



STOR Committee Meeting Agenda

April 24th, 2025: 2 – 4PM Hybrid
Meeting

For STOR Committee Members & Guests: *This meeting will be held in-person at the Blackstock Building – 200 W Virginia Ave, Gunnison, CO 81230.*

For the General Public: *The meeting will also be held virtually on Zoom at the following link: <https://gunnisoncounty-org.zoom.us/j/86913079445?pwd=w7cZK6GjdM8kHatroi9aOUvNdcJ2nd.1>*

- 2:00 pm **Call to Order – Tim Kugler (Committee Chair)**
Approval of January 2025 Minutes. Tim Kugler.
- 2:05pm **Strategic Plan Goal Setting - Nick Catmur**

Reviewing strategic results for goal A. Promote a sustainable, resilient community that supports thriving natural ecosystems and native wildlife resources, a vibrant rural and ranching culture, and a diverse recreation economy.
- 2:40pm Reviewing strategic results for goal D. Minimize degradation of natural resources and enhance accessibility of recreational amenities by focusing recreational development close to population centers and emphasizing conservation and wildlife habitat preservation in outlying areas.
- 3:30 pm **Pulse Check on Strategic Results, are we missing anything? – Nick Catmur**
- 3:40 pm **STOR Advocacy Letter review – Cathie Pagano**
- 3:55pm **Update: Funding for USFS Season Staff – Nick Catmur**
- 4:00 pm **Adjourn**

A. Promote a sustainable, resilient community that supports thriving natural ecosystems and native wildlife resources, a vibrant rural and ranching culture, and a diverse recreation economy.

1. By _____ STOR will work with CPW to help and Identify high priority areas for wildlife conservation with a focus on conserving land around highway 135 for a potential wildlife overpass
2. By _____ STOR will expand the gate replacement project to include BLM lands and more USFS lands

B. Foster a culture for residents and visitors that demonstrates an ethic of environmental stewardship and respect for our community.

1. By _____ STOR will Develop a Visitor Management Framework for the valley that identifies the most critical management issues on public and conserved lands and identifies methods and opportunities to mitigate negative impacts and improve the user experience.
2. By _____ STOR will develop a “plan B” for campers and pursue additional opportunities outside of federal land to provide plan to accommodate people who can’t find a campsite.

C. Support collaboration between federal land management agencies, state and local government, nonprofits, and user groups to improve management of recreation and natural resources.

1. By January 31st of each year The STOR Committee will prioritize annual funding recommendations for the Gunnison Stewardship Fund based on this strategic plan and overall STOR Committee mission.
2. By _____ STOR will identify and inventory priority high use recreation areas/sites and improvements to provide adequate infrastructure and amenities to accommodate demand.

3. The STOR Committee will work with state and federal partners to identify and prioritize opportunities to support funding and or alternative management strategies for resources on federal lands.

D. Minimize degradation of natural resources and enhance accessibility of recreational amenities by focusing recreational development close to population centers and emphasizing conservation and wildlife habitat preservation in outlying areas.

1. By _____ STOR will identify high priority infrastructure projects (2-3) that achieve the above goal and apply for funding through the available grant funding.
2. By _____ STOR will identify 3-5 high use non-federal trailheads for improvement and pilot infrastructure opportunities to improve the user experience and accessibility while also improving environmental outcomes through the inclusion of bathrooms, trash disposal, hardening, and other improvements.

Tim Kugler, Chair
Gunnison County
Sustainable Tourism & Outdoor Recreation Committee
221 N Wisconsin St. Suite D
Gunnison, CO 81230

April 24, 2025

Representative Jeff Hurd
Senator Michael Bennet
Senator John Hickenlooper
INSERT ADDRESS HERE

Re: Impacts to public lands and local communities from recent federal actions

Dear [Representative/Senator],

On behalf of the Gunnison County Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation (STOR) Committee—an appointed coalition of diverse stakeholders including agricultural producers, conservation groups, recreation nonprofits, and land trusts—we respectfully urge your strong support for robust Fiscal Year 2026 funding for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and National Park Service (NPS) recreation programs.

Gunnison County, located in rural western Colorado, is composed of more than 80% public lands. These lands are the foundation of our local economy, attracting residents and visitors alike for world-class outdoor recreation—hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing, biking, camping, and boating. Tourism and recreation are not merely lifestyle amenities in Gunnison County—they are our primary economic drivers.

Despite surging visitation and growing demand, the USFS and BLM have faced chronic underfunding and understaffing for decades. This gap has left local communities without the resources or capacity to address the growing needs on over 2 million acres of federal lands. Public lands in our county support not only recreation but also ranching, timber, mining, and energy development. Yet, it is recreation and tourism that generate the greatest economic return. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, outdoor recreation contributes \$17.2 billion annually to Colorado's economy.

Underinvestment in federal land management has real, visible consequences: overflowing toilets at trailheads, unmanaged trash, wildfire risk from unattended campfires, and widespread erosion—all of which jeopardize visitor safety and degrade the natural resources we depend on. Additionally, the lack of staffing may gravely impact the USFS and BLM's ability to respond to wildfire or be forced to reallocate all staff that remains at local agencies when a

wildfire does break out. These issues are not theoretical—they are impacting our communities now.

We also express strong support for the bipartisan **Public Lands in Public Hands Act (H.R. 718)**, which ensures that public lands managed by the Department of the Interior and USFS remain in public ownership. Selling off these lands would be devastating to our rural economies and threaten livelihoods rooted in outdoor tourism, conservation, and ranching.

While Gunnison County faces a housing shortage like many rural areas, public lands are not a viable or appropriate solution. They are not connected to existing infrastructure in a way that makes development practical or cost-effective. We are actively addressing housing needs through local policies, incentives, and strategic development. Meanwhile, our agricultural lands—many of which rely on public lands for seasonal grazing—would be gravely threatened by privatization. These operations are critical to our food supply and rural heritage.

We urge you to:

- Prioritize full and sustained funding for USFS, BLM, and NPS recreation programs and management;
- Support the passage of H.R. 718 to protect public lands from sale or privatization; and
- Recognize that strong federal support for public lands is a direct investment in the economic vitality, public safety, and ecological resilience of rural communities like ours.

Thank you for your leadership and attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Tim Kugler, STOR Committee Chair

About the STOR Committee

The STOR Committee is a community coalition, created by the Gunnison County Board of Commissioners to improve and maintain tourism and outdoor recreation in a manner that is sustainable (environmentally, socially, and financially) and aligns with community values. The committee is structured to be a wide-ranging group that acts thoughtfully, efficiently, and proactively to address negative impacts and develops unique approaches to create a sustainable tourism economy and outdoor recreation experience while preserving the natural resources of Gunnison County.

Committee representation includes municipalities, non-profit organizations, agricultural groups, and land management agencies, among others. In some cases, individual STOR Committee members may refrain from supporting an issue due to potential or perceived conflicts of interest. This letter represents a consensus opinion of the STOR Committee, but it may not reflect unanimity.





STOR Committee Meeting

Minutes March 27, 2024

Hybrid Meeting

For STOR Committee Members & Guests: *This meeting will be held in-person at the Blackstock Building – 200 W Virginia Ave, Gunnison, CO 81230.*

For the General Public: *The meeting will also be held virtually on Zoom at the following link:*
<https://gunnisoncounty-org.zoom.us/j/87637105265?pwd=Rkt2d2NoM3NubTJWMIz5bnJzNjVvUT09>

Committee Members Present:

Jake Jones, Nick Catmur, Andrew Sandstrom, LB Mullin, Chris Parmeter, Laura Pucket Daniels, Dave Ochs, Cathie Pagano, Tim Kugler Derrick Neiderer, Gabi Prochaska, Jeremy Johndrow, Hedda Peterson, Jen DeBoer, Steve Duke, Jon Kaminsky, Marisela Ballesteros, Dayle Funka

Jake Jones (Committee Chair) called to order

Approval of December 2024 Meeting Minutes

Prochaska made a motion to approve the minutes and Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Daniels abstained.

Selection of new Chair and Vice Chair

Tim Kugler was nominated for chair by Ochs and seconded by Prochaska. Andrew Sandstrom was nominated for vice chair by Jones and seconded by Daniels. Kugler was appointed chair and Sandstrom was appointed vice chair. Nominations for chair and vice chair were unanimous.

Update on Existing Strategic Plan

Catmur reviewed the previous strategic plan and how it is to be implemented in 2024. The committee discussed any changes they would like to make to the strategic plan for 2025. They decided not to make any major changes to the plan but added several key issues, such as trash, human waste, unattended campfires, and camping outside of designated areas.

Discussion for new Strategic Planning Initiatives

The committee discussed strategies to guide tourists to appropriate hiking and camping areas, including signage, digital messaging, and promoting “Plan B” camping options when popular sites are full. A subcommittee will continue work on messaging, stewardship, and

identifying alternative camping areas. They also discussed funding for seasonal employees and maintenance and agreed that further discussion on Forest Service staffing support is needed.

Updates on local fallout from recent federal actions

Commissioner Houck shared how recent federal actions are impacting recreation and wildlife projects due to limited staffing. The Forest Service will continue managing areas as best they can with current resources and a letter to the congressional representatives expressing concerns about resources in the community will be drafted and sent to committee members.

Jones adjourned the meeting.

DRAFT