

**GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
January 28, 2021**

The January 28, 2021 Gunnison Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Tourism Committee (STORC) meeting was conducted by Zoom virtual online meeting.

Committee Members Present:

Voting Members:

Christie Hicks, Vice-Chair, Crested Butte Nordic
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Board of
County Commissioners
Dave Ochs, Crested Butte Mountain Bike
Association
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails
Chris Parmeter, CPW
Kristi Murphy, BLM
Kimberly Schappert, At-Large Community
Member
Matt Reed, High Country Conservation
Advocates
Matt McCombs, U.S. Forest Service

Mallory Logan, City of Gunnison
Mona Merrill, Town of CB
John Norton, Gunnison Crested Butte Tourism
Association
Joellen Fonken, UGRWCD
Roman Kolodziej, Mt. Crested Butte Town
Council
Hannah Crannor, Stockgrowers' Association
Hedda Peterson, MetRec
Scott Borden, WCU
Jake Jones, Crested Butte Land Trust
Brandon Diamond, CPW

Others in Audience:

Shea Earley, Town Crested Butte
Elizabeth Bauer, WCU MEM
Jordan Erdie
Joey Carpenter, Crested Butte
Rob Strickland
Jim Lovelace, BLM
Marlene Crosby, Gunnison County
Peter Horgan
Aaron Drendel, USFS
Greg Austin
Matthew Bernie, Gunnison County Manager
Aaron Drendel, USFS

Melanie Yemma, Town of Crested Butte
Mike Rogers, Waste and Wastewater
Nick Catmur, USFS
Ashley Hom, USFS
Cheryl Cwelich
Greg Austin
Chris Parmeter
Janna Hansen, Crested Butte
Katie Gienapp, Gunnison Country Times
Tammy Randall-Parker
David Gardner, City of Gunnison Public Works

Staff:

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

CALL TO ORDER: Hicks called the January 28, 2021 meeting to order at 2:02 PM.

AGENDA APPROVAL: Agenda approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 17, 2020 MEETING MINUTES: Moved: by Kugler and seconded by Reed to approve the December 17, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Pagano introduced new members, Hannah Cranor and Jake Jones. Kugler was reappointed to the committee. Hedda Peterson is also a new member on the Committee. Pagano stated that the BOCC

amended the STOR charter and made it so that MetRec is a standing member of the STOR committee. Fonken will now represent UGRWCD. Brandon Diamond will be replacing Chris Parmeter. Pagano reported that this will be the last meeting for Kristi Murphy and thanked her for her help on the committee. Jim Lovelace will be taking over her position on the committee.

EXPANDED FEE AREA UPDATE

Bauer gave the expanded fee area background and clarification of her project. Stated that there was a lot of public support for the proposal. Went over the public comments that were submitted and the responses. Reported that the fee subcommittee members discussed wanted to make a recommendation to the USFS that there be a maximum stay of seven overnights. Bauer asked that the committee have a motion to support the fee proposal go to the Gunnison National Forest for consideration.

Kolodziej asked how the sites will be managed and what kind of enforcement will be at each site. Bauer stated that day use areas, security services are part of the services required to be implemented. There would need to be a Forest Service office there during the day use hours. The day use areas are intended to have a staff member at fee collection areas and will help in management. Overnight camping will need to be on an honor policy, whether a site belongs to them. She has recommended that Gunnison National Forest incorporate camp hosts in each of the five areas of overnight camping. McCombs stated that they are working on the logistics on the recreation management plan and that they will offer an enforcement mechanism, making sure that reservations are being met and that the wayward camper has moved on their way.

Fonken asked if there is a way they can add a layer to their apps for the designated campsites. McCombs stated that they are looking at adding a toilet layer now and believes it would be good to add the campsite layer too. Norton stated that they are modifying where toilets are in the valley and that they could also do the designated camping layer.

Kolodziej asked whether there will be a way to let people know that everything is full. McCombs stated that is something he has been talking to the developer with rec.gov to add real time data. They are still working on a plan on how to redirect traffic. Social media will also help with getting the news out there in a real time basis. There has been an idea to also do live electronic boards outside of town.

Ochs asked if Murphy could go over the transition that happened when Oh Be Joyful was transitioned. Murphy stated that they went from free camping to 70 to 80 dispersed campsites around the existing infrastructure. Once they did that they were able to go to the campsite design. Stated that the public wants that. They want to know that they have a place to camp. They went 100% into recreation.gov and they have received good responses from the public. The reservations will only improve the public experience.

Kolodziej asked about how the phasing will go. McCombs stated that a lot of it is subject to public input. Since it is a community-based proposal, that sends a clear message to the Forest Service that they want to be very thoughtful about the hard work that the community has done and be in alignment with much of what is being proposed. The statute requires a robust public engagement and they are going to hear from a lot of locals, residents from all over the country and residents from all over the region. That will have an impact on how they roll it out. McCombs believes that phasing is going to be what a lot of people ask for. Bauer stated that when these recreation areas are managed appropriately, infrastructure and services are provided, it will reduce noticeable impacts on the areas and this will increase stewardship in the areas too.

Fonken asked why the hunter population was rolled into the proposed period of time for regulations, with it going through September. Bauer stated that some of the more remote areas would not be included in the areas requiring reservations, only the designated areas. McCombs stated that looking at the peak use time and taking it through the end of September makes a lot of sense because there is still a sizable amount of people in those areas at that time. Believes the hunters will be a part of the public comment time. Drendel stated that there would still need to be a comment time and that if they were to make a regulation to limit people to seven to eight days in the project area that would be a NEPA process they would need to do, so

that's a little different than the process that they have been describing. There are other areas in the GMUG that have gone to the seven to eight day and it has been working but that is a different process that they would have to go through. Bauer stated that all the designated sites that would be assessed a fee would only be locations that can be accessed by vehicle. Norton stated that September and July are the two months with the greatest demand in the valley, both greater than August.

Moved by: Kolodziej, seconded by Schappert for the STOR Committee to endorse a recommendation to the Gunnison Ranger District to accept the proposed new recreation fees for use of overnight designated campsites and for day use of Kebler Pass and Lake Irwin. The STOR Committee recommends that the Gunnison Ranger District submit these new recreation fee proposals to the Rocky Mountain Regional Office for public scoping and approval and to be implemented in the summer of 2022. The motion passed unanimously with McCombs, Murphy and Diamond abstaining.

NORTH VALLEY WASTE MANAGEMENT

Merrill stated that a lot of people are coming here and there are impacts to the backcountry. The only waste disposal site is in the Town of Crested Butte. It has caused a lot of traffic issues, safety concerns with kids in Town and they only anticipate it getting worse. Would like the STOR Committee to have a conversation about it and what they can do. Would like help figuring out how to mitigate what is getting out of control in Crested Butte.

Yemma stated that the use of the RV dump station in Crested Butte reached a boiling point last year. The Town Council is concerned about the issue, where they are seeing an increase in outdoor recreation and tourism. The dump site might not be compatible with the neighborhood. They were given direction by the Council to bring the issue to the Committee, where they have all of the stakeholders here. They want to work regionally on it, how can they better manage their waste. They know that there are dump stations in the City of Gunnison and Taylor Park. They would like to bring another station online. Their goal today is to raise awareness of the issue and see if they can get a recommendation from the Committee that they should work on it regionally.

Jones asked what sort of utility structure is required to deal with the waste and if there any sites they are looking at. Wanted to know if the solar farm concept at the Avalanche Park is moving forward and if they can add it to that location. Mona stated that they are moving forward with the solar panels and she brought up the idea of camping in that area but most likely it would be tent camping. They are still in the process of talking about solar powering at this time and haven't looked at camping. Yemma stated that one of the reasons the campsite idea didn't move forward was the need for an acceleration, deceleration lane off 135 for that amount of traffic, especially with RVs. It would have made the project cost prohibitive. They have to keep in mind that for a RV dump station there is going to be added traffic. They gave a basic list of what a station would need in the memo.

Pagano stated that as someone who oversees the septic program for the County, she urges that any type of dump station needs to be connected to central infrastructure. Kolodziej stated that it'd be helpful that they come up with ideas of where the dump station can go. Where does it make sense to have it? Yemma stated that there have been preliminary conversations with the subgroup about where they can explore areas that they can put it. Early stated that there is a need to have a central system that can handle the waste that is coming in.

Gardner stated that the City of Gunnison is in the process of upgrading their system and putting in a better system for RV haulers, separate from the commercial side, where they can have potable and non-potable water in those areas. Pagano asked if there is a timeframe. Gardner stated that it will hopefully be implemented this fall and believes it will help alleviate the traffic in Crested Butte. They want to have a commercial system that has the ability to monitor toxic waste and reject waste that exceeds the limits. Believes it will help the City and County. Ochs stated that it is good that they will be charging the fee and will hopefully help afford the costs. Gardner stated that he doesn't believe people with the large RVs will have a problem with a \$5 charge. Gardner will keep the group updated. Borden stated that he likes the idea of a bike trail that would go around it and wanted to know who would work with them on that. Kugler

stated that they would love to be a part of the conversation of possibly separating the two. Houck suggested that they keep in mind that it is a good problem to have, people are actually using an enclosed container in an RV for human waste and they are trying to find a place for them to put it. One of the biggest problems they have is so much waste from the backcountry where people don't have a place to put it. Houck stated that he doesn't see any heavy representation from the RV crowd and he would be interested to see some resources that help them understand trends, what people tend to do and not do, and general expectations of that community.

Hicks asked whether a subcommittee would be beneficial. Pagano stated that they have started forming a group to work on it and that the Committee can direct the group to look more at the issues, short term versus long term plan. The Committee agreed that they would like the group to continue working on identifying the issues, where they need a dump station, and other options for locations.

STATE PARK PROPOSAL

Houck reported that this is just an idea. Past commissioner Messner and Houck started having conversations about how they create more access to the lands that are owned by the people in the County. They started to talk about the County and State owned property that is the base of W Mountain. The eastern side is the IBAR ranch and the Tomichi Creek State Wildlife Area, you wrap around the base of the mountain and get to the observatory, a little bit before the entrance of Hartman Rocks. All of the land along that area is owned by either the State or Gunnison County. There are increased visitors, more amenities being used, bigger toys are being brought into the woods and how do you develop and refurbish existing opportunities.

While they were working on this the Colorado Parks and Wildlife, in the last year, has started a public process to see where people are interested in where their next State Park opportunities should be. One of the reasons they believe it is a good thing to explore is that they are seeing a new trend in people that are coming to visit, not just in Gunnison County but across Colorado. They are seeing more and more people with less experience and people who want more of the amenities that are close to town, not to stay in a hotel but to camp but also want WIFI and want to be able to get to the restaurants.

The concept of the State Park is that the area around the base of W Mountain, where Tomichi Creek is, could see a substantial amount of habitat improvements, access for fishing or hiking. Towards the observatory there is a potential to develop a campground, which would generate income to support the Park. It's centrally located between Hartman Rocks and Signal Peak, BLM recreational areas. There are amenities that have been built around it, archaeological sites that WCU and the State, that has an opportunity to be highlighted as an educational feature. There is the largest observatory in western Colorado. The Pioneer Museum is adjacent to it. It connects to the State Wildlife Area. It is adjacent to town. There is pedestrian and bike access under Highway 50.

There is a high demand for opportunities like this. It could possibly provide access from Gunnison to Gold Basin Road towards Hartman. Western has expressed an interest in this opportunity because it can supplement their outdoor programs and management. It has the ability to connect to what is going to be the new BLM headquarters. There are a lot of things that need to happen regarding sage-grouse and wildlife and habitat concerns. The idea is that this does have the opportunity to increase access to fishing, hiking, more camping opportunities, is a benefit to the local economy and it addresses a lot of STOR issues that they are trying to do. Asked if him and Pagano could draft a letter for a general level of support for the concept and idea. The only State Park in Gunnison County is in Paonia. The Committee discussed the idea and gave their support to work on the letter. Pagano stated that they will work on the letter and circulate it via email.

Reed stated that HCCA isn't opposed but would be reluctant to offer support without knowing the implications on wildlife and asked Jonathan if he could elaborate on conversations with CPW and their feelings on this. Houck explained that at this point it is just getting general support and that there is interest. Parmeter stated that there will be significant concerns with sage-grouse and big game impacts that could use improvement. There are people concerns with beating down the banks while fishing and

can cause as much damage as cows can. Doesn't have specific details at this time. There will be some significant hurdles to overcome with regards to wildlife. Reed stated that he thinks it's a good idea if you can tailor it around those issues.

Borden asked that it would be nice to hear from IBAR ranch and make sure they are interested as well.

Diamond stated that there are a couple of livestock operators out there that should be considered because their livelihoods revolve around that land.

WESTERN COLORADO UNIVERSITY: OUTDOOR MBA STUDENT SPONSOR

Will be on the next meeting agenda.

COMMUNICATION SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

Logan stated that the communications subcommittee has been meeting around a comprehensive communication plan for STOR and the Gunnison Valley as a whole and what it looks like is cohesion in messaging and how they can disseminate those tools to all their different land management groups, while also respecting their various rules and regulations. They would like to discuss with the Committee if this is a topic of interest, a multi land use management plan and how it plays into a design tool kit that everyone can use. Would like to put a more substantial agenda item on the February agenda. They are trying to avoid mixed signals and mixed messages, so people can see the message cohesively through the entire County. In the near-term Rob Strickland has been helping put together signage at the designated campsites at Hartman Tocks. BLM has approved the signage and they are looking for funding.

Pagano stated that she has some ideas for funding on the design side. An ongoing challenge is that you can have campaign materials that you can share widely but without a point of contact, staff, it's really difficult to maintain that over time and believes it's something to talk about. Murphy stated that Strickland was looking at a same graphic to go on all the signs and was looking for consistency.

Strickland asked whether the STOR Committee thought that there was interest in the concept. Hicks stated that it from past conversations, it is very supported for a unified message. Strickland asked what kind of proposal the Committee would want to see. Hicks stated that it is always have flushed out proposals.

ADJOURN: The January 28, 2021 meeting of the Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee adjourned at 4:15 PM.

Prepared by Rebecca Ricord, Community Development Administrative Assistant III