

**GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
February 14, 2019**

The February 14, 2019 Gunnison Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Tourism Committee (STORC) meeting was conducted in the Gunnison County Blackstock Government Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room, located at 221 N. Wisconsin #D, Gunnison, CO 81230.

**Committee Members Present:**

Voting Members:

Ben Breslauer, GOATS  
Joellen Fonken, Gunnison Nordic  
Dave Ochs, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association  
Chris Parmeter, Colorado Parks and Wildlife  
Kevin Alexander, Professor of Biology, WCU  
Matt McCombs, U.S. Forest Service  
Bruce Noble, National Park Service  
Steve Guerrieri, Gunnison Stockgrowers Association  
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails  
Paul Merck, Crested Butte Town Council  
Frank Kugel, Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District  
Matt Feier, Crested Butte Mountain Resort  
Noel Durant, Crested Butte Land Trust  
Christie Hicks, Crested Butte Nordic  
Kristi Murphy, Bureau of Land Management  
Malory Logan, Gunnison City Council  
John Norton, Gunnison-Crested Butte Tourism Association  
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Commissioner  
Sue Wallace, Mountain Manners

**Staff Members Present:**

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

**Approval of Minutes:**

Pagano noted that she addressed edits suggested by committee members.

**Motion to approve minutes:**

**Upon Motion made by X** and seconded by Paul Merck, the Committee voted all in favor to approve the following:

**Voted:**

That the STOR Committee hereby approves the Minutes of the meeting of the STOR Committee held on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

## **Election of Officers, Chair and Vice-Chair**

The committee discussed the timing and need to elect a new Chair and Vice-chair. Officer expectations include attending meetings, helping facilitate and organize meetings, working together with County staff, and help ensure the committee is working towards achieving their goals. The Vice-chair is expected to help facilitate the meeting when the Chair is absent. Pagano added that she will outline meeting agendas for their approval. Kevin Alexander was nominated to serve as committee Chair and Noel Durant was nominated as Vice-chair.

### **Motion to nominate officers:**

**Upon Motion made by X** and seconded by Paul Merck, the Committee voted all in favor to approve the following:

#### **Voted:**

That the STOR Committee hereby elects Kevin Alexander as Chair and Noel Durant as Vice-chair of the STOR Committee.

## **Overview of STOR Committee and Onboarding for New Members**

### **Onboarding-**

Pagano explained the committee's new appointments, including the re-appointments of Joellen Fonken, Noel Durant and Tim Kugler. She added that Sue Wallace was newly appointed. Wallace introduced herself, explaining that she worked for the Crested Butte Wildflower Festival for 11 years and is now mostly volunteering her time to get Mountain Manners back on its feet. Pagano noted that Navid Navidi, who represented Gunnison Sportsmen, decided not to re-apply.

### **STOR Committee Overview-**

Houck provided an overview of how the STOR committee developed. To start, he noted the increase of all types of use across public lands throughout Gunnison County. The need was recognized for the long-standing Trails Commission to address a broader scope of issues, and other models were considered. An approach was needed that could accommodate conversations around the myriad of uses that interface with public lands. Houck added that there are lots of good practices occurring locally, but mostly independently of each other. He noted the need to also include nexus lands, like Land Trust land in the conversation. This understanding, further influenced by what was learned from the One Valley Prosperity Project (OVPP), led the County Commissioners to advocate for the development of STOR in their strategic plan.

Houck explained that the need to bring everyone together was further underlined by the fact that federal land managers do not write their own budgets. By bringing everyone together, there's an ability to leverage resources. There was also a need to manage these efforts in a way that touched on stewardship and sustainability. Houck added that STOR also presents an opportunity to find long-term funding opportunities for the work its members want to do, as the model brings strong collaboration and has already received recognition at the state level.

Houck concluded that at the Commissioners' latest strategic retreat, the STOR committee was confirmed as a top-tier priority. He added that Pagano's staff does a lot to keep it afloat and securing a sustainable funding stream for STOR is now being pursued.

## **Review of Strategic Plan Priorities and Possible Changes/Updates**

Pagano shared a PowerPoint with the committee that reviewed STOR's development and priorities. The committee discussed the progress made towards each goal.

The Sustainable Tourism and Recreation (STR) Task Force met in 2016 to develop the STR strategic plan. Four goals were created as part of the plan. The goals were based off community values identified during the OVPP process.

### **Goal 1: Ensure the Valley's tourism sector of the economy is year-round, vibrant and supports our community's values.**

Pagano asked if Norton had any had any comments in regards to goal 1. Norton felt the tourism sector was making positive steps towards meeting this goal.

### **Goal 2: Foster a resident and visitor culture that demonstrates respect for our community, culture and environment.**

Fonken noted not wanting to dilute the recent mapping work done by the Tourism Association in this effort. Pagano suggested Sue Wallace join this sub-committee and explained that county staff, Rachel Sabbato, will work with the sub-committee to help progress their work and needs. Logan also volunteered to help with the committee's work.

Hicks explained that the new winter layer for the CBG Trails app is available, *and* free. The app is interactive and shows motorized and non-motorized trails/routes. It extends all the way to Hartmans. It also notes allowable use types on the trails/routes, such as fat bikes. Hicks stressed that this is a valuable asset for the Valley with all winter recreation information in once place. Norton added that they have the ability to add a cattle icon in areas to educate users and prevent ranching/recreation conflict (i.e. steer recreationists away from cattle drives). Guerrieri explained that the U.S. Forest Service has the information pertaining to their grazing permits. It was also noted that event information, such as the time and location of a bike race, could be added to the app. The committee briefly discussed the ability to add the location of dispersed campsites to the app.

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

#### **NFF & the Gunnison Stewardship Fund-**

McCombs explained the Gunnison Stewardship Fund and National Forest Foundation (NFF) partnership. NFF is the U.S. Forest Services' congressionally chartered non-profit partner. Stewardship Funds have been established by NFF across the country, the most successful model being their ski conservation fund. In Gunnison, a new approach is being taken. Due to the high number of outfitters and guides in the region, there is an opportunity for those entities to collect voluntary donations from clients which would be directed to the Gunnison Stewardship Fund. Examples of partner outfitters/guides include Three Rivers and Eleven.

McCombs continued by explaining STOR's ability to serve as the NFF selection committee. The selection committee would be tasked with discussing where NFF Stewardship Funds are raised and invested. Emily Olsen, the NFF CO Program Leader, has been working with the County to develop this partnership. Alexander noted that a sub-committee was formed to help with this development and that 4-5 STOR committee members volunteered to be on the selection committee. McCombs added that he has suggested to NFF that the boundary be pushed for how those funds are invested, including the ability to invest in nexus lands to USFS administered land.

Pagano noted that local groups can apply for funds for a variety of projects, including recreational improvements, wildlife habitat projects, citizen science initiatives, outreach campaigns, and more. Additionally, as a community committee, STOR can decide on strategic investments that may require additional funds. Pagano noted that Eagle County has a ski conservation fund in partnership with NFF which generates ~\$390,000 annually (with Vail Resorts as their only partner). She stressed the importance of this opportunity to generate a local revenue stream paid for by the visitors.

Wallace asked who will administer the program. McCombs answered that it would be administered by NFF. Pagano explained that they hope to have enough funding this year to solicit projects this field season, as funds will be collected from committed outfitters and guides this summer.

Hicks asked what Crested Butte Mountain Resort's model would be to collect funds. Fier noted that it is still to be determined. As of now, they collect a voluntary 1% for the Land Trust on retail and culinary sales. Wallace asked if funds are committed from CBMR yet. Pagano reiterated that they are not yet and that NFF is still in conversation with several local outfitters and guides.

#### **Fee Program on Federal Land-**

McCombs reminded the committee of the information shared from the Sedona USFS representative about their fee collection model. He reminded the committee that the development of a local fee system would have to be community-driven. He has discussed its potential with the Washington Office. He stressed that fee proposals are inherently controversial. Thankfully, they have a good model to build off of (Sedona). The USFS contacts are ready and waiting for formal community support to further pursue the effort.

The BLM noted that they have considered piggy-backing on this effort in certain areas, such as the Oh-Be-Joyful campground where they already have the fee authority for amenities. With this in place, they could pursue overnight fees, however, a day-use fee is more complex with up-front costs. Murphy noted that the Alpine Guard Station will soon be up and running and is expected to be rented year-round.

Pagano reminded the committee that fees would likely only be implemented at very busy trailheads and that funds would be spent where they're raised. Fonken noted that the Trails Commission had discussed the need for the County to develop a fee structure at the Hartman Rock base-area. Ochs noted that due to CPW's current short-fall in funding, he'd love to see a local model implemented.

Pagano explained that she will speak with Met Rec at their next meeting and that anyone is welcome to join. They have developed two recreation advisory committees for the north and south ends of the Valley. Initially, Pagano had concern over the duplicative intent that they may have with SOTR. However, after discussing the differences with Met Rec board members she believes there is the ability to align their mission with STOR's. With that said, there is a need to identify priority projects. Pagano asked if it

would be helpful to form a sub-committee to identify projects, or, use a survey. The committee discussed the best method for STOR to identify projects.

Pagano asked federal land managers if it's a reality to tackle projects on USFS/BLM land if they're determined as low hanging fruit. Parmeter noted the relevance of this conversation with the need for a map that shows existing infrastructure. McCombs underlined the "shared stewardship" approach. He understands the long-term importance of upgrading infrastructure, but it must align with all planning documents. Houck reminded the committee to also consider winter uses and needs and not simply default to summer needs.

#### **Met Rec Funds-**

Hicks reminded the committee that with 7D's passing, Met Rec was successfully de-bruced. Now, there is potential for approximately \$85,000 to be used towards recreation this year. Hicks explained how she envisions Met Rec and STOR's alignment. She continued that she considers STOR's work to concentrate outside of and on the outer-limits of our downtowns and municipal centers. Met Rec, she explained, could work from within the downtown and municipal areas and extend out to meet the recreation funding gaps and interface with STOR and other funding sources. With the de-brucing, she continued, there is an opportunity to go to the community to raise the mil levy. It is therefore important that Met Rec be used wisely.

Fonken asked if Met Rec will provide a grant cycle this year. Hicks noted that at the next Met Rec board meeting, the recreation sub-committees will provide an overview to the board on what opportunities there are, again, focused on inner-municipal work.

Nobel noted that he would be happy to engage with Goal 3 work.

#### **State Level Funds-**

Pagano explained that the County has advocated for funds at the state level via GOCO's Stewardship Impact Grant. She explained that \$1 million has been allocated by GOCO for several projects across the state. Pagano submit a draft grant application yesterday and is requesting \$350,000 for a three-year period. If awarded, the funds would help support a Stewardship Coordinator position and go towards programming support. She added that almost everyone at the table has contributed matching funds and/or a letter of support. Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) is also matching \$15,000 for the three-year period towards the Stewardship Coordinator position.

Kugel reminded the committee of the District's grant cycle, which closes on February 28<sup>th</sup>.

Pagano suggested formalizing a bi-annual meeting to identify what grants are up-coming and to help coordinate our asks. Kugler suggested a shared grant calendar. McCombs suggested getting a MEM student to help create it. Ashley Hom volunteered to help develop the grant calendar.

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

It was noted that one initial action associated with this goal was to identify funding for the Crested Butte Conservation Corps (CBCC). The thought was for this to be pursued through the GOCO grant, but the County will not hear back from GOCO until June. The grant timeline was delayed due to the Government shutdown.

## **Sub-Committee Updates**

**Peanut Lake Road-** Durant explained that the Land Trust hosted a public forum on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018. They collected ample community feedback and are now working to develop a proposal for the implementation of 2019 projects, including parking enhancements, trail improvements and signage. The County has also commit to helping with earth work.

**CB to CB South Trail-** Marlene and Fier met with key landowners over the last week. Fire explained that they had productive conversations. He added that it would help to find ways to enforce easements on other, near-by easements. Fire added that some landowners are open to revocable easements. He added that due to the amount of trespass on McCormick ranch, certain landowners are hesitant to engage in this project.

**Other-** Merck explained that Leave No Trace (LNT) has seven key principals but also develops outreach that caters to local needs. A local trail in the White River National Forest jurisdiction was selected for a LNT project after Merck submit a grant application. The committee discussed the advantages of taking a LNT training course.

Wallace asked if anyone has considered the economic development grants available through USDA. Pagano noted that if she's looking at them, it's typically for the Ice Lab and Tourism Association.

Noble noted that they have a newly formed non-profit, Friends of the Black Canyon National Park. Part of their mission is to fundraise on behalf of the park. The board and staff are based in Montrose County. Nobel suggested that he could have them present at a STOR meeting to see if their model would be helpful to hear about.

Pagano confirmed that STOR is interested in talking about UTVs at the March meeting. Additionally, a survey will be sent out to help identify priority projects. Norton asked if as part of that, we could determine what's been approved and what is still pending (i.e. Signal Peak). The committee briefly discussed the complexities of the approval process.

Pagano noted that Ashley Bembenek, who does environmental consulting work for Coal Creek Watershed Coalition, did a study on E.coli levels in the Slate Rive area. Ashley asked if she could present the work to STOR.

Kugel asked the Gunnison Stockgrowers representatives what could be done to help support their work. Guerrieri noted that education is a biggie. Wallace volunteered to contact Guerrieri at a later time to see how their needs could be incorporated into Mountain Manners' work. Pagano added that Sabbato may also reach out to Guerrieri on behalf of the Goal 1 work. Guerrieri and the other Stockgrowers representative briefly discussed the impact that informing recreationists of cattle drives could have. Potential lines of communication to ensure this happens were discussed. Murphy noted that signage is not always the answer, but that video content and multi-media outreach is needed.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM.