

**GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
April 22, 2021**

The April 22, 2021 Gunnison Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Tourism Committee (STORC) meeting was conducted by Zoom virtual online meeting.

Committee Members Present:

Kevin Alexander, Chair
Christie Hicks, Vice-Chair, Crested Butte Nordic
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails
Brandon Diamond, CPW
Matt Reed, High Country Conservation Advocates
Hedda Peterson, MetRec
Kimberly Schappert, At-Large Community Member
Mallory Logan, City of Gunnison

Others in Audience:

Joey Carpenter
Celeste Heminski, Gunnison Chamber
Lizzy Bauer
Pat Medina, USFS Fire Mitigation
Katie Gienapp, Gunnison Country Times
Jennifer Sublett, Gunnison Ranger District, USFS
Nick Catmur
Greg Austin
Rob Strickland
Cheryl Cwelich, Crested Butte Land Trust

Staff:

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

CALL TO ORDER: Alexander called the April 22, 2021 meeting to order at 2:02 P.M.

AGENDA APPROVAL: Agenda approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF MARCH 25, 2021 MEETING MINUTES: Moved: by Logan and seconded by Reed to approve the March 25, 2021 meeting minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

UPDATE: DESIGNATED CAMPING IN THE NORTH VALLEY

Lavorini gave the update. They are looking at designated camping from the communications perspective, before and after communication before the visitor arrives. The biggest thing they are communicating is to have a plan B. They talked about the message to visitors once they are at capacity. They will have press releases, newspaper articles. They are working with various organizations to make sure the online platform is updated when changes are made. The CMBA website will be the most up to date. On arrival communication will be done with updated signs at Signal Peak and Hartman Rocks, designated camping kiosks will be put up this year. They will be working on their ground game, engaging with visitors and helping to communicate the change in regulation, including a camping in the Gunnison Valley handout. The handout will have information on how to camp responsibly and have a map of the campsites

available. They will have a separate handout that will have hotels that are available. They will have VMS signs just north of CB and one higher up on the hill at the entrance of Mt. CB. They are also hoping to get one north of Jacks Cabin. Gunnison Country Times will have an advertisement in the paper with general promotion of the STOR Committee. Future communications will include where new toilets are, winter trailheads and wilderness kiosks.

Schappert asked about alerts that could be sent out, if they can put an update that would be sent by text letting people have real time updates. Kugler stated that they discussed as a group about having the messaging boards at the beginning of each of the trailheads but it was decided that the ability to know when the area is full and then update the sign wasn't there yet. Alexander stated that it is an expensive option at this time. Lavorini stated that real time updates of the status of the drainages and campsites would be great to have but that they can use rec.gov and are working towards that for next year. They will have the monitors but things will be changing quickly and would be hard to send out real time information at this time. Pagano stated that they'd need to investigate the costs and develop a program. She doesn't expect that's something they could implement this year but could be a program to look into for next year or future years. Catmur stated that to implement something like that this year would be cutting it closing and would be expensive and using rec.gov would be helpful. Believes that it would be best to rely on the message boards this year.

FIRE SEASON UPDATE

Medina gave the update. Gave a presentation for the season outlook as of April 2021 on their drought and wildland fire potential. The predictions go out to July 2021. Hoping moisture will be provided after that in the monsoon season.

Lavorini asked if Medina had an idea of the level of compliance when the fire season is high. Medina said that the level of compliance is high. He brings in more enforcement during that time and they try to get on the ground and communicate the high hazards. Last year they had more fires started by humans than naturally. The first human start was in April 2020 near Waunita in the backcountry.

Alexander asked if they do any type of planning as far as suppression. Are there other things that STOR should be thinking about for planning? Medina stated that in many decades they haven't seen the bringing in of teams. They might bring in the next level team to help manage safe and effective operations. They made an adjustment because of COVID and it's going to continue through this year. They will have to coordinate where they will put their operations. They will need to coordinate that there is a plan for the visitor if a fire starts.

Lavorini stated that Norton asked that he bring up community awareness, educating the public and visitors of fire safety and once restrictions come into place. Are there opportunities or leads on engagement with the public for enforcement and education? Medina stated that they try to coordinate it as much as possible to provide information above and beyond normal compliance. They try to communicate that as best as possible. They will bring in a communication specialist to speak with the County. Sublett stated patrols are one of the most important things and getting out there and talking to people. Including getting flyers out there.

Diamond asked, that because of the conditions, if they are standing down on prescribed fires? Medina stated that they did their early implementation last week by Old Agency. They are doing on a case by case basis if the weather will hold for them or if the resources will be available. They are evaluating it and determining if they can move forward. They have not put it on hold at this time.

GUNNISON PUBLIC LANDS INITIATIVE

Alexander stated that there is a fair enough of overlap with the STOR Committee and Gunnison Public Lands Initiative. Gunnison Public Lands Initiative is a proposal where almost all different representative recreation groups have all been communicating since 2016. Each month they went basin to basin looking

at big picture view of management on the Gunnison Landscape. They have come up with a proposal. You can find it at gunnisonpubliclands.org. Currently the language for a federal bill that will be brought up at the U.S. senate has been drafted. They are hoping to have something ready to bring back to public and then hopefully be introduced to Congress. They did not close any trails or roads.

Reed went over the different members of the GPLI group. It's has been a long and complicated process but sets a sustainable plan for Gunnison Basin.

Lavorini asked what the focus of the special management areas is; ranching, recreation, a mix? Alexander stated that they have a mixed priority system. There tends to be a balance between recreation and wildlife conservation. There will be a mix. The proposal encompasses both BLM and Forest Service.

Lavorini asked when the legislation is approved where it goes, is there more community involvement, work out on the ground? Alexander stated there will be a proposed legislation, with groups providing feedback. They have provided a variety of community engagement events. If it passes it will provide long-term value level guidance for major areas on the landscape. Kugler stated it is worth noting that while this would be legislation that provides new prescriptions on how to manage the landscape, nothing in the plan takes public comments out, they would still be required to follow the current guidelines for new trails etc.

CBLT RIVER STEWARDS FUNDING PROPOSAL

Cheryl Cwelich, with Crested Butte Land Trust went over the proposal.

Introduction:

The Slate River Working Group (SRWG) was co-convened in 2018 by the Crested Butte Land Trust (Land Trust) and the Town of Crested Butte (Town) in response to the increased amount of river recreation on the Slate River and its impacts to wildlife, streambank habitat, private property and historic agriculture. In 2019, the SRWG, comprised of eighteen stakeholders, finalized the 2019 Slate River Floating Management Plan. An important solution proposed in this management plan was building a river ethic through education. Since 2019, education on river etiquette has included new or improved signage, outreach materials and a human presence at two key Slate River put-ins/take-outs. These seasonal River Stewards have gathered observational and survey data for annual river use studies, in addition to providing education on river etiquette.

Objective:

The Crested Butte Land Trust on behalf of the Slate River Working Group is seeking funding assistance for one of two River Stewards to be stationed at two key Slate River put-ins for educational monitoring (funding request is itemized below): one located at Gunsight Bridge on the upper stretch, and one located at the Rec Path Bridge on the lower stretch. Educational monitoring will serve two purposes; to provide a human presence at river access points to educate river recreationists about private property, seasonal grazing, wildlife habitat and proper boating etiquette, and to collect recreational use data for the 2021 Slate River Use Study.

Timeline:

The proposed 2021 seasonal employment of two River Stewards will commence approximately on May 14th, depending on snowpack runoff and recreational flows, and conclude approximately on August 16th, depending on dropping water levels and recreational flows. The suggested schedule for the river stewards is during peak recreational use times of Friday through Monday, for five hour observational periods (20 hours/week per location), generally to be from 12:30pm to 5:30pm.

Funding Request:

The Crested Butte Land Trust is requesting \$4,760 from STOR to fund one River Steward position for the 2021 floating season as part of its Outreach and Education program.

2021 Season - May 14 th thru August 16 th :	14 weeks
Schedule - 5 hours a day, four days a week:	20 hours

Hourly Wage: _____ \$17 / hour
\$4,760.00

The Land Trust will fund the second River Steward from either general operating funds or grant funding opportunities.

Moved by: Schappert, seconded by Peterson moved to support the CB Land Trust request of \$4,760 to fund a River Steward for 2021. Motion passed unanimously.

UPDATE: WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Carpenter gave the update. Stated that the Waste Management subcommittee met. There were discussions both at the subcommittee meeting and this week's council meeting. There was discussion that the Town seemed to be wiping their hands of the dump station issues. They are happy as the staff that the council is considering revisiting the decisions to be part of the collaborative waste management. In the north end of the valley they feel it is a very important aspect to have and they are very hopeful to see how some of the new implementations in the drainages will impact usage rates of the dump station with designated camping and new restrooms going in. Hopefully those will lessen the impact on the dump station. At this point it is up to the council at the April 17, 2021 meeting to decide to work on looking into finding an alternative location. From a staff prospective believes a letter from the STOR Committee would pull valuable weight in that discussion.

Sublett said they were talking about doing a press release via the Forest Service and asked if they decide not to reconsider and they don't open the Crested Butte dump, what is the message going to be? What would he like them to do to support the message? Carpenter isn't sure what the answer to that is at this time and would like to wait until after the April 17th meeting.

Diamond asked if the City of Gunnison is still planning to expand and enhance their dump stations. Carpenter stated that yes, they are and they plan on making the expansions in September so there wouldn't be a dump station to use. Logan stated that yes, they are planning on doing it in the fall.

Alexander asked whether they should make a letter to consider the long-term planning that they could consider to the Crested Butte Town Council and if the group is supportive of that. The group supported the letter. Carpenter clarified that there will not be a public dump station when the City dump station closes. Discussion followed on what the group would like to include in the letter. The next meeting for the Crested Butte Town Council is May 17, 2021. They would have to get the letter to them the Monday before. They will mention the closure of the dump station in the City of Gunnison.

COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE: REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE GRANT

Lavorini went over the grant opportunity. The State is looking to capitalize on groups like STOR around the State. They have released an RFP that includes joining the statewide initiative and looking at where there are already existing entities like the STOR Committee; they are looking at supporting those organizations financially, through funding for administration or planning. The State is offering funding to establish coalitions where there aren't already entities. They have the opportunity to join the regional partnership initiative and Colorado Outdoor Partnership and if they are selected they will be encouraged to elect an official for the statewide advisory board. They will then seek funding for the committee. They have a need for continued support for staff support and potentially seeking additional support for the STOR Corps program. They are offering up to \$100,000 for established organizations. They will work on it the next couple of weeks. He drafted a letter of support and the committee reviewed it.

Alexander stated that the STOR Committee worked with CPW as they started pulling these types of things out and they have used them as a model across a variety of organizations. Believes it's a good thing, brings extra funding and gives them a seat the table at the State level.

Diamond stated that the end goal is to have a level of consistency and it will be an important system and functioning group moving forward.

Schappert stated it seems that it would be remiss for them not to join if they are being used as an example.

Moved by: Schappert, seconded by Logan to support the letter and to apply if the County Commissioners approve. Motion passed unanimously.

UPDATES FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS & FUTURE MEETINGS TOPICS

Logan stated that the City of Gunnison is hosting a community clean up on Saturday at 9 am at Jorgensen Park.

Kugler reported that the Hartman Rocks clean up date is scheduled on May 15th.

Pagano stated that Shady Island will be open to the general public either later spring or early summer. The boat ramp has been installed and they're getting ready to pave the parking lots and roads.

Lavorini stated that Kolodziej said that he is interested in finding a way to support an FPO, Forest Protection Officer position this season. He has spoken with McCombs and he is supportive if they can find funding for it.

Diamond reported that they have a committee formed that has evaluated the first rounds of State Park nominations. They received 38 applications. There has been a preliminary review of the applications. If anyone in the group is interested they are planning their first public outreach webinar regarding wolves on April 28th, 6 to 8 PM. You have to register.

Alexander asked if there are any future meeting topics they want to go over. Possible topics: how the current state of marketing interfaces with capacity.

ADJOURN: The April 22, 2021 meeting of the Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee adjourned at 3:49 PM.

Prepared by Rebecca Ricord, Community Development Administrative Assistant III