

**GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
April 11th, 2019**

The April 11th, 2019 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, Gunnison County Commissioners
John Norton, Gunnison Crested Butte Tourism Association
Sue Wallace, Mountain Manners
Joellen Fonken, Gunnison Nordic
Mallory Logan, Gunnison City Council
Ben Breslauer, GOATS
Roman Kolodziej, Mt. Crested Butte Town Council
Chris Haver, Town of Crested Butte Town Council
Matt Fier, Crested Butte Mountain Resort
Matt McCombs, USFS Gunnison District Ranger
Steve Guerrieri, Gunnison Stockgrowers Association
Noel Durant, Crested Butte Land Trust
Kevin Alexander, Gunnison Hunters and Anglers
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails
Chris Parmeter, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Others in Audience:

Michelle Wilk, High Country Conservation Advocates
Mel Yemma, Town of Crested Butte
Ashley Bembenek, Alpine Environmental Consultants
John Cunningham, Sun Sports Unlimited
Joni Reynolds, Health and Human Services
Arlene Edwards
Marlene Crosby, Gunnison County Public Works
George Gibson

Staff Members Present:

Cathie Pagano, Director of Community and Economic Development

Overview of UTVs and Stay the Trail Program, Molly Chiappetta

Molly Chiappetta introduced herself as the outreach coordinator for Stay the Trails (STT).

She explained that STT was born in 2003 from a small group of off-highway vehicle (OHV) enthusiasts looking to protect motorized access to public lands. This group was interested in developing a new approach to Colorado land management issues. The approach included educating the public on responsible OHV use and the development of stewardship ethic towards our public lands among OHV users. The organization produced its first educational brochure in 2005. Since then, STT has grown into a resource that the public and federal land agencies can use to educate the public on responsible natural resource protection. Their mission is, “to reinforce and highlight responsible OHV use, and to modify and mitigate irresponsible use in an effort to minimize resource damage on public land.”

Chiappetta explained that STT has fine-tuned their messaging to meet state and local needs. For example, Colorado’s public lands have become a nation-wide destination for side by sides and 4x4s, and they’ve crafted messaging to address that pattern of use. Additionally, STT’s education and outreach programming consists of presentations, a traveling educational trailer for trailheads, and educational materials such as brochures, videos and their website. Chiappetta added that their two-person crew hosts roughly 60 events each summer, including attending events like the Razor Rally in Taylor Park.

STT also assists with stewardship projects by working with land managers across the state. Chiappetta noted that STT often acts as the middle man, helping identify issues and work with applicable clubs/organizations to develop project plans and request funding. They also help land managers by convening relevant local trail groups to help with projects on USFS administered land. Examples include trail work, clean-ups, and kiosk installations. STT also initiates youth outreach to establish a land ethic early among OHV users.

Committee Questions for Chiappetta:

Sue Wallace: What metrics does STT use to ensure they’re reaching people.

Chiappetta: One way is to track orders of their free material. In 2018, they provided over 10,000 maps to different entities.

Joellen Fonken: Does STT have anything scheduled in Gunnison County this summer.

Chiappetta: STT’s first Gunnison event is scheduled for the last weekend in June. They’re also work closely with the USFS in Taylor Park. STT may also set up a booth at Safeway during the second rifle season with CPW.

John Messner: Has STT’s signage and kiosk program been utilized in Gunnison County?

Chiappetta: Unsure, but knows they did not fund any last year in Gunnison County.

Kristi Murphy: Some of the OHV issues observed on Gunnison’s public lands are associated with camping. Murphy explained that often, motorized users prefer to camp as one large group. Does STT have good information on dispersed camping and good etiquette?

Chiappetta: They do not have info specific to dispersed camping but they do share “tread lightly” information. They are limited by only being able to produce info that’s motorized specific.

John Messner: Are they experiencing caravan style camping around the state that comes with motorized use?

Chiappetta: In her experience, a lot of the bigger groups are folks less likely to be in the outdoors alone, but yes, they’re seeing it everywhere.

Marlene Crosby: Does STT do outreach in the Marble and White River National Forest area?

Chiappetta: They try to spread out across the state. In the Carbondale area, there are some great groups with strong advocacy that share STT messaging.

Marlene Crosby: Suggested STT gets in touch with a local task force group in Marble seeking to mitigate impacts from crowded roads in the summer.

Sue Wallace: Mountain Manners focuses on friendly outreach. Admittedly, she would stereotype moto users as not always being the most approachable.

Chiappetta: The moto community often gets a bad rap and it’s a reputation that the user group is trying to overcome.

Kristi Murphy: Wants to make a plug for the COFCO conference, May 31st - June 2nd. It includes a trail construction workshop and anyone can sign up.

John Cunningham asked how moto users can better respond when a hiker approaches them with a pre-conceived negative interaction? The group discussed the overall need for positive interactions between *all* user groups on the trail. Parmeter noted that many moto users here may not be exposed to information presented at the USFS office and other locations. It depends on their point of entry. How else can we get this information and knowledge to people.

Cunningham suggested that when users buy a registration they should have to watch a video on how to ‘Stay the Trail’, similar to the process of riding at a Go-Cart track. Alexander noted that there are 10 + videos on the STT website.

The committee briefly discussed the timeline for infrastructure improvement installation on Cottonwood Pass and the potential to include STT messaging at the day-use area. McCombs noted they’re still trying to fund a toilet for the location.

Logan noted what’s happening on the Alpine Loop and in Lake City. They approved OHV use in their downtown a few years ago and are now experiencing the impacts. Today, the town is polarized over the impacts (positive economic impact vs. negative natural resource impact).

Wallace asked if permits for group size numbers are applicable for motorized use? McCombs explained that they’re looking towards such permitting and a use designation process. He added that USFS is hoping to work with MEM students to help model and develop these plans.

McCombs noted that it will be a controversial process, as it requires changing patterns of use that have long been in place. The Board of County Commissioners and the STOR Committee need to be involved in the conversation early. The committee discussed what enforcement of such rules would entail. McCombs reminded the committee that enforcement costs money and that most USFS crews are currently utilized to build and maintain trails. Durant asked what a seasonal law enforcement position costs the USFS. McCombs explained that a GS 4 or 5 costs roughly \$16,000 - \$17,000 a season. He added that they are Forest Protection Officers with the ability to write tickets, however, they mostly act as educators.

Water Quality in the Upper Gunnison Valley, Ashley Bembenek- Alpine Environmental Consultants

Bembenek explained that she was presenting on behalf of Coal Creek Watershed Coalition (CCWC), who she has worked for since 2011. At this meeting, she will share a summary of E. coli concentrations in the Slate River Watershed. She believes this should be of concern to the STOR committee because it flows downhill to Gunnison. While she is presenting specifically on the Slate River, she challenges the STOR committee to consider other watersheds in Gunnison County where E. coli concentrations likely exist.

Project Location: The study area spanned from the mouth of Coal Creek, northwest to Oh-Be-Joyful (Slate River headwaters). They also sampled at the mouth of Washington Gulch. This area encompasses some of our most beloved trails in the upper Valley (Lupine, Lower Loop, Snodgrass, Rec Path). Water uses in these areas are very extensive, from waste water treatment facilities to multiple sub divisions. There is also extensive recreation use in the area.

In 2011, CCWC initiated the Slate River Watershed Plan, they convened stakeholders to discuss water quality concerns and identified human and pet waste near Oh-Be-Joyful (OBJ) and Gunsight Bridge. Around 2013, BLM lead a study that found high user numbers at OBJ. In response to this growth and stakeholder concerns, CCWC started a program in 2014 to place portable toilets throughout the Slate River Watershed. There are now six to eight toilets in the drainage. The USFS and the Tourism Association have helped build this program in recent years. Plans for additional toilet placement is still underway.

E. coli Study: CCWC collected baseline data in 2011 and repeated data collection in 2013 and 2017. The USGS also sampled E. coli concentrations for the past 20 years at three locations near Crested Butte. All samples generally found low E. coli concentrations (less than the primary recreation standard). Bembenek explained that this standard is designed to protect water recreationists who may ingest water. A red flag was raised when the results from the Rec Path over the Slate River were received. This spurred CCWC's 2018 project which entailed working with several groups to complete a more thorough study. The study was a four-month long process in which over 80 samples were collected. E. coli concentrations have increased and certain areas are in excess of the recreation standards, including at the Rec Path Bridge, Totem Pole Park, and Gunsight Bridge.

Bembenek explained that after understanding the increased concentrations, CCWC took a closer look at potential sources. They looked at effluent from the waste water treatment facilities and found that both entities met their permit limits. This suggests that the E. coli is likely coming from non-point sources. Referencing Table 1. from CCWC's report, Bembenek explained that they saw similar concentrations over the years, suggesting that the concentration was not heightened by the drought.

CCWC is currently working with partners to expand the study for 2019 to increase sampling locations. They will also be looking at stream temperatures and stream flows to help understand how low flows impact E. coli concentrations. CCWC also collected nutrient samples, which were lower than standard.

A committee member asked if it's possible to determine the amount of human waste versus pet waste influencing E. coli concentrations. Bembenek explained that a few techniques can be used, including a DNA analysis to determine stomach type. However, they're expensive and inconclusive. Bembenek noted that Moon Ridge Lane has pursued this but she feels their results were not clear in defining source locations. Bembenek noted that they must consider confounding variables. Another non-point source could be septic systems located outside of municipal boundaries.

The committee briefly discussed educational approaches relevant to this issue. Murphy asked if STOR should concentrate on a single drainage to start. Bembenek explained that CCWC is considering pursuing a non-point source grant, available to groups addressing impaired waters. The funding is geared towards correcting a problem and requires an education component. Therefore, she asked, to what extent do they want to further research versus pursue heavier education and infrastructure.

Pagano added that the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District and the Gunnison Basin Roundtable are no longer interested in funding toilets. McCombs added that the Stewardship Fund could be a fitting funding source for such projects. The committee discussed the different toilet types, noting that compostable toilets are often difficult to operate given our climate. Murphy reminded the group of the additional and long-term costs associated with toilets and pet waste stations, such as toilet paper, pick-up of waste and doggie bags.

Communication Sub-Committee Update, Rachel Sabbato & Mallory Logan

Logan explained that they've been working on developing a logo for the STOR committee. Generally, the idea is to communicate "people in nature". Logan noted that they will be making some changes to the verbiage and geography depicted. The logo could be utilized for stickers and on letterhead for grants.

Fonken explained that at the Gunnison River Festival, they took on the water component of the Mountain Manners signage, which is being reviewed by groups such as Trout Unlimited. Fonken added that the committee needs to define how it messages bank access. Durant noted that the

Slate River Working Group has been working through this same issue and urged the committee to recognize its complexity.

New Committee Meeting Date

Pagano explained that based off the committee survey, most committee members selected the second Tuesday of each month. Pagano concluded that she'll circle back with the committee on a potential new meeting time.

Topics for May 9th Agenda:

- What can STOR do to be useful for fees and UTV planning.

Cathie reminded group to complete prioritization survey.