

**GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
May 28, 2020**

The May 28, 2020 Gunnison Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Tourism Committee (STORC) meeting was conducted by Zoom virtual online meeting.

**Committee Members Present:**

Voting Members:

John Messner, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners  
Dave Ochs, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association  
Matt McCombs, USFS  
Christie Hicks, Crested Butte Nordic  
John Norton, Gunnison Crested Butte Tourism Association  
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails  
Roman Kolodziej, Mt. Crested Butte Town Council  
Noel Durant, CB Land Trust  
Chris Parmeter, CPW  
Mallory Logan, City of Gunnison  
Elijah Waters, BLM  
Joe Laughlin, US Forest Service Trails  
Steve Guerrieri, Stockgrowers' Association

**Others in Audience:**

Marlene Crosby, Gunnison County Public Works  
Hedda Peterson  
Lauren Koelliker  
Brian Lieberman  
Melanie Yemma, Town of Crested Butte  
Nick Catmur  
Aaron Drendel, USFS  
Jim Lovelace  
Pam King  
Matt Reed  
Greg Austin

**Staff:**

Cathie Pagano, Community Development Director  
Joe Lavorini, Gunnison County Stewardship Coordinator-National Forest Foundation  
Hillary Seminick, Community Development Planner  
Rachel Sabbato, Community Development Planner  
Rebecca Ricord, Administrative Assistant III

**CALL TO ORDER:** Durant called the May 28, 2020 meeting to order at 2:01 PM.

Approval of Agenda

**APPROVAL OF APRIL 23, 2020 MEETING MINUTES:** Moved: by Kolodziej and seconded by Messner to approve the April 23, 2020 meeting minutes as proposed. Motion passed unanimously. Guerrieri abstained.

## SUMMER STERWARDSHIP PLANS

Pagano reported that she had a brief conversation with the County Commissioners last week with concerns for this summer with the pandemic going on and general anxiety, the increase in visitors and conflicts that can occur. Her and Lavorini have been talking about what a Stewardship program can look like. It was agreed to develop a Stewardship Program within the GOCO grant. They will be presenting an overview of the Stewardship Program to the BOCC today. They proposing that they develop a STOR core, with similar work to the conservation core, a core hired separately from the Crested Butte Conservation Core, potentially Gunnison Trails. The National Forest Foundation has run models like this in other communities. They are willing to match 50 percent of whatever they can come up with. She is going to make a request to the BOCC later for funding but isn't sure how much yet. They received \$350,000 from the GOCO grant, and including the partner matches they had \$424,000 total. Subtracting the \$150,000 to be utilized for designated camping for the Forest Service, \$15,000 for the Slate River Trailhead work, and the Stewardship coordinator salaries, they have \$108,000 left over the next two and a half years for Stewardship Programing. Her request would be to ask for \$15,000 to \$20,000 to advance the stewardship program this year. She will have to come back with more details. It would be focused on outreach, education, maintenance and restoration. Having a crew of approx. 10 seasonal folks eight to twelve weeks, working throughout the Valley to be busy at trailheads, direct people, help spread the Leave No Trace, stewardship ethics, and potentially supporting the agencies with extra cleaning in response to COVID. She has asked Lavorini to start developing a volunteer stewardship program associated with it, so there would be a paid and volunteer component.

Ochs believes it's a great idea and believes it's very important to have people out there on the ground. The conservation core would love to be a partner in helping out. Doesn't believe they can do anything wrong with having more bodies out there.

McCombs stated that they could definitely use the extra capacity and help, it's likely they will see more people and have a busier year. Believes people are going to be looking at the public lands and the outdoors and being ready for that and being able to move out in a way that employs people and have the extra capacity will move them towards the sustainable goals the group has.

Pagano believes it will help put people back to work, idea of a civilian conservation role, and is an equally important role in this.

Messner believes it would be better to be the STOR Force.

Kugler stated that it would be great to have a sustainable program, funding, that will last longer than just two years. Wonders if they can count on funding coming in the years after year two. Kugler wondered how much the Forest Service sends on the conservation groups spend each year for work. Drendel reported that it varies every year and a lot of the money they bring is through competitive applications they apply for in the winter. The funding they have received varies largely year to year base on what they get when they apply. They have invested \$150,000 into the Crested Butte Conservation Core, Western Colorado Conservation Core and student core. In a typical year they will invest \$80,000 to \$150,000 to conservation core, a lot of it goes to trail work and depends on the target for funding. It is hit or miss, but they do invest substantially.

Roman wanted to know if there is a list of priorities or schedule of what they do any given day and would they answer to a stewardship coordinator. Pagano stated that they have been going over that and who would be in charge.

Pagano stated that it seems like they would like to hear direction from the BOCC and then come back with a more refined proposal and may do it over email before the next meeting. Kolodziej asked about whether they have set of items that they would do each day and who they will report to. Pagano reported that they are working on that now and that they will most likely report to Lavorini, the Stewardship Coordinator. Outreach will eb an important component of the program. The Committee is ok with them requesting the \$15,000-\$20,000.

McCombs reported that NSFF is willing to match community funds by 50 percent.

## **“RIDERS OFF THE ROAD” TRAIL PLAN PRESENTATION**

Ochs gave the presentation. They are hoping for a recommendation to the USFS to accept this plan into the NEPA process. They are hoping the STOR committee can help provide the recommendation to the USFS. They are down from 42 trails to 15 trails based off of comments that they have received. They believe this will provide them with five to eight years of work. Their desired outcomes are to enter into the NEPA scoping process with the Gunnison Ranger District, recommendation from the STOR Committee to the Gunnison Ranger District to accept the short-term plan for scoping, and approval of a five to eight year roadmap to avoid frequent requests to agencies for annual project approval.

They have the conservation core coming out every day to work on the trails.

Last year they put in the Middle Cement Creek Trail, and received the approval from the STOR Committee. They were able to complete the first phase. It is the new ranch route for CB South and takes people 1.2 miles off the most dangerous areas.

They have the top five areas of support: Snodgrass to Public Land and open longer, connect Washington Gulch and Slate River, more beginner and intermediate trails, Gunnison to CB, and better connectivity, access, progressive trails. The top five concerns were: wildlife and ecological concerns, “When is enough, enough”, fragmentation, have enough already and existing uses.

They are working on getting public comments fixed on the website so that people can actually see all of the comments.

They are asking the USFS to scope them and see if it is possible to do the trails.

Why now? Without planning for trails and infrastructure and providing access for the “right behavior”, chaos ensues. Gave example of Brush Creek Road in 2019 showing users going rouge. It is not just about more trails but proper trails. They are willing to go back to remove and restore trails that don’t serve the purpose.

Ochs showed a map of the retracted trails that they have taken off the plan. He also went over the plans for each of the fifteen trails:

**Lake Irwin Parallel Trail-** were told that it was not needed. The road has become very crowded and dusty, with a lot recreation. The trail would get users off the road, create a better experience by removing users from dust and high motorized speeds, and create a beginner/intermediate trail amenity for the campground and busy day use are. It would also link the Lake to the Wagon Trail and better connect existing trails and access. It would have 2.1 miles of new trial and 1.6 miles of decommissioned trail

**Slate River Loop Trail-** More beginner or intermediate trails requested. The Slate River Loop would serve many purposes. 1) A trail recreation amenity at an existing hub- Oh Be Joyful Campground. Many people drive away from OCJ campground to recreate. This would provide better access to recreation right from the closest improved campground to the Town of Crested Butte. 2) In addition to the Gunsight Bridge to OBJ trail, this trail would provide a means to get users off the busy and dusty Slate River Road. 3) It would be a beautiful beginner terrain. All things go up in Crested butte but this is perhaps the one place that does provide very gentle and rolling access for a true beginner trail and loop experience at the base of Paradise. 4) A continuation of the Lower Loop to help disperse the large volume of users on that very close to town trail system (5-mile loop)

Guerrieri stated that he visited with Curtis, a rancher with a public grazing lease with the Gunnison National Forest and BLM, who has great concerns with the proposed loop. It is a high impact area, already have issues with the amount recreation happening in the area, It will be devastating to what they do up there. He doesn’t see how it would be workable for him, moving forward. Even if you have closures, once the cattle are turned out it would need to be closed for several months, doesn’t see the benefit to the public. Stated that if there was a trail on the northeast side it could benefit Curtis to keep the cattle on the right side of the

road. The traffic may keep the cattle from using it. Guerrieri is worried about the impacts to wildlife. Would the trail create more wildlife impacts.

Kolodziej asked how far up the trail goes on the hillside, does it connect to Musician's camp. Ochs reported that it is very low in the valley and does not go up that high. Kolodziej asked what the difference would be between user and cattle conflict as opposed to Deer Creek. Guerrieri stated that any time you build a trail through grazing allotment the cattle will move and use the landscape the area differently, and will require much more labor to keep the cattle where they want them. You create two islands, between the road and the trail and between the two trails. Kolodziej wanted to know the perspective of the BLM and Forest Service how they manage lands for all people versus limited people. McCombs stated that is the inherent challenge with multiple use management. If they were to advance with support of the STOR Committee they would analyze the affects and give people opportunities to provide feedback and then try to make the best decision going forward.

Norton stated that he didn't know if putting McCombs reported that NSFF is willing to match community funds by 50 percent. the loop on the other side of the trail is practical but commends Ochs for looking at green trails, seeing as there aren't any. If this isn't the right location for the green trail, it would be good to find somewhere where they can put one.

Parmeter stated that Deer Creek Trail has significant wildlife and agricultural impacts also. They are just already existing and so they wouldn't be a lot different with this. Kolodziej stated that he has seen the impacts while hunting elk off of Deer Creek Trail, one week there is tall grass and then it is flat and eaten up and the elk have moved out of the drainage, so he sees it from both sides.

Durant reported that the Allens also graze their conserved properties lower in the Valley. The Land Trust isn't an advocacy organization, they work with willing landowners. The Allens have had to adapt and limit their use and grazing in the lower valley due to recreation impacts. It used to be where the Lower Loop could be grazed twice a year, but now they only can graze in late fall for a limited time. When there are recreators in the mist of it is harder to manage. The Land Trust is there to make sure that ranching, wildlife and recreation exist for the next generation to enjoy for forever and would like to make sure that as a Committee they are thinking about how they are using trails to solve really intractable problems, and if the problem is that they need more trail then they should talk about. He wants to be thinking about the problem-based approach and if this is addressing that critical need.

**Snodgrass Public Trail (#590):** The much requested, much sought after. Snodgrass trail all to public lands. Currently the trail dips into and then out, then back into private property (East to West). The Snodgrass Trail connects the Gothic and Washington Gulch corridors and the growing communities of Mt. Crested Butte. The annual Snodgrass trail closure comes to early, every year, and often brings about the ire from many citizens. Many letters and many comments have been made in regards to access to the Snodgrass Trail and people's rights to public lands. By avoiding property, we can also provide an exit to the trail on FR Rd 811.3a which is in the process of becoming a "designated camping" hub in Washington Gulch. This trail finish would also connect to the infamous "Rendezvous Meadow", a heavily impacted and used area, which would also make the trail serve an even larger existing impacted area and camping hub. Bathrooms are also proposed, providing all the amenities needed to really make the trail finish a network improvement. They've moved the proposed trail to utilize the most of the existing trail, and to stay as close as possible to private property but avoid sensitive research areas. They can decommission and restore as much of the existing trail as the private landowner would invite, if this trail were to be realized (2.7 miles new- 1.6 mile decommissioned.)

Guerrieri stated that Curtis has concerns about them continually using that trail during grazing and wanted to know if the trail was constructed is there going to be any effort to reclaim the old trail that goes through his property, because he does have concerns that he will still have poachers using that trail if it still exists. Ochs explained that they would love to do that, and do the restoration and decommission the existing trail. Guerrieri wanted to know from a wildlife standpoint if there is any opportunity to zig zag down there, near the fence up top. Ochs stated that yes they would try and do that and use technology to stay closer to the fence.

Durant stated that one thing that is really defining of the community is the partnership between private landowners and recreators. The Snodgrass trail came into existence when the private homeowner gave access. It was a give and take when the landowner said that it is a great trail, as long as they close it when they are operating it. If it is rerouted off of private property you are taking the collaborative approach out of the equation. It is important that there is that collaborative effort and is problematic if you take the private landowner out.

**R Gulch to Lower 401 reroute out of Mud Bog:** It is destroyed and is a free for all out there. Needs a simple reroute on solid ground. The trail being there is attributed to livestock over time, and the width and amount of resource destruction is from a combination of hiker, horse, bike and stock looking for the best crossing. Moving the trail slightly west and onto higher ground, there is ample room to completely avoid the heavily damaged crossing and wet bog. CBMBA and the CBCC will not only put in the proposed trail if approved, but decommission and restore the existing impacted area and try to realize the natural riparian area that it is. (.15 miles new, .1 miles decommissioned and restored)

**Upper Upper to Brush Creek Trailhead:** This trail, as proposed, would go above a sensitive bee research area, connect to the BC TH in a most pleasant way providing the best trail experience, ensure access to a gorgeous field of flowers, and get riders (users) off the road. One of the increasingly busier roads these days, Brush Creek is an increasing hotspot with camping/recreation and separating users is a desired need (.75 miles)

Guerrieri is opposed to the trail because he believes it is overkill since the Brush Creek Road is one of the widest roads. The proposed trail is creating an island during grazing season, doesn't believe a closure would be effective.

Kugler stated that the trail spits you off a blind section of road and no matter how many times you put up signs that there is a road crossing coming up people will not pay attention.

**Strand Bonus to 409:** The Strand Hill area is a very popular and important hub for trails. Users can access West and Middle Brush Creek, Farris Creek and begin the connection to Cement Creek. The trail would help connect the Strand Hill network to the Farris trail network. The trail also connects existing trails to keep single-track experience with seamless connectivity (.6 miles)

Guerrieri stated that he hasn't a chance to talk to Bill Trampe to see what he thinks about it, he did get the email and plan.

**Ambush/Budd Connection to Tent City/Deer Creek:** South of Brush Creek Road is the very popular Strand Hill/Farris Creek network of trails. There are few ways to connect to Brush Creek Road from the hear of the network, and where the greatest impacts are now being seen. The Budd Connection Trail, mostly on private property can solve this issue. Tent City is in the works to become an improved area, as the West Brush/Brush Creek area is seeing more parking and access. The Budd Connection can provide a starting point for a hub at Tent City where there could be parking, bathrooms, and camping. The trial would connect the Strand Hill/Canal Trail network and the Deer Creek Road/Trail. On behalf of the Budd Family and a bridge in place, it also provide the safest crossing of Brush Creek, a known bike and sometimes body snatcher in the Spring runoff. This trail will help connect networks, provide a hub for access, get riders off the road and provide better recreation experiences. 7a is the main trial, 7b is a connection up to Tent City itself and 7c would connect to Deer Creek/Trail(#8). (1.05 miles)

**Deer Creek to Brush Creek Road:** One of the dustier, longer, harder road climbs to get to classic single-track, the Deer Creek road climb is hard. More cars, more UTVs, more use has made a need for this single-track connection to finish off one of the more iconic trails of the Valley. With recent reroutes on "The Deer Creek Wall", and on the West side to remove the trail from Trampe property, the trail goes both directions now, and this proposed track works for a great finish after 10 miles of trail, or a great start to the 10 miles of trail to come (1.8 miles)

Parmeter that this puts the trail into an entirely different view scape. Ochs reported that yes it would face a different view ship. Parmeter stated that it has a significantly more wildlife impact per foot of trail than a trail just a little further off the road, since it is in an entirely different viewscape than the road. Ochs would like to talk to RMBL again to see if there is an opportunity to go to the right side of it and stay closer to the road, they would entertain that.

Guerrieri stated that they need to keep it as close to the road as possible to avoid fragmentation.

**405.2a (aka Dark Side) Re-Route:** The existing portion of this trail to be re-routed is a bit of a hopeless cause. It's in a steep ravine on a seeping hillside, then it turns into a fall line uphill that has turned into a multi-trail trench. Proper and sustainable alignment will relieve much resource damage and make for a better approach to 405.3a (aka the Hammer) and Waterfall Cutoff Trails (.65 miles)

Guerrieri stated that one thing that they all might be missing in talking about the re-routes and other users and how they use the trails. If you take out that section and make the bigger loop you are creating more trail and takes longer if you stay on the trail. It changes the dynamics of how people are using them. He likes how this loop is. Ochs reported that they like to scope and look at it on the ground to look for better solutions if needed.

**Cement Creek Trail- Lower Cement to Caves Trail:** The final connection to get to Cement Creek Trail to connect via single-track from one end of Cement Creek to the other. Getting riders off the road for the whole span of it and creating a parallel trail experience second to none in Crested Butte. It will be a tough build, but a fun challenge through some talus/rocky terrain, but will connect with the Caves trail for seamless trail connectivity (.6 miles)

**Teo Extension to Brush Creek Road:** You come down the single-track downhill only to finish the last part of the ride on a fall like dirt road. At .35 miles long they could add this piece of track to finish it off properly. Connecting with the Farris Creek/Canal Trail/Strand Network, more seamless trail connectivity is realized and better trail experiences.

**Cement Creel Trail- Upper CCT to Crystal #583:** The goal is to continue the Upper Cement Creek Trail further up to the start of the Crystal Peak Trail. Switching sides of the road, the East side of the Cement Creek Road provides more adequate terrain to parallel to the road and continue up to the Crystal Peak Trail start (2.3 miles).

**Eccher/Granite Basin Trail:** This trail needs help. The entrance is rutted, eroded, fall line wall, in the middle is a mandatory hand over foot carry your bike switchback, and the exit doesn't exist (13c). They would like to continue working with the USFS to realize a land swap with CDPT to help realize a proper and legitimate exit, along with the 2 other fixes (13 a and b). (2.5 miles total)

Guerrieri stated that his problem with the trail is that it continually promotes more traffic on the road for one little section on the road. With it currently not being enforced, it needs to be shut off and help alleviate the problem. Believes they are allowing illegal activities to occur.

Parmeter stated that this is the poster child trail for what they shouldn't have. It has a larger carbon footprint because people are shuttling it. This trail puts riders onto the road. It goes through an elk migration corridor. Believes they should get rid of the trail.

**Bear Creek Re-route- out of wetlands:** The trail is in the low spot of an open park and continues to see heavy erosion and resource damage. Raised tread/turnpikes have been built over the years but they eventually fail and erode from high use and nothing will fix the rough track but for a slightly higher, raised and more sustainable alignment. There is plenty of room to parallel the existing trail but move away from the lowest spots and gain some elevation to connect both ends. (.95 miles)

**Dr Park Mud/Turnpike Re-Route:** Another trail suffering through a poor alignment. This section of trail sees continual erosion and resource damage as turnpikes' give way to high use and erosion. In the end, the trail is in the wrong spot. Making a better connection to clarify the motorized and non-motorized portion of the trail, the re-route would start where the upper Dr. Park comes in (non-motorized from this spot down) and remain on higher ground, away from the wet and boggy area below where the current trail is. (1.25 miles)

Ochs stated that CBMBA seeks STOR Committee support because STOR represents various interest in the Gunnison Valley and was formed to prioritize recreation infrastructure and minimize negative recreation impacts via collaborative efforts. The proposed plan has considered extensive public input from the scientific, ranching, sportsmen, conservationist, wildlife and recreation communities.

Ochs is asking the STOR Committee for a recommendation to the USFS/Gunnison Ranger District to include this Riders Off the Road Plan into the NEPA/scoping Process. Norton supports it.

Parmeter would like site visits to look at the trails.

Kugler stated that CPW is updating their Traveling Trails with Wildlife in mind. They want more wildlife managers involved before the trails are worked on. Kugler is in full support of going through NEPA.

**Moved by;** Norton, seconded by Kolodziej to recommend to the USFS/Gunnison Ranger District to include the plan in the NEPA/scoping process and that site visits be planned so that everyone can look at the proposals. Voting Yes: Hicks, Norton, Roman, Parmeter, Durant, Kugler, Norton; Abstaining: All BLM Employees present, McCombs; Voting No: Guerrieri.

Guerrieri has concerns that the public isn't being heard before they vote. Ochs stated that they have been soliciting comments since 2016 and believes they have done as much as they can to get to this point. Ochs believes it is time to make a decision.

Durant stated that he believes that it is important, that after seeing the votes, that it wasn't a consensus vote and that it is important that, them as a Committee, move forward in the NEPA process to be clear and transparent that there is a lot of discussion involved in this and that moving this to the NEPA process doesn't mean that the Committee is saying they approve of the trail plan but they are moving forward with the public proves where it can be explored more. It wasn't a consensus vote, that they weren't all behind the trail proposals as they stand.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES**

Norton reported that the e-bike subcommittee met once and talked about making accommodations for the over 65 and adaptive riders. The Forest Service doesn't have the resources to allow a senior and adaptive person to do one thing and others not. They are going to schedule another committee meeting for this next month before the next STOR Committee meeting and will be suggesting trails for e-bikes at that time. Would like it to be on the next agenda in June.

Lavorini reported that the fee subcommittee met and they are doing market research to see what other fee programs exist in similar communities on the National Forest and other public lands in the region.

Sabbato reported that Joellen put up one of the kiosks at the white water park and she is working on getting the rest of kiosks up around the valley. Parmeter stated that there was already a panel available at the white water park and that they have been holding off until the group sizes changed but will get them up.

Durant reported that the Peanut Lake Road and Slate River Trailhead subcommittee has a new trailhead sign that will be going in at the Lower Loop parking area on Peanut Lake Road. Gunnison County Public Works is currently projecting to make the reconfiguration of the parking area per community feedback before big time summer hits. They are working on the Slate River Trailhead design, getting close to where they got a conceptual design that has feedback from the subcommittee members and looking at an August

engagement onsite to get people connecting with how the reconfiguration will of the Slate River Trailhead will look per the conceptual plans.

**FUTURE MEETINGS:** Future meetings will occur on the 4th Thursday of the month in the Planning Commission meeting room, located at 221 N. Wisconsin, Gunnison, Co. 81230, unless changed for a specific reason.

**ADJOURN:** The May 28, 2020 meeting of the Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee adjourned at 4:05 PM. **Moved by;** Guerrieri, seconded by Ochs to adjourn the May 28, 2020 meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Prepared by Rebecca Ricord, Community Development Administrative Assistant III