

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

The December 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:

Dave Ochs, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association
John Norton, Gunnison Crested Butte Tourism Association
Johnathan Houck, Gunnison County Commissioner
Matt McCombs, U.S. Forest Service District Ranger
Ben Breslauer, GOATS
Christie Hicks, Crested Butte Nordic
Elijah Waters, Bureau of Land Management
Kristi Murphy, Bureau of Land Management
Joellen Fonken, Gunnison Nordic
Mallory Logan, Gunnison City Council
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails
Chris Parmeter, Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Paul Merck, Crested Butte Town Council
Matt Feier, Crested Butte Mountain Resort

Others in Audience:

Sue Wallace
Molly Murphy
Mel Yemma
Laura Puckett-Daniels
Chris Haver

Staff Members Present:

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

Approval of Minutes:

The November minutes were not discussed.

Sally Wier, Volunteer & Partnerships Manager- Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC)

Pagano introduced Sally Wier, who visited from Monte Vista, CO where she works remotely for VOC. Pagano explained that the County has the opportunity to apply for funds from GOCO through their

nascent Stewardship Impact Grant. Pagano added that up to \$350,000 could be awarded to the County over a three-year period. The County's last application, that described the development and potential of STOR, was found to be very compelling by GOCO.

Wier and Dean Winstanley, VOC's Director of Stewardship, presented information to the STOR committee about VOC and in particular, Wier's role as the Volunteer and Partnerships Manager in the San Luis Valley. Winstanley explained that VOC is a non-profit organization based in Denver. Wier is currently VOC's only employee not based out of Denver and works in Monte Vista out of the Rio Grande National Forest office.

Winstanley explained that historically, VOC served as a trails club, with the majority of their budget spent on "boots-on-the-ground" projects. In recent years, their focus has expanded to include more stewardship-specific projects, including their "Stepping-up Stewardship" program. Today, VOC is the largest statewide stewardship organization in Colorado. The field-based position was developed based off of observations from COSC's Research and Impact Reports. In 2014, the "Caring for CO Public Lands" report gathered information from over 100 stewardship organizations to identify their greatest needs. The study reinforced the need to help land managers build capacity. This led VOC to establish the pilot position in the San Luis Valley.

Volunteer & Partnerships Manager details:

Wier provided detail about her specific position with VOC. She's based out of the San Luis Valley Forest Service field office and also works in alignment with the BLM's San Luis Valley field office. She functions largely as a federal employee but is employed by VOC.

Wier explained the two main hubs of her position; providing volunteer program management for the Rio Grande National Forest and San Luis Valley BLM, and working as the project lead for all VOC projects in the area. Wier noted VOC's robust platform for recruiting volunteers as well as their established structure for how on-the-ground projects are implemented. Last year, Wier helped coordinate over 30 projects, six of which were VOC projects. The majority of their work is recreation focused (trail work). Wier added that she has also helped with habitat enhancement projects, range projects (fencing), and has helped spearhead a number of citizen science projects focused on monitoring needs. Wier's position also focuses on capacity building.

Wier explained that her position was created ten years ago and she stepped into the role 1.5 years ago. At this time, Wier got to know the existing stewardship groups in the area and has become active in helping form new groups. Her work also includes grant writing to secure funding for projects.

Wier reviewed her 2018 field season projects with the committee.

- Of the six VOC projects, two were BLM and four were USFS. They included a variety of stewardship work; trail work, fence work, habitat enhancement, and two week-long wilderness projects.
- Local projects and programs consisted of timber projects, tree planting, youth-specific programming, and additional wilderness volunteer work.

Ochs asked how many volunteers they typically recruit for projects. Wier explained that for wilderness projects they are capped at 15 people, and all other projects range from 40-180. She added that they have trained crew leaders who are also volunteers.

Another key component of Wier's position is volunteer training. This includes First Aid/CPR training, cross-cut saw certifications, and chainsaw certifications. Wier also is responsible for seeking in-kind support for projects, including supplies, food and beverages and more. She noted that her role as a VOC employee enables her to seek these contributions as well as grant funding for local projects.

Lessons Learned by VOC:

Winstanley explained what VOC has learned about establishing a remote position.

- VOC recognizes each community is unique with its own politics, partners and needs. Therefore, it's very important for VOC to let a community's needs drive their programming.
- Develop a clear and realistic work plan for the VOC staff person to ensure their role is clearly communicated to local partners.
- This is not an entry level position. While technical skills can be learned, the individual must be a self-starter, diplomatic, and have strong project management skills. They must have the ability to work with long-standing organizations already doing great work.
- They must have functional office space with a local partner.
- A reasonable funding plan must be developed for the position that takes into account the direct and indirect costs. Wier has a 5-year plan with the BLM, USFS and VOC.

Winstanley noted that there was a former VOC position in Salida and that it now operates under the Colorado Mountain Club and BLM office.

Committee Questions:

Q: Does Wier work on lands that are not USFS/BLM?

A: She does not and it can sometimes be an issue. Her role is for stewardship on public lands.

Q: How do they recruit volunteers?

A: Two primary methods. For VOC projects, the VOC online registration platform is utilized. For local projects, they recruit volunteers via networking and partnering with existing organizations. Winstanley explained that VOC has a detailed database for tracking volunteer needs and targets. The efforts are also supported by VOC's outreach coordinator in Denver.

Q: What is the average age of volunteers?

A: Recently, they have started to see more volunteers in their 20's. They also work with many senior citizen volunteers. Wier added that she has worked with an age range of 19-90. She added that they also host family-oriented projects and that their male to female ration is typically 50/50. This past year, VOC ran a new, experimental woman only project.

Pagano asked the committee if developing a similar position in Gunnison County is something they feel is needed. She added that VOC is interested in helping fund the position. Wier added that the bulk of her position is funded by BLM and the USFS, and a small portion (~20%) by VOC. Winstanley noted that funding ratios for these positions can be developed based off of a community's needs.

McCombs noted that USFS has no shortage of need for this type of help, especially for wilderness areas and trail networks outside of where they already receive help from CBMBA and Gunnison Trails. He added that he believes there could be an agency contribution to this, as was done in the San Louis Valley for Wier's position. The committee agreed that there would be potential for the position to help build capacity from the Gunnison County Stewardship Fund. It was agreed that the role could work *with* the existing and well-supported volunteer groups (CBMBA and Gunnison Trails). Houck agreed that there is no shortage of work for this role to tackle. He added that there is no one-size fits-all concept, and that this is an opportunity for our area to address many of the issues underlining STOR's development.

Pagano explained that they're being encouraged to apply for the GOCO grant. She added that \$1 million is available that GOCO is looking to disperse among three diverse models that improve and increase stewardship capacity. They are looking for a landscape-scale proposal. She suggested that developing a stewardship coordinator position could be a good fit.

The committee discussed the potential for a STOR supported, broad-based funding mechanism that includes more entities than just our public land agencies. Houck noted that there are other trail user populations that may not necessarily fit within our established groups, like equestrian users. Winstanley emphasized that if the position were to be established with help from the GOCO Stewardship Impact Grant, the County and STOR need to show how it would build capacity in addition to the existing groups.

Murphy noted that BLM has more projects than volunteers, including sagebrush restoration work, and shooting range clean-up. Sue Wallace asked how other "do-gooders," like Mountain Manners, could benefit from the funds. Pagano explained that established funding for STOR, like NFF, is still forthcoming. As of now, STOR has no money. Wallace explained that she and Molly Murphy are fundraising for Mountain Manners and looking for ways to build capacity for all entities. Wier explained how her work often involves incorporating groups like Mountain Manners. Logan asked who is responsible for hiring the coordinator. Wier explained that when she was hired, there were multiple people on her hiring panel, including representatives from VOC, USFS, and BLM. McCombs added that they attempted to launch this position in Eagle and that it didn't go well. He stressed that it is a unique position requiring a unique personality.

Waters questioned if the new position would impact the funding of other organizations. Hicks noted that if it's expanded beyond public lands she feels it could be a full-time position. The committee discussed how the position would need to be modeled to avoid stepping on toes. Laura Puckett-Daniels noted the need to be very intentional about building the position to increase capacity and avoid redundancy. She also suggested the committee consider how the position would be funded beyond the GOCO grant period.

The following individuals offered to assist Pagano in fleshing out the details around what this position and program could look like; Laura Puckett-Daniels, Hedda Peterson, Tim Kugler, and Kristi Murphy.

Sally Wier's phone number is: 1 (719) 852-6234.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.