

**GUNNISON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND OUTDOOR TOURISM COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 24, 2023**

The August 24, 2023 Gunnison Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Tourism Committee (STORC) meeting was conducted in person and by Zoom virtual online meeting, Gunnison, CO, 81230.

Committee Members Present:

Jake Jones, Chair, Crested Butte Land Trust
Kimberly Shappert, Vice Chair, At-Large
Celeste Helminski, At-Large Member
Derrick Nehrenberg, MetRec
James Lovelace, BLM
Roman Kolodziej, Town of Mount Crested Butte
Laura Puckett-Daniels, BOCC
Jennifer DeBoer, WCU
Jeremy Johndrow, At-Large Member
Dayle Funka USFS

Steve Guerrieri, Stockgrowers'
David Ochs, At-Large
Tim Kugler, At-Large
John Norton, Tourism Association
Chris Parmeter, At-Large Member
Ian Billick, Town of Crested Butte
Mark Voegeli, CBMR
LB Mullin Jr., At-Large Member
Brandon Diamond, CPW

Others in Audience:

Matthew Quinn USFS
Hedda Peterson

Scott Clarkson, CB Chamber
Alana Nichols

Staff:

Cathie Pagano, Community and Economic Development Director
Rachael Blondy, Community and Economic Development Planner I

CALL TO ORDER: Jake Jones called the August 24, 2023 meeting to order at 2:17 PM.

MINUTE APPROVAL: Minutes from July 27th, 2023. Moved to approve by Kimberly Shappert and seconded by Tim Kugler. Passed unanimously.

Jake Jones passed the floor to Cathie Pagano to discuss item **STOR Committee Strategic Plan:**

Strategic Result C.3. to develop implementation plan: "3. The STOR Committee will work with state and federal partners to identify and prioritize opportunities for funding support for ongoing maintenance of resources on state and federal lands" and D.1. "By December 31, 2023, identify and prioritize additional recreation infrastructure funding needs for high use areas to support a fee proposal on high use federal and other public lands."

Cathie Pagano called upon Dayle Funka, USFS and Matt Quinn, USFS to discuss resource maintenance on Forest Service land. The conversation focused on bathroom maintenance and the lack of manpower, resources and time the federal land agencies have to dedicate to this subject. Committee members were concerned about the lack of proper human waste disposal on public lands.

Matt reviewed the process the USFS went through to hire a contractor for bathroom maintenance. The first contract included the vault toilets at Swampy Pass, Kebler Pass, Slate River, Gothic and Brush Creek. There was a second contract that included Taylor Canyon and Taylor Park, but the USFS did not receive any bids for the second contract. USFS hired the contractor to help clean toilets and it has helped significantly. The main issue the USFS ran into when contracting out was the level of details required in the USFS/NFF contract, which led to only one person bidding on the contract.

- The USFS, the NFF and the County could work together to simplify the contract to encourage more applicants. There is opportunity to put the RFP out earlier and help applicants walk through the contract.

The committee discussed how the West Maroon Trailhead bathroom has been locked. Dayle clarified that that specific vault toilet is on White River National Forest (WRNF) land, and that the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests (GMUG) is too understaffed to send someone over Schofield Pass for maintenance.

- WRNF could hire a seasonal position based in the GMUG territory to provide staff support.

The committee discussed funding, and whether the funds that weren't used for the second contract roll over year to year. It was unclear, but the new NFF staff person should know when they settle into their role. The committee realized that funding is not the main issue preventing maintenance of public lands bathrooms and questioned how STOR can support in the most effective way. The main issue is that manpower is missing.

Dayle shared that soon the USFS will be charging for designated dispersed camping in Gothic using a concessionaire and that Lake Irwin area will have a day use fee. Lake Irwin is in the process of being redesigned and redeveloped. The process has been successful because the NFF helped with the RFP to hire a design firm.

Brush Creek could be converted to a built campground and then turn into designated dispersed camping once there is an established area. This designated area could help with the human waste issue that currently exists. The USFS would need to look at drainage issues and infrastructure before this could happen. By adding more built infrastructure, people will be more likely to use spaces correctly.

Jeremy Johndrow shared that the public land partners should utilize outfitters that are already out on federal lands. He is currently trading work for permits through the Trail Stewardship Credit Project. (JJs Jeeps will be building shelter for porta pottys up Cement Creek.)

Mark Voegeli pointed out that as you start to add porta pottys out the drainages, the porta potty companies can't host and maintain the ones in areas that they need the most at Crested Butte Mountain Resort.

The committee asked if agencies can share staff for this maintenance, but USFS, CPW and BLM all shared that they do not have additional staff capacity to share.

USFS has a lot of volunteers, and they have been able to share responsibilities with outfitters (Three Rivers, Scenic Rivers) for day use areas along the Taylor River.

Tim Kugler shared that Gunnison Trails would consider cleaning toilets if they're passing by on their work loop, but that they do not pass many of the vault toilets in question. Dave Ochs suggested STOR members could all promote the successful "B plan" marketing again. This campaign shared that if you are showing up in Crested Butte on a Friday evening to camp, you should have a plan B, as designated campsites will most likely be filled.

- Could STOR create community messaging and marketing campaign to teach people how to poop outside? What happened to the Mountain Manners program? There is opportunity to create a volunteer corps or ambassador program to reach people at trailheads.

John Norton claimed that the Valley has created this problem by going to designated camping without utilizing a reservation system. Is there potential to require reservations for camping that are free, but there would be a penalty if you no show. Potential to take direction from Recreation.gov.

It's difficult to enforce on federal land, considering enforcement officers have to go through extra hoops to be certified.

The STOR D1 committee has worked with USFS on identifying parking lots that could become more official and paid parking – Brush Creek, Tent City, Cement Creek. However, if the USFS collects fees, it adds a level of accountability that isn't desired.

- There is opportunity to create a **pass through** – the county could steward fees on behalf of USFS, fiscal responsibility would be on county. The fees would go back to paying for the site maintenance. This is similar to the existing USFS concessionaire permits.

Jake Jones inquired if STOR has the financial capacity to support a third party. He suggested the possibility of investing in a multi-drainage infrastructure plan. This report could identify a comprehensive plan and a prioritized list of infrastructure needs.. There is opportunity to include messaging and marketing strategy as a part of it.

Derrick Nehrenberg agreed that outdoor problems are handled tacitly and having a regional plan would be valuable to full valley. The current Met Rec Recreation master planning scope is broad. (Gothic to Gunnison, Indoor and Outdoor, Winter and Summer) but Hedda Peterson pointed out that the plan goes out to trailheads, but not beyond.

- Does STOR have the funding for a recreational use master plan? Could STOR utilize the Gunnison Stewardship fund, it could tap into community philanthropic funding.
- Would the NFF/County person be in charge of a master plan process?
- The USFS Forest Plan will most likely be slow to finalize. The USFS agrees a master plan would be a great tool but is worried that they wouldn't be able to implement what is identified due to lack of manpower.

Cathie Pagano inquired if STOR could focus more on helping support USFS with individual projects instead of waiting for another plan.

- USFS will share a currently comprehensive list of infrastructure needs by the end of 2023.

Jim Lovelace shared that the BLM has a fee proposal out for public review – the BLM is considering expansion of existing fees at Lake Fork, Mill Creek, OBJ from \$10 to \$20. BLM has breakdown of campground fees in the area.

- Does STOR want to weigh in on fee proposal? The BLM recognizes STOR comments would hold a lot of weight.

ADJOURN: The August 24, 2023 meeting of the Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee adjourned at 4:00 PM.