

**GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
November 17, 2022**

The November 17, 2022 Gunnison Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Tourism Committee (STORC) meeting was conducted by Zoom virtual online meeting, Gunnison, CO, 81230.

Committee Members Present:

Jake Jones, Chair, Crested Butte Land Trust
Kimberly Schappert, Vice Chair, At-Large
Community Member
Sonja Chavez, UGRWCD
Dave Ochs, At Large Member
Matt Reed, High Country Conservation
Advocates
Ian Billick, Town of Crested Butte
Brandon Diamond, CPW
Roman Kolodziej, Town of Mount Crested Butte

Tim Kugler, At-Large Member
Dayle Funka, USFS
Derek Nehrenberg, MetRec
Celeste Helminski, At-Large
Mark Voegli, CBMR

Others in Audience:

Beverly Richards
Bob Goettge
Cindy Williams
Janna Hansen, Town of Crested Butte
Matthew Whiting
Matt Quinn
Nate Seward
Alyssa Moore

Scott Clarkson
Morgan Anderson
Andrew Sandstrom
Martin Schmidt
Len Mason

Staff:

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

CALL TO ORDER: Jake Jones called the November 17, 2022 meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

MINUTE APPROVAL: Moved by Tim Kugler seconded by Dave Ochs to approve the minutes as presented. Passed unanimously

AGENDA APPROVAL: Agenda approved as amended.

The next meeting will be December 15, 2022

Gunnison Wildlife Data & Recreation Impacts to Wildlife-Kevin Blecha

Will be revisited at a later date.

Comment from the floor: Dayle Funka introduced Matthew Quinn as the new Rec Staff. Matthew Quinn introduced himself.

Planning for Wildlife Tools-Cindy Williams

Williams facilitates the Chaffee Rec Council. She is looking to have a conversation to expand the planning of wildlife goals to include Lake and Gunnison Counties.

The plan includes the Big Picture, the Why, the What and How, Tool Use and Q&A.

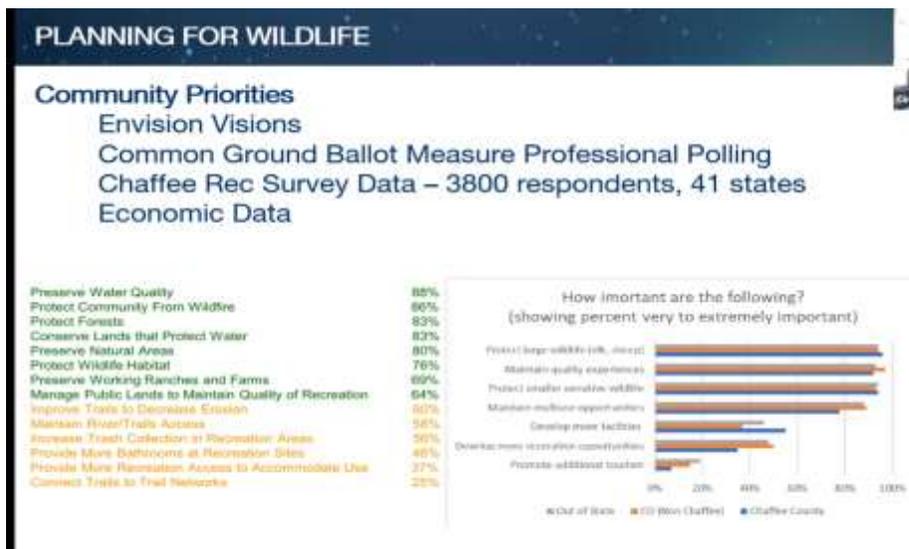
Big Picture:

Started with Gunnison One Valley Prosperity. Chaffee County did a similar thing called Envision. Out of Envision the community developed 4 visions. One was to have healthy forest waters and wildlife in balance with outdoor recreation growth. And another was sustainable agriculture lands. An all lands county based outdoor recreation management plan. The plan was approved by the commission in June of 2021. CPW developed the Regional Partnership Initiative. Help regions across Colorado to create plans and wrap those together. Chaffee County used the County Governments and the USDA Forest Service – A Guidebook for Working Together.

Wildlife and Recreation – The Why:

Planning for Wildlife and Community Priorities. 4 priorities- – Envision Visions, Common Ground Ballot Measure Professional Polling, and Economic Data.

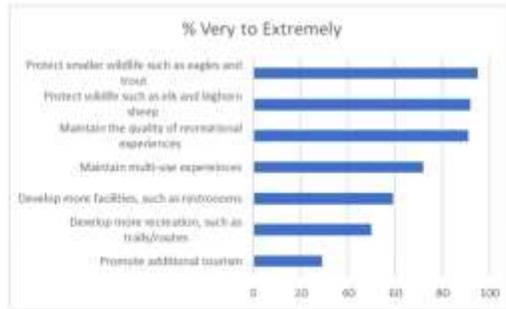
Chaffee County Poll:



Lake County Poll:

Lake County Community Wildfire and Recreation Survey, 2021
(488 respondents)

As recreation expands in Lake County, how important are the following?



Sonja Chavez asked if Williams felt that Covid affected the surveys. Williams answered that the Chaffee County poll was done pre Covid and the Lake County was post Covid and the results are similar. She does not believe Covid had any affect. Brandon Diamond asked how much the surveys cost and how did they fund them? Lake County survey was around \$10,000 and the Lake County govt funded it. Chaffee County was maybe \$20,000 funded by a combination of the county, CPW and GOCO funds. They used the visitor's bureau to process.

Williams shared a report card on wildlife populations. A= things are getting better, B=population is staying the same, C=decline of up to 1% per year, D=decline 1.5% per year, F=decline more than 1.5%.

| Wildlife | Grade | Data |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
|  | Overall | C Declining populations of concern |
| | Big Horn Sheep | D 21% decline from 2000 to 2021; 0.9% per year. Includes S11, S12, S17, S20, S47, S66, G14 |
| | Mountain Goat | D 31% decline from 2000 to 2021; 1.3% per year. Includes G1, G2, G3, G14, S66 |
| | Mule Deer | C 13% increase from 2000 to 2021 but have declined sharply since 1960 and remain 23% below the bottom end of the population objective. Includes D13, D16. |
|  | Elk | C 8% decline from 2000 to 2021; 0.4% per year. Includes E17, E22. |
| | Pronghorn | A Increasing population of 150 to 200. Vulnerable due to small population. |
| | Moose | A Local numbers of this introduced species increased from about 20 to 50 since 2000, consistent with statewide trends |
|  | Boreal Toad | F Decline of 70% of breeding sites since 2013 when chytrid fungus was first detected in Chaffee County. The two remaining breeding sites in Lake County have seen sharp declines in productivity with no successful breeding in years. |
| | Raptors | C Populations of raptors (Bald Eagle, Osprey, Peregrine, Prairie Falcon) are relatively stable based on nest and roost use. Some concern on Golden Eagle and Northern Goshawk population declines. |
| | Susan's Purse Making Caddisfly | F Not documented in 2017 or 2022 at a single known location in Chaffee County. Not documented in Lake County. |
|  | Black Swift | C Single Chaffee Co. nesting location at risk from recreation use. Not documented in Lake Co. |
| | Townsend's Big Eared Bat | B Population trends are unknown, but some actions taken to protect habitat in Chaffee County. Not documented in Lake County to date. |

Williams shared planning for wildlife data is important yet declining. Causes of decline include: recreation impacts and development, dispersed camping, designated trails, highways, commercial development user created trails, and increase desire for outdoor recreation and growth.

Celeste Helminski asked if the question ever came up about supporting tourism. Williams responded that they have a few things in place: One is a program called "Adventure by Nature", done by the Visitor's Center. If a visitor takes a pledge about how you are going to behave while visiting, you get a Chaffee pass. It is a bunch of coupons to local businesses. Also, they started a rec rangers' program. It puts 8 rangers on the ground. The community pays for. They have a Rec Adopters group. They picked up 15,000 lbs. of trash off of public lands.

Roman Kolodziej asked Williams if she could repeat what she said about hunting and fishing contribution to the economy and its rating toward recreation. Williams responded that hunting and fishing was the top driver of the recreation as far as revenue.

What can we do about it?

What can we do about it?

- Vegetation treatment dovetailed with wildfire fuels mitigation
- Highway crossings
- Habitat enhancement projects
- Manage new recreation development for the least impact
- Manage current recreation for lower impact
- Regional recreation planning
- Connect wildlife tools to Land Use Code
- Protect critical habitats
- Appropriate hunting and predator management
- Private lands protection

BUT we need a shared tool to support collaborative work...

Planning for wildlife tools. Who made them and how? Created by the following organizations:

Who



The process point, work to get data, rank, human impact map, habitat map, develop planning for wildlife tool, finalize tools,

Process-

Step 1-gather wildlife habitat data. 44 species considered. Multiple habitats

Step 2- rank species by the following: rarity, population trend, economic contribution, specificity of data, and evidence

Steps 1 and 2 combines to rank and prioritize species.

Step 3 – Ranked habitat map. Most important and most sensitive habitat for the most species. 33 habitats combined as ranked.

Dave Ochs asked if Williams can explain the percentile of recreational impact of all winter habitats. Williams responded that the recreational impact is varies and increases depending on the species and if they are in reproduction or winter habitat mode.

Ian Billick stated that a big part of wildlife habitat value has to do with connectivity proximately to impacts. Billick asked if this is incorporated. Williams responded, yes. That is exactly how it is incorporated.

Billick also stated that he would appreciate the inclusion of pollinators in the target species. Williams agreed to the importance but stated that they only have data on the Caddisfly at this time.

Step 4 – Current Human Impacts rec map. Combine acknowledged human impact map with the habitat map. The intensity of use was ranked.

Step 5 – Where is the most important AND undisturbed habitat? Combine current impact with habitat. The result is a planning for wildlife tool. They took community input and cross checked it to CPW Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind.

Finalize Tools, Propose Use-

They held a formal 30-day community comment – 600 comments were received. They used comments to adjust the plan and finalize the Rec Plan Language.

Chaffee Rec Plan Approved-

PC approval at a public meeting then adopted in County Comprehensive Plan

How is the model being used – Chaffee County is using the model:

-trails system and conservation plan, camping plan, county LUC, CPW comments to planning commission, informing habitat projects and fuels treatment

The tool is available on CODEX, everyone in community can see map

Working to expand model to include Lake and Gunnison County

Matt Reed asked if Chaffee County is looking into wildlife crossing tools. Williams responded, yes, and Colorado CDOT got a grant from RESTORE for a wildlife crossing.

Ian Billick stated the data could also be used for land acquisition/conservation, trailheads/facilities, and transportation planning. He asked Cindy Williams if they have pushed that in Chaffee County? Cindy Williams responded, they have not.

Jake Jones asked that the areas that are gray or neutral are potentially ag lands, does this put a bullseye on irrigated ag land for development? Williams responded that is a mix. Irrigated Ag lands end up in the highest quality habitat bucket because most them become critical winter habitat or severe winter range.

Derek Nehrenberg asked if this is moving forward in Gunnison County? Cindy Williams stated that by working with Brandon Diamond and Joe Lavorini, they have developed funding to expand to Lake and Gunnison. The model is in progress in Lake County right now.

Ian Billick stated that a lot of the value of a model like this is integrating and bringing together lots of information and to reveal non-intuitive things. Billick stated that his sense is Gunnison County is pretty intensively studied. He is wondering if that the non-intuitive results that would emerge and spending time on the model is just an excuse to avoid the hard decisions that we need to make. Williams responded that it was not just collecting the data but making the data accessible. Also pulling all the information into one map has changed the conversation.

Sonja Chavez commented, it is a good exercise and from the Upper Gunnison perspective the value of putting together the layers. There is a lot of data and there are some data gaps.

Joe Lavorini asked Cindy Williams about the process. Who was engaged, time commitments and who the key players were. Williams responded that in Lake County there is a leader's council and they will steer the process. They meet every 1-2 months over a 9-month period for about an hour and half. They will approve the maps and engage the community, There is also a technical committee who actually drives the models. The technical committee meets every 2 weeks over a 6-month period. CPW is creating the model. There are also stakeholders. Dayle Funka asked if they had a break down of CPW, Forest Service, BLM, State and private land acreage. Cindy Williams responded that they do. In Chaffee County they are 83% Forest Service, 7% BLM, 1-2% State, and the rest in private.

Next Steps for Gunnison-

The STOR Committee has endorsed and are moving forward with this. Lavorini shared the rough schedule for Gunnison County. Lavorini stated that hopefully get this accomplished by end of next year. Early in the new year they will ask for volunteers to participate on a subcommittee. Sonja Chavez asked if the stakeholder list is developed. Lavorini stated that it is just his initial thoughts at this time. Lavorini stated that the stakeholders list can be distributed and added to.

Joe Lavorini asked if the survey portion of the planning needs to be done in Gunnison County. Brandon Diamond stated that he has been thinking about it since hearing about the survey that Envisions conducted. And thinks it could be important.

Brief Updates –

Crested Butte to Crested Butte South Multimodal Trail Planning – Cathie Pagano

Cathie Pagano updated the committee that the Commissioners want to do whatever they can to avoid accidents. There is an RFP out there for the planning of the trail, no construction. There have been are 3 proposals received. The conversation is to ask for volunteers for the review and interview committee. The county has committed \$75,000 in 2023 for the planning. A MMOF grant was received for \$125,000, but no one can be hired or any money spent until CDOT finalizes the agreements. The RFP's out are for design and create, not construction. Lavorini and Pagano will do an initial review of the proposals with a team. Initial reviews will be between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Dave Ochs volunteered to be on the committee.

Roman Kolodziej stated that Dave Ochs referenced the Met Rec needs assessment and this topic being number 1 on it a few years ago stated that this was priority. Kolodziej does not remember it being highlighted for support. Kolodziej is wondering if this will become priority over other issues that Met Rec has labeled as needs. Derek Nehrenberg stated that he believes the needs assessment had listed rec center as number 1 need, trails as number 2 need, and connected to #2 was connectivity which would include the Crested Butte to Crested Butte South Trail. Ian Billick commented that it will be up to the

future Met Rec boards on what capital investments to make. Janna Hansen stated the Town of Crested would volunteer for the review committee.

Strategic Planning Update – Joe Lavorini

Lavorini stated that they are close to being done with the stakeholder assessment interviews. There will be an update at the December meeting.

Future Agenda Items to Consider-

Matt Reed, High Country Conservation Advocates - Mt Emmons Mineral Withdraw requests Thomason Divide water supply, Mt. Emmons Mineral Withdrew. Matt Reed is asking for 5 minutes.

Committee Comments – Jake Owens stated he thinks this might a little out of STOR, it could be a redundant step. Kim Schappert stated that she does not think this is not out of the realm of STOR. Jake Jones stated that they will do an informal vote to put this on the agenda. Matt Reed will email a summary and a draft letter to committee members before the next meeting and the item will be put on the agenda.

Len Mason, WCU – Innovative Finance for National Forests. Asking for 10-15 minutes

Committee Comments – Unanimous agreement to add to a future agenda.

Gunnison County, MetRec, TAPP, Legislative Updates

Committee Comments – Unanimous agreement to add to a future agenda

Other future items: Sonja Chavez suggested that they could give a presentation on the wildfire risk assessment – future agenda item

Joe Lavorini reminded the committee of the early date of the next meeting, December 15, 2022.

ADJOURN: The November 17, 2022 meeting of the Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee adjourned at 3:58 pm.

Prepared by Shannon Frias, Community Development, Administrative Assistant III