

**GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
November 18, 2021**

The November 18, 2021 Gunnison Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Tourism Committee (STORC) meeting was conducted in the Board of County Commissioner Board Room, 2nd floor meeting room, located at 200 E. Virginia Ave, Gunnison, CO, 81230 and by Zoom virtual online meeting, Gunnison, CO, 81230.

Committee Members Present:

Kevin Alexander, Chair
Hedda Peterson, MetRec
Kimberly Schappert, At-Large Community Member
Hannah Cranor, Stockgrowers' Association
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Commissioner
Dave Ochs, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association

Matt McCombs, USFS
Jake Jones, Crested Butte Land Trust
Mark Voegeli, CBMR
James Lovelace, BLM
Joellen Fonken, UGRWCD Advocates
John Norton, Gunnison Crested Butte Tourism Association
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 November 18, 2021 meeting to order at 2:07 P.M.

AGENDA APPROVAL: Agenda approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF October 28, 2021 MEETING MINUTES: Moved: by Jones and seconded by Schappert to approve the October 28, 2021 meeting minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

The next meeting will be December 16, 2021.

MT EMMONS LAND EXCHANGE

Sherburne presented on the Mt Emmons land exchange. Their company facilitates land exchanges. The concept of this land exchange has been talked about for many years now. Land exchanges are a tool for the federal government to better serve the public with public ownership. The land exchange process is

designed to ensure that the exchange is in the public interest and values are equal. Key policies: Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and the Federal Land Exchange Facilitation Act of 1988.

Overview of the Mt. Emmons Land Exchange: The land exchange is between Mount Emmons Mining Company (MEMC) and Gunnison National Forest. MEMC has proposed to acquire approximately 550 acres of USFS lands that encompass the operational footprint for the water treatment facility and adjacent land. USFS to acquire equal value land from MEMC, to add to the National Forest. This includes land commonly known as Three Peaks Ranch, which is located at the headwaters of Ohio Creek. It contains outstanding wetlands and wildlife management.

The objectives are: To permanently eliminate commercial extractive mining activities from Red Lady, establish perpetual recreational access to the upper portions of Red Lady for the Crested Butte community, prohibit future commercial or residential development on Mt. Emmons Mining company lands at Red lady and consolidate management of ongoing water treatment and remediation operations at the site.

Additional components: In addition, MEMC is working with the Town of Crested Butte, Gunnison County, the local community and other stakeholders on the following measure to be implemented upon completion of the land exchange; conservation and recreational easement that would prohibit residential and commercial development and allow recreational access to the upper portions of MEMC private property; deed restriction that would prohibit any commercial mining on Red Lady; withdrawal- an administrative withdrawal on the USFS land surrounding Red Lady would withdraw the ability to locate mining claims there. The CORE Act would make that withdrawal permanent, and MEMC will allow its unpatented mining claims to expire.

The timeline:

- MEMC is expecting to submit a proposal to the USFS for the exchange in early 2022
- The Forest Service will manage the land exchange until completion, MEMC intends to encourage public comment in advance of and during the exchange process.
- The land exchange is expected to be completed in 2023.

McCombs stated that if were able to do this in the time proposed at the complexity scale effort it would be a historic exchange. The average time is six to 15 years. The issue it resolves is quite historic.

Glass stated that they have submitted drafts of the two major conservation measures to the Town of Crested Butte, County and Crested Butte Land Trust. In terms of the starting date, they will not submit anything to the Forest Service formally until they have an agreement on the conservation measures. The easements would take effect at the same time as the land exchange is complete. The exchanges are, by law, done in equal value. Up to 25% of any valued difference can be equalized in cash. In addition to Three Peaks there are three other Forest Service inholdings. It's a larger package then what is here. The Town and County have hired a conservation easement expert to review the documents and they are hoping that review will occur quickly because the sooner it happens the sooner they can start the land exchange. In regards to the withdraw, the CORE Act would provide a perpetual permanent withdrawal. If the CORE Act doesn't pass and they do an administrative withdraw, Congress has given the Secretary of Interior the authority to issue public land owners. There would be no mining claims, leases, etc. It can only be done for 20 years if it is done administratively. They are really trying for the CORE Act and are hoping it passes but have a back up plan with the administrative withdraw.

McCombs stated that they have a cooperative relationship between the Town of Crested Butte and Gunnison County in a pre NEPA process. This allows them to share the information that they have, work together and have unique relationships with their community leaders. They are in complicit partnership with the Town of Crested butte and Gunnison County.

Sherburne stated that next year is a big yea for the land exchange and they are hoping to have everyone as a partner.

Ochs stated that he is thankful that they are considering the ski access. There is a desire of the community to extend the hiking trail where the Wagon Hill Trail butts up to the mine and is very busy.

Schappert asked about the patented mining claims and whether they are withdrawn. Believes public comment will be a big chunk of time. Also asked about the three other parcels and which ones they are, what the value is that they are putting on it now, and what resources are they using to equal it out and what the extraction process looks like. It makes her nervous. Glass stated that land exchanges are done on a fair market value for fair market value basis. The company has to pay x amount of dollars for the 500 acres that it wants at the waste water treatment plant. All of that is on forest land now. The reason for the exchange is that the company wants to operate on the land that is currently contaminated and has the water treatment plant. At the end of the exchange the goal is to invest in a new water treatment plant and further remediate the tailings. Three Peaks Ranch is not worth as much in dollar amounts as the 500 acres on Mt Emmons. The other parcels look like great inholdings that will be conveyed from private owners to the Forest Service. It's land that would be conveyed from private ownership, from MEMC Freeport ownership, to the United States in exchange to make the dollars values equalize. It also helps in public interest because they are equally gorgeous and valuable from an ecological standpoint. The withdraw will not protect any of the existing mining claims that are under Mt. Emmons today that are private mining claims. The two agreements at the front end of the deal that are being presented will address that. Agreement A covers the recreation access and no development up there. Agreement B is an atypical conservation easement, a subordination agreement to mine will be given up completely to Crested Butte Land Trust, should they accept that. Under Colorado Law, mining claims are always superior in terms of the right holders' right to access those minerals. As part of this agreement that right will be subordinated to CB Land Trust right, which will own the right to mine the minerals. CB Land Trust does not want to have any liability for the mining claim, the mine waste and the cleanup. The company will retain all of that liability and essentially, in perpetuity, convey the right to mine those minerals to the Land Trust. The company has provide the documents to the County, the Town and the Land Trust.

McCombs stated that when they take lands in through an exchange they access those lands and apportion them to the appropriate management area commiserate with their natural resources. Typically, that is the adjacent management area. For example, if they acquired Three Peaks Ranch they have already made the determination to request that the mine completely restore the site to remove all evidence of the ranch and it would be folded into the new forest plan and wildlife management plan because it is directly adjacent to Roadless and the wildlife management area that they proposed blankets the majority of Red Mountain.

Houck clarified the location of the parcels. There are 160 acres on the Cochetopa, at the top of Sheep's Creek, in the Rio Grande National Forest. And you can see the 3 Peaks ranch coming up from Baxter Gulch and when you come up from Carbon Creek the ranch sits up there. Fonken asked if there is a map that shows the acreage. Sherburne stated that a map of the location is forthcoming. They are just finalizing all of the boundaries at this time. McCombs stated they are in the final stages of working on a proposal everyone can accept before the multi-step process starts; public comments, etc. Sherburne and Glass went over the framework of the public engagement process.

Jones stated that he hasn't met anyone who isn't ok with the exchange but asked what the naysayers would say. Sherburne stated that she has heard that the big one that she has heard is the water treatment facility being by the mining company. It essentially removes a layer of bureaucracy for the Forest Service permitting process that the mining company has to go through. Some folks unfamiliar with the process may think that they lose a layer of protection or water quality mechanism but that's just not true.

Lavorini stated that at this time the area is used for skiing and wondered if that experience will change. Sherburne stated that she isn't certain but will follow up. Jones stated that he has seen the map and the way they have traveled up there in the past has been accounted for.

Houck stated that for the County this has been an urgent issue for 25 years. They are working on it diligently. The complexity of doing it is very detailed. Asked if the CORE Act stalls out or some is done

separately would they be able to attach this to that federal legislation as well? Glass stated that it is a map and as long as they have the map they can attach it to anything. Houck asked that if there isn't legislation to add it to can the grab it later on and add it if something comes out in the future. Glass stated that they can happen simultaneously.

CRESTED BUTTE BEACON PARK

Acuff reported that Beacon Park will be at the Dirt Jump Park behind the Crested Butte Community School. There will be ample parking next to the free Nordic trails and as part of their outreach program they do work with the school so they can walk right out to it. This is part of their outreach program that the STOR Committee helped support last year. Beacon Park is a place for people to train on how to use their beacons. Believes it will be a great amenity for backcountry users and the community. Houck stated that he likes the idea that it is accessible to everyone.

Acuff requested funding for Beacon Park. They are requesting \$8,000 from the Committee. Schappert asked if they are committing to the upkeep of it. Acuff stated that they are. Lavorini stated that they got the GOCC grants over a year ago, doesn't have the most updated budget and expense report right now. Peterson stated that she believes it is a good idea to fund the project. Puckett-Daniels asked how many seasons they will be able to use the equipment. Acuff stated that they should last at least three years.

Moved by: Schappert, seconded by Jones that the STOR Committee support the Beacon Park up to \$8,000, contingent upon the availability of funds. Motion passed unanimously.

GUNNISON COUNTY STEWARDSHIP FUND: PROJECTY PROPOSALS

Lavorini reported that they are kicking off the 2022 funding project. They will have at least \$150,000 available. Showed past projects, provided the funding cycle. Today he is requesting comments on the proposals received.

Discussion followed on the following proposals for funding:

CBMBA- like to request \$75,000 for the 2022 Crested Butte Conservation corps (CBCC) to support a trail and steamship crew of 5-7 members. The 2022 CBCC will operate from May through October and provide support to the Gunnison Ranger District, the Bureau of Land Management, local municipalities and key community stakeholders by providing regular trail maintenance and improvements on public lands in the Gunnison Valley. The CBCC will also partner with the Gunnison Ranger District to continue the installation and maintenance of the designated camping initiative and perform regular stewardship efforts in conjunction with stakeholders.

Gunnison Trails- Gunnison Trails requests \$60,000 from the Gunnison County Stewardship Fund to support our 2022 Professional Trail Crew. The 6-person trail crew will work a total of 3,600 hours on trail maintenance, construction and stewardship work on public lands across the Gunnison Basin. Work currently scheduled for 2022 includes building two new miles of non-motorized trail in Signal Peak, maintaining 45 miles of trail at Hartman Rocks and 20 miles of trail in Signal Peak and clearing and maintaining 25 miles of trail on the Gunnison National Forest. We will continue to partner with the BLM Gunnison Field Office on campsite cleanup and sagebrush restoration work at Hartman Rocks, as well as rollover installation and cheatgrass mitigation and monitoring efforts in Signal Peak. Our trail crew will also lead volunteer stewardship days with Western Colorado University students, the Gunnison and Crested Butte High School MTB Teams and the 6th grade class at the Gunnison Middle School, in addition to our weekly Trail Work Tuesdays.

HCCA- The purpose of this project is to address the decline of wetlands and beavers in Taylor Park, Colorado. In 2021, Phase I resulted in the implementation of around 50 low-tech process-based restoration structures on Trail Creek that mimic beaver activity and other natural processes. These structures reconnect rivers and streams to their natural floodplain through overbank flows and enhance the depth, extent, and duration of inundation on the landscape. With the help of volunteers, this exceeded

the project target of 20 structures.

Fieldwork for Trail Creek Phase 2 will occur over two weeks between July 15 and Sept 15, 2022. We are requesting funding to support 6 to 8 community volunteer days to help with staging and implementation of the structures in Phase 2. Funding would provide volunteers with safety equipment, lunches, on-site volunteer coordination, education, and oversight.

BLM- #1 - A new permanent toilet to serve the dispersed camping area accessed from the Gold Basin Road entrance to replace the current intermittently placed porta potty.

#2 - \$\$ to fund an assessment of campsites already existing in Hartman's and future development plans to see if there is a possibility of clustering more sites together to alleviate resource damage and provide better services like toilets.

The Nature Connection- The Nature Connection is a program of the Delta County School District with the goal of breaking down the barriers to getting outside. They do this through offering outdoor summer programs, environmental education field trips, internships in outdoor stewardship jobs and trail development near local schools. The Wilderness Trail Crew program offers up to 4 high school youth the opportunity to work with USFS staff to maintain and enhance trails in the Paonia Ranger District of the Gunnison National Forest. Crew members primarily camp in the backcountry and are responsible for clearing downfall, repairing tread and enhancing the visitor experience for the increasingly popular trails along the Kebler Pass Corridor in Gunnison County.

This experience not only helps keep our public lands safe and accessible, but also engages dedicated youth from underserved rural areas who have a passion for being outside and want to pursue a career in environmental stewardship. The Nature Connection is requesting \$25,000.

STOR Corps- The STOR Corps addresses one of Colorado's greatest challenges – promoting use of an unparalleled public lands experience while protecting landscapes for the future. We are seeking to return the Corps for a third season to continue to address priorities such as visitor outreach and monitoring, trail maintenance, habitat improvement, and restoration, among other projects. The NFF is seeking approximately \$10,000 in funds from the Gunnison Fund to support a 4–6-person crew that will work approximately 12 weeks during the summer 2022 field season.

Discussion followed on priorities and whether any of them would not be considered. Last year they awarded \$100,000 to CBCC and \$135,000 to Gunnison Trails. Lavorini will bring more detailed information to the January 2022 meeting for voting. Lavorini wanted to make sure that the proposals fell under the STOR Committee's priorities. There was no opposition to any of the proposals. The Nature Connection will present at the next meeting, explaining more about the group. Schappert will work on getting more information for costs for the BLM proposal.

CRESTED BUTTE-TO-CRESTED BUTTE SOUTH COMMITTEE UPDATE

Lavorini reported that they are submitting a concept paper to GOCO early next week requesting funds to support planning process. They will find out in March if they have the funds to support the planning process. There is a full proposal due at the end of the year and will be requesting letters of support.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

McCombs reported that he was offered and accepted the position of Colorado State Forester and Director of the Colorado State Forest Service effective January 3, 2021. Last meeting will be in December.

ADJOURN: The November 18, 2021, 2021 meeting of the Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee adjourned at 4:04 PM.

Prepared by Rebecca Ricord, Community Development, Plans Examiner