

**GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 27, 2020**

The August 27, 2020 Gunnison Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Tourism Committee (STORC) meeting was conducted by Zoom virtual online meeting.

Committee Members Present:

Voting Members:

Kevin Alexander, Chair, Hunter & Anglers- Western Colorado University
Christie Hicks, Vice-Chair, Crested Butte Nordic
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners
Dave Ochs, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association
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
Steven Guerrieri, Stockgrowers' Association
Kristi Murphy, BLM
Matt Reed, High Country Conservation Advocates
Mark Voegeli, CBMR
Elijah Waters, BLM
Joellen Fonken, Gunnison Nordic

Others in Audience:

Brian Lieberman, Crested Butte Land Trust
Elizabeth Bauer, WCU MEM Program
Hedda Peterson
Melanie Yemma, Town of Crested Butte
Aaron Drendel, USFS
Matt Vasquez, USFS
Jake Jones
Than Acuff, Crested Butte Avalanche Center

Staff:

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

CALL TO ORDER: Alexander called the August 27, 2020 meeting to order at 2:02 PM.

AGENDA APPROVAL: Agenda approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF JULY 23, 2020 MEETING MINUTES: Moved: by Norton and seconded by Borden to approve the July 23, 2020 meeting minutes as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

Alexander reported that Durant's last meeting is today and thanked him for all his hard work on the Committee. Durant reported that Jake Jones will be replacing him at the CB Land and Trust. Alexander

reported that Matt Reed will be the new At-large member on the STOR Committee. Reed introduced himself. The group discussed who would replace Durant's position as Vice-Chair through the end of the year. Moved: by Norton and seconded by Houck to have Christie Hicks as Vice-Chair. Motion passed unanimously.

Alexander reported that the CORE Act has passed the House but not the Senate. Senator Bennet will start drafting the initiative for the Gunnison Public Lands.

STOR CORPS UPDATE

Lavorini reported that NFF and Gunnison County officials acted urgently to create the STOR Corps to do 2 things: one, provide jobs for local residents who have experienced economic hardship due to Covid-19 pandemic, and two, to complete stewardship and educational outreach projects on public lands in Gunnison County. The partners quickly hatched the idea for the STOR Corps – an urgent jobs-creation program modeled in-part after the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930's and in-part after the youth corps model that is so successful today. Funding was secured through NFF matching dollars, County CARES Act dollars, Great Outdoors Colorado, and the Tourism and Prosperity Partnership. Job descriptions were drafted in late June, interviews were held almost immediately, and by mid-July the STOR Corps was on the scene. The STOR Corps is 10 members strong: 2 Crew Leaders and 8 Crew Members.

The Corps is halfway through a 12-week season that will end in early October. The Corps is in the field 40 hours per week. The crew is working with all of the federal land management agencies in the county, and so far have accomplished the following:

- Distributed plague vaccines to prairie dogs.
- Assisted CBMBA with trail construction along the Slate River.
- Cleared deadfall on Wilderness trails.
- Installed signs on Cottonwood Pass.
- Conducted habitat surveys in advance of forest restoration projects.
- Built fence at Oh-Be-Joyful campground.
- Restored wet meadows to provide habitat for Gunnison sage-grouse.
- Removed noxious weeds at Curecanti NP.
- Planted trees on Slumgullion Pass.
- Hosted 8 outreach days at Judd Falls TH, Washington Gulch, Lake Irwin, Brush Creek, and Hartman Rocks.
- Have made hundreds of user contacts so far, spreading an ethic of sustainable and responsible recreation.

The Corps has a strong connection with Western Colorado University. Several crew members are earning credit for their experience, and both of the crew leaders graduated from the Master of Environmental Management program. While initially crafted as a temporary, urgent response to the economic and land-management challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the partners are exploring the potential to continue the program into the future.

Reed reported that HCCA has a couple of upcoming stewardship projects HCCA is coordinating with NFF, FS, BLM, and UGRWCD for which we are still seeking some volunteers. September 12 Gunnison Sage-grouse habitat work at Signal Peak, and September 22 road ripping at Taylor Park.

GREAT OUTDOORS COLORADO: RESILIENT COMMUNITIES GRANT

Pagano stated that they applied for the grant with GOCO. They put together the application and requested \$450,000. They only required a ten percent match this time. They turn the decision around within a month normally so they should know in the next couple of weeks if they received it.

WINTER RECREATION PREPAREDNESS

Lavorini reported that he had multiple conversations over the last couple of months in the mist of when everyone believes it has been a really busy summer season. It's prudent to look towards the winter and what they have in store for use of public lands.

Yemma reported that the Town of Crested Butte has been trying to plan ahead with COVID scenario planning and they are working with the CBAC to help them in their efforts (for example, putting a sign at the entrance to town). They want to plan ahead for what to expect and how busy it will be in the back country. They have been working with Mt. CB, CBMR, Mountain Express and RTA to plan ahead for winter parking and circulation issues with limited capacity on transit.

Acuff reported that they are expecting a jump in numbers due to Vail Resorts having limited openings and they will expect further pressure in the back country. All of the companies that rent out equipment are pushing for people to visit the backcountry. They are going to do trailhead days, where they set up their easy up with a forecaster, checking with people to make sure they are using the information forecast. Increasing outreach this year. They are going to get together with the athletes at WCU prior to the season to go over avalanche awareness and training so that they are aware of the hazards.

Further discussion followed on signage.

Alexander asked if there is any information on how much the Resort is decreasing their load. Norton doesn't believe they have figured it out themselves yet but believes they will have crowding parameters. Voegeli reported that they are still working on the capacity piece with all of the resorts and can't put a number on it right now. It is their goal to have the mountain open, making sure employees and guests are safe. Houck stated that one of the benefits of our size and location is a bigger challenge than some bigger resorts. We may not see the impact some of the larger resorts will see. Voegeli can't say how it will affect us at this time. Alexander stated that he is looking at the connection between how the resort operates will affect backcountry use. Acuff agrees stated that in the past they have all seen numbers increasing and there has been pressure in the backcountry from front range users and that it is going to continue to rise and the question is how much. They can count on it being busier. Voegeli stated that last Spring users got a taste of the backcountry and will use it more now.

Hicks reported that at CB Nordic they are anticipating a higher number of people this year and are working on getting ready.

Murphy reported that they have made changes at Hartman Rocks McCabe's Lane entrance. New parking areas were constructed and the road has been improved to the new parking areas. Gunnison Nordic, Gunnison Trails and BLM are discussing the possibility of making one of the newly constructed parking areas the winter trailhead.

Fonken stated that Gunnison Nordic would like to help coordinate with CBAC on educational signage for Avalanche awareness at Ohio Creek and Taylor Canyon portals.

Alexander asked whether the communication committee should meet to go over the getting the avalanche message out there. Fonken liked the idea and stated that the Communications Sub group will work on a cohesive message for Winter - Safe Travel on Snow Messaging; Safe Distancing, Transportation and Parking; Basic User Etiquette messaging and Reduce your exposure message.

REVIEW OF SUB-COMMITTEES

Lavorini reported that the e-bikes and trail planning committees have dissolved. At this time there are only education and communication committees. Lieberman reported that the Slate River Subcommittee has been meeting. Peterson asked whether the CB and CB South committee has been meeting. Pagano stated that the committee had not met recently. She stated that Marlene Crosby and Matt Feier had a fairly discouraging meeting with CDOT earlier this year and Crosby has some significant reservations about the trail being implemented. Crosby and Pagano are going to meet with the County Manager to discuss further.

Lieberman stated that the CB Land Trust hosted two community forums and stakeholder sessions at the Slate River Trailhead. They were well attended. They discussed signage and messaging and received feedback from the public. CBLT is working with a landscape design firm to incorporate the feedback received during the community engagement into an updated design. The updated design will be circulated again to key stakeholders and then finalized and presented to the County for implementation. Some adjoining landowners were the loudest voices at the meetings. Alexander asked what the feedback was. Lieberman stated that their biggest concern was that 'if you build it they will come.' They were concerned that rearranged and additional parking would lead to additional crowding in the valley. They were also concerned about the visual impacts to their property. Lieberman responded to the landowners that the use is already occurring and exceeding current parking capacity - leading to parking that causes resource damage and parking along the landowners road. Lieberman said CBLT is attempting to improve the trailhead to accommodate the use that is already occurring at the winter trailhead.

Bauer gave the update for the Fees Subcommittee. They wrapped up their sessions and she has been working on the draft proposals for the regional office. Bauer asked that she be on the next agenda to go over the fees draft. She will work to put it all together for the committee to review at the next meeting before they send it to the regional office.

Parmeter gave the update for the communication subcommittee, stating that Statewide they are seeing an increase in the amount of hunting licenses.

Alexander showed the blog where they talked about the work the STOR Corps has done, located at <https://www.nationalforests.org/blog/heres-the-stor-y-the-nff-and-gunnison-county-team-up-to-create-stewardship-jobs>

Fonken reported that Gunnison Nordic will have ski conditioning classes in September and are partnering with WCU. You can find the information on their website and social media sites, once they have all the information.

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

ADJOURN: The August 27, 2020 meeting of the Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee adjourned at 3:40 PM.

Prepared by Rebecca Ricord, Community Development Administrative Assistant III