

**GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
July 23, 2020**

The July 23, 2020 Gunnison Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Tourism Committee (STORC) meeting was conducted by Zoom virtual online meeting.

Committee Members Present:

Voting Members:

Kevin Alexander, Hunter & Anglers- Western Colorado University
Jonathan Houck, 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
Scott Borden, WCU
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails
Roman Kolodziej, Mt. Crested Butte Town Council
Noel Durant, CB Land Trust
Chris Parmeter, CPW
Mallory Logan, City of Gunnison
Kimberly Shappert, At-Large Community Member
Steven Guerrieri, Stockgrowers' Association
Kristie Murphy, BLM
Matt Reed, High Country Conservation Advocates
Mark Voegeli, CBMR

Others in Audience:

Elizabeth Bauer, WCU MEM Program
Hedda Peterson
Pam King
Melanie Yemma, Town of Crested Butte
Aaron Drendel, USFS
Matt Vasquez, USFS
Brian Lieberman

Staff:

Cathie Pagano, Community Development Director
Joe Lavorini, Gunnison County Stewardship Coordinator-National Forest Foundation

CALL TO ORDER: Alexander called the July 23, 2020 meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

AGENDA APPROVAL: Agenda approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF JUNE 25, 2020 MEETING MINUTES: **Moved:** by Borden and seconded by Norton to approve the June 25, 2020 meeting minutes as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

Alexander reported that there is a new CBMR representative, Mark Voegli.

The group went over the change in the STOR Committee Charter and they added language to #3 under "Meetings" to read: A quorum of the Committee consists of **at least half of the members appointed to the Committee**. Action shall be by a majority vote of those members present. **The Committee shall strive for consensus on matters. Positions are achieved by a majority vote. Any member can request a roll call of the vote to be recorded in the minutes.** The Committee agreed to move the changes to the Board of County Commissioners for approval.

Pagano reported that Sue Wallace resigned. They are currently advertising for an at-large member.

STOR CORPS UPDATE

Lavorini reported that they secured all of the necessary funding, received Board of County Commissioner approval and hired ten crew members. The crew members started last Thursday. Their season will go from mid-July to October 2nd or 3rd and will be working 40 hours a week. This week they did an orientation and trained the crew on Leave No Trace. One of the crews I out today doing prairie dog vaccine drops and the other crew is up on Cottonwood Pass with the Forest Service doing sign installation. Yesterday a crew was out with the Land Trust doing ditch work and installing one of the fences across the Slate River. Tomorrow a crew will be out with CBCC out at Gunsight. The project development is on its way. They will be working five eights or four tens depending on where they are. The source of the funding was a one to one match, about 50 percent, came from the National Forest Service Foundation, so about 50 percent of the scope of work will be taking place on the Forest and the rest on any public lands to round out the budget. They are doing on the ground stewardship work and developing an outreach program, where they spend weekends doing public outreach. They are working on getting more certifications for the crews. They are having a hard time getting vehicles for all the crew members. They have two vehicles that they are currently using. Looking for any four-wheel drive vehicles available for two crew members per vehicle. He is working on getting shirts made for the crew members.

GREAT OUTDOORS COLORADO: RESILIENT COMMUNITIES GRANT

Pagano stated that GOCO changed their funding strategy for this year and next. They have come out with different programs and strategies they can fund through. They came up with a Resilient Communities Grant. It is COVID directed. It's a rolling grant cycle that they are taking quarterly. They are still trying to get Shady Island finished up and that may be a priority and desired application for this program for the County right now. The Committee discussed different ideas and possibilities that they could look at and send over to GOCO. Opportunities to get people in the outdoors, for lower and no cost, winter type stewardship programs etc.

E-BIKE PILOT PROGRAM

Norton believes that next summer the restrictions on camping in the North Valley are going to negatively impact the businesses, restaurants and retail, in Crested Butte. There is a growing interest in E-bikes and he believes that people will stay in lodging and motels to charge their bikes. Norton is wanting to know if there is support from the STOR Committee to do a test program for E-Bikes. The trails are Wagon, 409, Deer Creek and the three Cement Creek trails (lower, upper and middle).

Kugler wanted to know when it would roll out. McCombs stated that he wasn't sure but if the Committee were to say that they want to put the community forward as a pilot for e-bikes on mountain bike trails, trails currently restricted to motorized use. He would take it to his boss, then start interacting with the regional recreational staff and let them know that it is an opportunity to collect data. There is no guarantee that they will go ahead with it. They may need to change the travel designation for the trails through NEPA. Kugler stated that he wanted to make sure the experiment is set up so that they get substantial data.

Murphy stated that the BLM is going to look at possibly doing an e-bike EA in 2021 for the entire field office. They are looking at their workload to see if it is possible. She has been working with BLM and they

have a partnership with Colorado Mesa University doing an e-bike study right now. When they get the results she will forward the results to the Committee.

Parmeter stated that the E-bike subcommittee talked about how Deer Creek trail was a ranching and wildlife concern for increasing the users out on the trail. The subcommittee talked about allowing e-bikes on trails that are traditionally shuttled, which would potentially reduce two conflicts at once, congestion and extra traffic. Suggests that they pilot something that is not going to have impacts to hunting and ranching and be able to resolve conflicts out there.

Norton stated that the e-bikers he sees are trying to extend their riding experience on trails that they can ride safely and easily.

Shappert stated that they are going to have a full range of riders that want different opportunities. She doesn't think it's a limited group of people that they are going to be dealing with.

Norton believes that e-bikers are in their late 60s early 70s.

Kugler stated that when you have options; mountain bikes, e-bikes, etc., a lot of families are going to say they want to rent e-bikes. They will see a lot more people renting.

Ochs stated that they want to rent everything. His crews see e-bikes on all of the trails and people will have the ability to do it. Believes there are search and rescue concerns, people without skills going where they don't have the experience.

Kolodziej stated that he believes that this isn't about people that Norton knows. It's an entire market of people. This is not a light decision and is opening doors and that there needs to be some serious data collection for social, wildlife, trail and user experience impacts. Has a concern with pushing people out further in recreational areas, when people are forced to go deeper because they don't want to ride with everyone else. Would lean on getting serious data collection and what this decision might actually mean.

Borden stated that he thinks the point about search and rescue is well taken, especially during this time with COVID. He has seen at least five new cheater trails at Hartman's and wanted to know what is going on with impacts.

Murphy stated that she has seen more cheater trails during this time, also when the areas weren't open because people were trying to get away from each other. Their use this year over the summer months is lower. Hartman's was very busy during April and May during sage-grouse closure when people were trying to get outdoors. In 2020 Oh Be Joyful had a 30 percent increase in visitation in June and a seven percent decrease in July, compared to visitation in 2015. August visitation is up 33%. It always depends on the season and what is going on with the community. 25 percent of the users are people from out of state and 75 percent of users are from Colorado.

Ochs stated that it is a sheer number thing. There are too many people with too little space. Majority of cars have bicycles and are camping. The majority of people are out there after 6 pm. There are not any camping spots left. There is more impact and it isn't manageable. There has to be a better way to communicate the most important things.

Guerrieri stated that he has great concern of adding another form of recreation when they are already overrun. Believes it could possibly create more problems than they already have. Deer Creek and 409 have wildlife and landowner issues already with the amount of traffic affecting them. More traffic from e-bikes is a bad idea.

Norton proposed that they end the discussion because there is no agreement within the committee to support a pilot program for e-bikes at this time.

Yemma said that her understanding when the sub-committee was created was to better educate and communicate where e-bikes were already allowed. It seems that needs to be the focus right now and not a pilot program at this time.

Norton stated that to the degree that people are using the trail apps it clearly delineates what trails are available to e-bikes.

Ochs stated that apps tell you where you can and can't go, but that isn't what they are talking about, it is about the people who are going wherever and doing whatever they want to do.

FEES SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

Bauer reported that they have done a lot over the summer. She thanked the subcommittee for their help defining the elements, how the community will respond and priorities. In the initial meetings one of the decisions made was that the subcommittee was interested in using the FLORIA legislation putting the management control back to the Forest Service. The Forest Service would be in charge of managing the fee and the recreational areas and allows the fees to stay in the Gunnison National Forest and keeps the revenue localized. From there they have compiled a lot of the elements that will go into the plan. They have defined the fee schedule and other elements that will go into the project proposal. The draft proposal will go to the district, regional office and then community outreach.

The subcommittee came to a consensus about creating a day use fee for three identified day use areas, Judd Falls, Lake Irwin and a recreation day use of Kebler Pass. They will start at \$5 for day use. If they want to use it longer they can access the day use areas with an annual pass for \$20. There are 200 designated sites that have been selected for overnight camping uses. A handful of those won't be in easy access to a toilet. The overnight fee for those areas may be less than where a toilet is accessible, one will be \$10 per site and the other \$15 per site. The two main priorities are to address the trash and human waste in the areas. There was a push towards finding a solution to address that with trash collection and pit toilets installed next summer in specific areas (Washington Gulch). There is a possibility of the amenities being installed incrementally.

Bauer is hoping to have a draft by September 2020 for the STOR Committee to review. Hopefully they will then get public comment over the winter and spring and be able to implement the fees in the summer of 2021.

McCombs stated that this plan is about generating the management infrastructure and the resources to effectively address some of the issues that are out of control.

FUTURE MEETINGS: Future meetings will occur on the 4th Thursday of the month by Zoom, unless changed for a specific reason.

ADJOURN: The July 23, 2020 meeting of the Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Prepared by Rebecca Ricord, Community Development Administrative Assistant III