

**GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
September 23, 2021**

The September 23, 2021 Gunnison Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Tourism Committee (STORC) meeting was conducted in the Gunnison County Blackstock Government Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room, located at 221 N. Wisconsin #D, Gunnison, CO, 81230 and by Zoom virtual online meeting, Gunnison, CO, 81230.

**Committee Members Present:**

Kevin Alexander, Chair	Dave Ochs, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association
Brandon Diamond, CPW	Jake Jones, Crested Butte Land Trust
Hedda Peterson, MetRec	Mark Voegeli, CBMR
Kimberly Schappert, At-Large Community Member	James Lovelace, BLM
Mallory Logan, City of Gunnison	Joellen Fonken, UGRWCD
Hannah Cranor, Stockgrowers' Association	Matt Reed, High Country Conservation Advocates
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails	John Norton, Gunnison Crested Butte Tourism Association
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Commissioner	Deanna Greco, National Park Service

**Others in Audience:**

Celeste Heminski, Gunnison Chamber of Commerce  
Aaron Drendel, USFS  
Jack Morgan, STOR Corps  
Dana Omasta, Greta Outdoors of Colorado (GOCO)  
Joey Carpenter, Town of Crested Butte  
John Mugglestone, CB Land Trust  
Greg Austin

**Staff:**

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

**CALL TO ORDER:** Alexander called the August 26, 2021 meeting to order at 2:04 P.M.

**AGENDA APPROVAL:** Agenda approved as presented.

**APPROVAL OF August 26, 2021 MEETING MINUTES:** Moved: by Houck and seconded by Kugler to approve the August 26, 2021 meeting minutes as amended. Motion passed unanimously. Fonken abstained.

**GREAT OUTDOORS COLORADO**

Omasta gave the background on himself and the Great Outdoors of Colorado (GOCO). GOCO recently completed a five-year strategic process. There are a few big changes, including a regional office manager program. There are six program officers across the State, where they can be a resource for the communities and partners. They want to be a more active partner. They have heard a lot from partners

about changing the way they do grants. They do a two-page concept paper that they discuss with their regional partner and then they will review the document and recommend if they should apply. They moved from an annual grant cycle to a triangular grant program- January, August and December. Omasta will be the partner for Gunnison County and will help with whatever he can. It is shaping out to be a competitive grant cycle this year. There was a total of \$13 million to spend over the course of the year. The first round they had 45 applications for \$25 million.

Pagano asked how they prorate the money out for the year, when it is best to apply. Omasta said they are trying to prorate it this year. There are four categories that they have to spread the money out and this year it is pretty even. The amount of funding in the categories will increase in a few years because they are saving for the Centennial Grant Program. The program will cover large projects. In 2023-2025 they will be able to give out \$5-\$10 million for each project.

Fonken asked if the Centennial Grant Concept will be replacing The Legacy Grant. Omasta said yes.

Lovelace asked if Omasta has a sense of GOCO funding that is already being funded in Gunnison County. Omasta stated that as of this last cycle they received one application from the Town of Mt Crested Butte for a park renovation project but it didn't get it through the concept stage. He believes that is the only at this point from Gunnison County.

### **SUMMER STEWARDSHIP ROUND-UP**

Jones reported that starting in June they were able to officially open the Coal Train Trail. They built an important connection from the Gunsight Bridge parcel to the Oh-Be- Joyful campsite. The trail allows people to go from the Town of Crested Butte to the Oh-Be-Joyful wilderness off the streets by non-motorized use, without motor vehicle traffic. They hosted a group of youth corps workers, funded largely by GOCO. They did a lot of weed mitigation and fencing projects. They decommissioned and tore out 1200 yards of abandoned barb wire fencing from the greater Crested Butte area. They monitored close to 6,000 acres of conserved land and loaded the information into a database to track monitoring and trends. They are in the midst of multiyear multi partner management projects. The Slate River working group was needed to protect the Great Blue Heron, rookery in the upper Slate River Valley and public access to conserved lands. The compact remains sound and the management solution they came up with was recertify this Spring for the voluntary no float during July. It was pretty well adhered to, with education done by stewards going out there and speaking with people and provide on the ground stewardship. They were able to put river stewards up in Long Lakes to collect more user data. This summer they got a group together to work on the long-term management of Long Lake to work on erosion and trespassing. The CB Land Trust is in a unique position to hold conservation easements with private landowners and the Town of Crested Butte. In a lot of cases they are landowners and have a lot of responsibility for those areas.

Lavorini stated that the river steward program was supported in part by the resilient communities grant that the STOR Committee was granted last year. Jones stated they are in the middle of a community farming project at Glacier Farms to grow food for the community and for people in need.

Ochs stated this is the CBMBA's fifth field season. They started the conservation corps in 2017. This year they are a crew of seven. This is the first year they have had a supervisor. They will be going until mid-October. They had three returning crew members this year. In 2021 they have cut out 168 trees from roads and trails, reached 916 people, worked on 41.9 miles of trails, collected 655.75 pounds of trash, they have cleaned 1,041 campsites this year, they have counted 43 campers outside of the designated camping area, they have decommissioned 53 fire rings, picked up 68 piles of human poop and have installed 117 designated campsites. They have installed a total of 207 campsites since 2020. That includes road signs, kiosks, bathrooms and places for people to park. It has been really well received. In five years they have cut out 1,709 trees, reached 6,276 people, worked on 353 miles of trail and picked up 5,310 pounds of trash. The Mountain Bike Association has completed the Middle Cement Creek trail. The trail was approved by STOR and the Forest Service in 2019. 3.1 miles of trail has been built, is connected to the existing Fence Line Trail, for a total of 4.6 miles of trail in the Cement Creek drainage, allowing people to get off the road.

Voegeli stated that it will be interesting as the years go by with the advertisement of the trash being picked up in the backcountry and the idea that someone will pick it up for them, and whether there will be an uptick in the amount of household trash because they know someone will get it. Alexander stated there are fees to dump some household items so that may be a problem too. Lavorini asked what the geographic area is. Ochs stated it is Kebler, Washington Gulch, Slate, Spring Creek, Gothic, Brush and Cement Creek. Lavorini asked if they should get the designated camping and fees subcommittee back together to answer any questions they have since the campsites were implemented. Ochs stated that there have been conversations but nothing decided yet.

Drendel stated that on the agency side he is pretty booked up with what is next because of the Rider's Off the Road proposal that has been advanced to the Forest Service. Regarding the fees, he needs to follow up with Matt McCombs to get the information from him. There are still discussions going on in the regional office to determine what fees to charge. They are in dialog with them and how to move that forward. He will be working with the Forest Service supervisor in Delta to make the designated camping proposal enforceable. There are discussions on continued management of designated camping next year. Lavorini will keep in touch with Drendel on which subcommittees to get together in the upcoming months. Schappert asked if they are aiming to collect fees and have a reservation system next year. Drendel stated that he is going to have to talk to McCombs before they can make that decision. There are different avenues they can go through to decide who will collect the fees.

Kugler stated they started their trail crew in 2016. They started with a crew of three and \$5,000. This year they had a crew of 7 and up to \$100,000 in funding. They hit the ground in June and have done 3,200 hours of work. This year they put in 350 hours of trail maintenance in Hartman Rocks and touched 30 trails. They have seen an increase of trail use. They put 1,200 hours into work in Signal Peak. They built another 2.5 miles of trail and finished the South Rim Trail. It will eventually connect with Notorious BSG. It will be a total of 3.5 miles when they are done. They have run into massive areas of cheatgrass and will be starting mitigation next week. All of the funding is coming from the CPW Nonmotorized State Trails Grant. They are hoping to get rid of the cheatgrass by Spring. They did six days of heavy maintenance on the South Creek Lotus Creek Trail. They did a three day overnight clearing the Mill Castle Trail in the West Elk Wilderness. They did two seven day sessions in the West Elk wilderness. They are down to two crew members who will work until the snow flies. Schappert asked if the cheatgrass asked what phase the cheatgrass is in. Kugler stated it has gone to seed and they are treating the seed bank. Lovelace stated it is called the preemergent stage and that this is the most potent treatment for it.

Fonken asked that Pagano let everyone know about Shady Island. Pagano stated they had 13 grants for Shady Island, totaling nearly \$1 million. They have opened the first stage of the park. The boat ramp and parking area are open. They still need to finish paving the parking lot. They weren't able to put the campgrounds and trails out there this year. The bathrooms will go in this fall. Fonken stated that things started on waterways and they advocated with all the players to come to the table to show that it will be a pay to play situation. They didn't charge any fees this year but will figure out the fees for next year. Pagano stated the BOCC adopted the fee program this year to charge \$5 a day and \$45 for the year, starting next year. Pagano it's better to call it a pay to sustain situation. Fonken stated that the boating and water community now has more interest on what is going on at the White Water Park. Gunnison Waves is a newly developed group of people, the surfing group, looking at the White Water Park. Gunnison County has ownership of the park currently. Annually the builder comes to look at it. The surfers are trying to get an adjustable wave. They are trying to get expert advice and see how they can fund it to do the first and second feature at the same time because diverting the water is a huge cost. Now that Shady Island is done they want to shift focus to the white water park. The Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District is working with all of the agencies to get messaging out about water temperatures and appropriate use of fishing on the creeks and getting information to all the users on the Taylor and the correct information about the cfs releases.

Reed with HCCA stated that it was formed in 1977 and for the first 40 years the focuses were save Red Lady, public lands, and water. They wanted to add a fourth focus of stewardship. They have built additional public lands components. They received funding to work with Western Colorado University to

help flush out the program and lead the stewardship program. Eli Smith is the supervisor. They are not trying to replicate what other groups are doing but are trying to find areas that need more focus. They have keyed in on Gunnison Sage-grouse, with wet meadow restoration to get volunteers out and take a deeper dive with agencies to identify sites and identify community enthusiasm. Their second focus has been work in Taylor Park doing riparian restoration, willow planting, restoration of stream bank habitat, beaver dam analogs to replicate beaver dams to mimic the environmental benefits that they bring to the landscape. Their projects are going great. At the end of the day both focuses retain water in the Basin.

Morgan gave the update for the STOR Corps:

### **Outreach**

1160 contacts, 621 in 12 days of campsite monitoring and 539 in 15 days of tabling at trailheads.

Performed outreach at 13 different locations around the valley over 25 days over the summer.

158 groups surveyed.

Gave 15 children Leave No Trace lessons.

Talked to people from 32 states and 3 countries.

Handed out 439 camping maps to businesses.

Handed out 152 camping maps to National Forest users.

Handed out 111 WAG bags.

Directed 52 clicks to CBMBA camping website via VMS.

#### **Campsite Monitoring**

10 days of monitoring in Slate River Valley- 52% occupied for season

Talked to 216 campers

10 days of monitoring in Washington Gulch, 70% occupiers for season, talked to 394 campers

2 days of illegal camping monitoring in Gothic, talked to 4 campers

2 days of monitoring in Crush Creek, talked to 5 campers

1 day of monitoring in Cement Creek, talked to 2 campers

### **Survey**

We surveyed 158 groups, made up of 498 people, from 29 states and 2 foreign countries.

67.47% of campers surveyed were from CO.

The next most common states were: TX 4.82%, CA 3.41%, FL 2.61% and NH 1.81%.

56.3% of respondents found their campsites because they had been before and knew the area or received a recommendation from a friend who knows the area. Of those who had to find this information on their own,  $\frac{2}{3}$  used the internet to find their way to Washington Gulch or the Slate River Valley.

55% of groups had camped in this area before.

85% of respondents were in favor of the switch to designated camping and only 3% were opposed.

Nearly  $\frac{2}{3}$ 's of respondents had some prior knowledge of the issue and why this change to designated sites only was being made.

Most users surveyed didn't expect many amenities when coming to this type of camp site.

The most popular responses were (in descending order) nothing, fire pit, level ground, pit toilet and somewhere to throw out trash (near site or just in town).

Overwhelmingly, the most popular activities campers were doing while here were biking and hiking.

Over 70% of respondents had a plan for their poop.

Almost 50% were using the pit toilets, even if they planned on using cat holes, WAG bags, or their own toilet prior to showing up.

About a third of those surveyed had a self contained toilet in their camper, RV or van.

Most users didn't want to switch to fees or reservations.

There was a stronger resistance to reservations than fees.

The minority of users who wanted fees and/or reservations wanted them to:

Prevent people from leaving their area unattended for days while reserving the spot.

Using campsites as parking for cars or trailers while recreating and not camping.

Assure that they will have a spot when they show up.

To help pay for more toilets, enforcement, cleaning or trash receptacles.  
It would be good to have up to date fire ban information at the kiosk in each drainage.  
We found a need to have more trailer parking for OHV trailers, especially in Slate River Valley.  
There were a few instances of users taking up multiple sites to park trailers for the day which angered nearby campers.  
Users would like to have some way of knowing if there are any open sites aside from driving up and down each drainage (perhaps a pegboard system at the kiosks).  
Many users love what has been done this year, but are worried that there are going to be more restrictions put in place that will change the area too much.  
Many users appreciated that their comments, suggestions, and grievances were being heard by the county.

### **Work**

Built 1.25 miles of new trail  
Maintained/finished 2.75 miles of trail.  
Assisted with 8 volunteer events.  
Picked up 250+ lbs of trash.  
Cleaned up 64 campsites.  
Decommissioned 36 illegal fire rings, put out 1 fire in an illegal fire ring.  
Blocked off 5 illegal campsites.  
Worked with 35 partners.

Ochs asked how they responded to the handouts. Morgan reported they were handing out camping maps. The Chamber wanted more and visitors were given the website information so they could print it off for themselves. Morgan stated the last day of the program was yesterday.

Fonken asked who will be working with the hunters this year. Lavorini reported there have been conversations in the last couple of months. Diamond reported there will be a couple of days of outreach during the hunting kickoff but most of the outreach will be done in the field as usual. Alexander stated it would be worth it might be a good idea to reach out to the Gunnison Sportmans Association during site in days to see if they'd be willing to partner to get information out. Houck asked if anyone has been in contact with the Gunnison Wildlife Association to possibly partner with. Alexander stated that him and Diamond will be talking to some of the group tomorrow.

Ochs asked if Diamond has heard back from ONX Hunt and Diamond stated he hasn't yet. Lovelace asked how the STOR Corps is funded. Lavorini stated that would be good for another meeting. Lavorini stated that there has been a need for the program and as they develop they should have their own projects to work on. They will be working on their projects to go over what they can focus on. GOCO, TAPP and CPW were large contributors. Pagano stated that 2020 was funded by the CARES funding and partnership with NFF. In fall of 2020 they received the GOCO Resiliency Grant and that fund the group in 2021.

### **CRESTED BUTTE-TO-CRESTED BUTTE-SOUTH TRAIL COMMITTEE UPDATE**

Peterson reported that the committee reconvened and spent the meeting hearing from folks who have had part in the preliminary planning of the trail. The two alignments being explored are the CDOT right away and through private land away from the highway. They looked at where the alignments are. They also spoke about funding opportunities. They are going to meet in another month with a two hour work session to take a deeper look at the challenges and opportunities for both options.

Discussion followed on funding possibilities, trail location, County priority, and possible tax collection.

### **OPEN FORUM**

Lavorini reported the Gunnison Stewardship Funding is looking for project ideas. It's an annual funding cycle. In 2021 they doled out \$160,000 in grants.

Lavorini shared that earlier this week the STOR Committee for Olathe (ORCA- Ouray Recreation Conservation Alliance) had their first meeting. The Gunnison STOR Committee came up as a model to use.

Fonken reported that CB Nordic has signed on with Nordic Pulse to talk about mapping. It is an app to go and see what has been groomed. There is also a skier component.

Norton stated that the dissolution of CBG Trails caught them by surprise. They are talking with a Google engineer about the possibility of picking up all of the data from CBG Trails to keep it going and are in the beginning stages at this time.

Houck stated that a lot has occurred with the STOR Committee over the last four years and that it is important to reflect on that.

**ADJOURN:** The September 23, 2021, 2021 meeting of the Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee adjourned at 4:03 PM.

Prepared by Rebecca Ricord, Community Development, Plans Examiner