasonable to Navidi. Navidi again responded that he questions whether accepting this is in the mission of the committee. McCombs believes this project speaks to the compromise that this committee strives for. Therefore, McCombs is supportive of this committee showing support of this project. He added that it will come with back-end work, including monitoring and other small tweaks.

Hicks added that if this project is underfunded it will not achieve the objectives that Navidi's organization has against the project. If funded, the smart build out with sustainable infrastructure will be encouraged and made possible. Houck suggested having a letter of support that shows who on the committee supported it.

Motion to support general letter of support from the STOR committee for Gunnison Trail's Signal Peak grant application.

Upon Motion made by X and seconded by X. Opposed by Navid Navidi.

Motion passed.

Second motion; move to have e-mail sent to committee members not attending allowing for their support to be added to the committee's letter of support.

Upon Motion made by Scott Borden, seconded by Paul Merck.

Alexander concluded that if there are members who do not want their name on the letter, contact Pagano. Pagano will also follow-up with those not in attendance. Kugler and Pagano will work together on drafting the letter of support. It will go to the chair and vice chair for review.

Pagano suggested moving committee updates to the end of the meeting.

US Forest Service Visitor, Jason Robertson

McCombs introduced Jason Robertson, the USFS Deputy Director of Recreation, Land and Minerals for the Rocky Mountain Region. McCombs noted that Jason can speak to the USFS from a regional level and

that he has governance over fee structures and fee processes. He can also provide a policy perspective of certain processes as well as the rank and file at the district and regional levels. McCombs noted that Jason and his colleagues work on several of the challenges that occur at the congressional level. Pagano noted that the committee would have the opportunity to ask Jason questions.

Jason explained that there are five states in the Rocky Mountain region. Recreation in Colorado has access to the State's sticker fund for the OHV community. He added that it complements the work that USFS does. Jason noted that there is approximately \$5 million for trails each year and that \$3.5 million reaches the ground in Colorado. This, Jason emphasized, is a huge opportunity for Colorado.

Jason explained that interesting conversations are playing out on the front range. This is largely because Colorado is growing by 60,000 people year, and that most of that population resides on the front range. In other areas, the population is reducing. As a result, the front range recreation community is growing and recreation is occurring first within 50 miles of where someone lives. Those areas, Jason added, are well built-out. The topic of conversation now, is connectivity. Residents are starting to look to recreate within the next 50 miles out, which includes areas like Gunnison, Durango and Montrose. Wyoming is also adapting to recreation pressure from Colorado.

Jason reflected on how the recreation industry is changing; more OHV's, more mountain bikes (including e-bikes). Jason added that there have been more requests for stacked loops, and requests from outfitters and guides to lead shorter trips. Issues relating to human waste continue to grow, and more toilets are being built. Additionally, challenges relating to the homeless population on USFS administered lands are increasing. There is growth in multi-generational recreation; more diverse opportunities from camp grounds and networks of complex and easy trails. At the bottom of all of this, Jason explained, are conversations about funding. The base allocations come from congress, he added. Fees, help from volunteers, and partnerships to address capacity help address a funding gap. Jason noted that the USFS is looking for additional new ways to partner and develop skills fill the gap. Partnering with the National Forest Foundation is an option.

Jason described his position to the committee, as well as the chain of command; President, USDA Secretary, Chief of USFS, then the regional office. The regional office serves as the hour glass of information and help develop policy and budget allocation. Their goal is to help gel what Washington is asking them to do to a regional-scale. Jason tries to prioritize what he's hearing in the field and relay that to Washington. Jason supervises everything from wilderness to coal and works with local communities to share information.

Committee Questions for Jason

Navidi: How to deal with change of administration.

Jason: Jason explained that recreation is a very non-partisan issues.

Messner- Is there acknowledgement of non-partisanship to develop recreation use opposed to extractive use?

Jason: Jason noted that congress hears that the recreation community is divided and lacks a clear voice in defining what would benefit local communities. Discussed what's being done to fill the funding gap for addressing certain issues, such as wildfire mitigation.

Durant: When thinking of technological innovation and how recreation is changing, how is a multiple use entity like the USFS weighing in on communities' localized opinions?

Jason: Jason noted that it is much easier for the USFS to react if the communities let them know what they want.

Houck: The current administration is very state-rights oriented. Many folks are moving here for quality of life and recreation opportunities. What happens when state level pushes differ (i.e. one state favors extractive industries and the other favors recreation)? How is that being managed by the USFS at a regional level?

Jason: Jason noted that because recreation is non-patrician, it makes it an easy place to sit. With that, it is also the second or third priority of most folks. Colorado and Wyoming are all in on recreation. Recreation industry jobs cannot be exported and it's an industry that caters to public health goals, as well as supporting rural economies. It also brings highly skilled individuals to rural areas. Recreation, Jason explained, is broader than our five-state region and recreation hubs are developing in areas like Bentonville, Arkansas. Economies like Gunnison, with world-class OHV areas bring opportunities and challenges for management.

Houck: How to balance extraction vs. recreation wants among different states (i.e. WY and CO). Houck fears that for recreation, at the end of the day, recreation groups are under-funded and under-represented in Washington. Recreation interests are diverse, lacking one cohesive voice, therefore not getting same clout as other groups with interest in public lands.

Jason: Jason responded that there needs to be more robust data on recreation, even down to the County level. He added that there is a new national GDP element for recreation. As the Census Bureau digs more into it, they are developing more robust tools and data.

Scott Borden: Are there best practices, or other communities that Jason has seen that work, or don't work.

Jason: Jason explained that the best potential is looking across county and property lines. That's where we'll see the most growth in recreation management. Finding ways to work with neighbors to connect roads/trails, etc. They are seeing niche conflicts between recreation uses. Jefferson County is thinking more about segregating uses. Other ideas include using a central node, that then splits user groups from there. They are also experimenting with new trail designs and making use of Strava data for management purposes (realizing speed issue on decent, etc.). Additionally, the USFS has gone to REI's Adventure Project. They are using aps, to determine areas that need better management.

Fonken: The BLM uses Strava data to see which trails are being used. What does the USFS define as trails for this process?

Jason: USFS system trails (18"-50" wide). The USFS does very little in regards to winter trail management.

Pagano: What are the benefits and drawbacks to segregation of uses on trails?

Jason: Jefferson County has started to think about ways in which areas can managed to be realized as areas best for specific uses (i.e. a mountain bike zone versus hiking zone). Corey Wong noted that certain urban areas are re-thinking what user groups belong on bike paths and that this ultimately results in considering a combination of width and user speed.

Alexander: With the Vail Valley seeing a complete collapse in certain wildlife populations, has anything in particular been identified as having not worked that may have contributed to this?

Jason: There has been no definitive answer from CPW about why those populations have collapsed. There is use there, it's multi-season, but not entirely different than what's going on in the front range. Concentration vs. spreading users is always a debate. The USFS aims to manage land and habitat, but the wildlife populations are managed by the state. As USFS looks to manage hunting and fishing, it creates challenges because the state manages the resource. The USFS has game management units in Colorado. They do not align with district boundaries. This is a concern and on the radar of needing attention.

Pagano: Pagano requested for Jason to speak to fees on National Forest land. Jason said that there are a lot of fee structures around the region. A challenge that exists is that there is not a lot of support for this, but the request and therefore support needs to come from the community. They are interested in new methods for collecting fees, and there is a lot of flexibility in that realm.

Emily Olsen, National Forest Foundation

Emily explained that with help from many local groups, the West Maroon Trailhead project is moving forward. In addition to the toilet installation, educational kiosks and improvements to the parking area are being installed and made. Emily noted that she is still thinking about what STOR's role could be in the NFF partnership and that perhaps it could be on an upcoming STOR agenda.

Trust for Public Land, Community Trails Program, John Messner

Messner explained that the Trust for Public Land (TPL) had the Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYAC) reach out to Gunnison Trails, the Crested Butte Land Trust and the Town of Crested Butte to develop a list of trails that would be ready for CYCA help and TPL funding in the near future. Mel Yemma, with the Town of Crested Butte, explained that TPL has a new program, the Colorado Community Trails Program, and is looking for priority projects to help execute. Yemma worked with the Land Trust, CBMBA, the County and Gunnison Trails to develop a list of trails for prioritization. The list was provided to the STOR committee and includes two trail-systems (Gunsight Bridge to Oh-Be-Joyful and Signal Peak) and larger-scale trail projects (Kebler Pass components of the Crested Butte to Carbondale Trail).

Messner asked the STOR committee if they felt these are good trails to be included in a TPL/CYAC list. McCombs noted that they have funding to host a youth conservation corps which he could offer to leverage these funds for a project. Fonken asked if the Crested Butte to Crested Butte South trail should be included. Yemma noted that the list should focus on shovel-ready projects. Pagano suggested speaking with Marlene Crosby about the trail on Gold Basin Road.

Messner explained that Jake Houston, the recently hired Director of the Colorado Community Trails program, will be visiting the valley later this month to discuss some of the County's work and STOR's process. Jake is interested in learning if there are opportunities for TPL to fund certain projects. John and Jonathan spoke with Jake about the Crested Butte to Crested Butte South trail and Jake was very supportive of the connectivity aspect of the project. They also spoke about Tomichi Creek and Signal Peak. Messner asked if there are other trails that could use TPL/YCC funding and/or assistance. Messner believes they have \$2 million for the entire state, which could result in \$250,000 for a Gunnison/Crested Butte project. Houck noted that the Crested Butte to Crested Butte South trail checks a lot of the boxes as it is the second most year-round populated area in the County. Kugler suggested Mt. Crested Butte to Gothic as another potential project, as it is a highly trafficked road that will continue to see more use.

Sub-committee Updates

Crested Butte to Crested Butte South Trail: Fier explained that the group recently met and will meet again soon. They will likely not pursue GOCO funding, rather use in-house funds and look to apply for shovel ready grant opportunities. They are in the process of discussing preferred routes with key entities and stakeholders.

Peanut Lake Road: Durant explained that the Land Trust, County, Town and CB Nordic convened for a site visit. Since then, we've followed up with necessary land owners to discuss how to make the Peanut Lake Road experience more inclusive. A commitment from Town for \$4,000 has been made for signage, and \$7,000 from the Land Trust Alliance. The Land Trust is working with a landscape architect on how to craft a public process for the project.

Shady Island: Messner explained that next Tuesday the County will have a draft preferred plan for staff and stakeholders. Several meetings have been held to inform the project's conceptual plan. A draft plan is now being created that will be made available to the public and the Planning Commission this fall. The County will be applying for funds from the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District, Trout Unlimited, and LPOR.

Pagano may reach out to the press about STOR's work on Peanut Lake Road. She will likely hold off on the Crested Butte to Crested Butte South trail.

Houck explained that the commissioners are receiving ample comments in regards to razor use. Comments are coming from all over, including, Cimarron, Pitkin, Crested Butte, and Taylor. The main theme is that they are not preferred. Houck noted that he responds that there are appropriate areas for razors to be used, however, the level of use here is something folks are struggling with. He noted that STOR will likely be brought into the conversation. McCombs noted that the policy vs. technology is an issue. Companies are making it easier and easier for folks to acquire them and that the barrier to entry is becoming easier. The committee briefly discussed where these vehicles can be used. Pitkin requires travers to be a Colorado licensed and the razor to be street legal. However, it is not being enforced.

Future agenda items for STOR include:

Emily Olsen, National Forest Foundation

Presentation on Fees

Razor/OHV Use

Sally Wier, Volunteer and Partnerships Coordinator for VOC in San Luis Valley Public Lands Center

Jason Sibold- Professor of Geography at CSU, interested in talking to STOR about climate change and forestry as well as relevant management options.

Pagano asked the committee what they would prefer to discuss in October. Alexander suggested discussing fees. Houck noted that he is not sure Sibold's presentation is relevant due to the County's involvement with SPEDMUR. Messner would like time to discuss messaging and wayfinding. Pagano added that the County will be submitting a grant request to GOCO for Shady Island and will likely be looking for a letter of support from the group. Messner would like to put the State Park concept on a future agenda. The group also expressed interest in hearing from Sally Wier at VOC.

The meeting adjourned at 4:11 pm.