A picture containing shape

Description automatically generated

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL MEETING, HELD MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2023, AT 3:30 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS MILLCREEK CITY HALL, 3330 SOUTH 1300 EAST, MILLCREEK, UTAH.**

**Present:**  John Knoblock, Chair

Carl Fisher, Co-Chair

Amber Broadaway

Caitlin Curry

Dan Zalles

Danny Richardson

Dave Fields

Del Draper

Dennis Goreham

Ed Marshall

Hilary Lambert

Kelly Boardman

Kirk Nichols

Linda Johnson

Maura Hahnenberger

Megan Nelson

Michael Marker

Mike Christensen

Mike Doyle

Morgan Mingle

Nathan Rafferty

Pat Shea

Roger Borgenicht

Sarah Bennett

Stuart Derman

Woody Lee

**Staff:** Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director

Samantha Kilpack, Director of Operations

Mia McNeil, Community Engagement Intern

**Opening**

1. **John Knoblock will Open the Stakeholders Council Meeting as Chair of the Stakeholders Council of the Central Wasatch Commission.**

Chair John Knoblock called the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Stakeholders Council Meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. He noted that there were attendees both in person and online.

1. **Chair Knoblock will Call for a Motion to Approve the Minutes from the September 25, 2023, Stakeholders Council Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Linda Johnson moved to APPROVE the Meeting Minutes from the September 25, 2023, Stakeholders Council Meeting. Kirk Nichols seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Council.

1. **Announcements:**
   1. **Stakeholders Received a Response from UDOT Via Email Regarding the ECCR.**

Executive Director, Lindsey Nielsen, reported that the CWC received a response letter from the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”). The Stakeholders Council had sent a request to the CWC Board that there be a response to the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Impact Statement (EIS”) Record of Decision (“ROD”). The CWC Board submitted a letter to UDOT and a response letter was received. Ms. Nielsen noted that the UDOT response letter was included in the Meeting Materials Packet. The letter stated that there was nothing left for UDOT to respond to. Ultimately, the request to engage in an environmental collaboration and conflict resolution had been denied. Chair Knoblock wondered whether the CWC would take action on the letter. Ms. Nielsen stated that given the response, the CWC Board felt there was nothing more to do.

* 1. **Youth Council.**

Ms. Nielsen reported that the Youth Council convened for the first time. She explained that this was a new endeavor being led by Community Engagement Intern, Mia McNeil. The Youth Council convened in October and created several committees. She noted that everyone on the Youth Council is enthusiastic. She looked forward to seeing what the Committee Members achieve.

Ms. McNeil reported that three committees were formed that focus on different issues in the area. There will be a lot of discussion and information will be shared with the Stakeholders Council in the future. She informed those present that there are some passionate young people involved in the Youth Council. There are 14 members of the Council in total. It was noted that some of the Youth Council Members are observing the current Stakeholders Council Meeting virtually.

* 1. **Ski Bus Bypass Service Begins on November 26.**

Ms. Nielsen reported that the Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”) Ski Bus Bypass Service started on November 26, 2023. The Ski Bus Bypass Service is catalyzed whenever Little Cottonwood Canyon needs to be closed for maintenance or avalanche work. When there is a road closure, the Sandy City Police Department escorts the UTA ski bus from 9400 South and Highland Drive to the Park and Ride lot at the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon. She reiterated that there will be a Ski Bus Bypass Service whenever the canyon needs to be closed for maintenance.

* 1. **CWC Board Retreat, December 15, 2023, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Millcreek City Hall.**

Ms. Nielsen reported that the CWC Board Retreat is scheduled to take place on December 15, 2023. Stakeholders Council Members were welcome to attend the Retreat at Millcreek City Hall. This year, the decision was made to join the CWC Board Retreat and the CWC December Board Meeting. The business portion of the meeting will take place at the end of the CWC Board Retreat. The Retreat was scheduled to run from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. She reiterated that all were welcome to join.

* 1. **Visitor Use Study Questions.**

Chair Knoblock reported that the Visitor Use Study was included in the Meeting Materials Packet. After reviewing the study he had concerns about portions of the data. Some percentages were listed of the resort skiers relative to the total number of vehicles. The number of resort skiers listed was closer to the number of people that ski there in a normal week. There were a few other inconsistencies in terms of the data. Ms. Nielsen was working with Dr. Jordan Smith to look at the data further. Chair Knoblock believed there would be a meeting with the General Managers of the ski resorts to talk about that and determine whether adjustments needed to be made.

Morgan Mingle noted that there was no clarity about the timeframe in which the surveys were completed. It seemed that a lot of the data collection focused on summer activities and she wondered if the disconnect in the data had to do with the summer versus winter seasonality or the timeframe. Chair Knoblock explained that Dr. Smith was asked to provide the dataset and more background information about how the numbers were determined. There needed to be more clarity provided.

Mike Marker left a comment in the Zoom chat box. He stated that the data in the report made him question the sampling process. Kirk Nichols noted that the question asked raised data collection, “Are you satisfied?” was a problem because those who were not satisfied were unlikely to be on site. He felt that a behavioral question should have been asked instead, such as, “Would you come more often if there were fewer people here?” Different questions might have yielded more accurate results.

Chair Knoblock reported that there was no specific data on how many people are rock climbing, backcountry skiing, and so on. Co-Chair, Carl Fisher, explained that the Forest Service got involved in the process at some point and it was blended with the National Visitor Use Monitoring Program dataset. He was not sure if that impacted the questions raised and data collected. Save Our Canyons, Salt Lake City, and the Forest Service tried a Visitor Use Study in 2014. It involved a full calendar year and a full inventory of all of the dispersed recreation sites, some climbing areas, and the ski resorts. The intention was to design sampling around that. It would be interesting to see what the delta was in the two processes. There was discussion about the original idea behind the study.

* 1. **Forest Service Recreational Enhancement Act – Fee Area Implementation.**

Chair Knoblock reported that the Forest Service is implementing the Recreational Enhancement Act. In 2024, at certain locations, fees will be charged similar to what was done in some picnic areas. The intention was to expand the areas where fees would be charged to raise revenue and further bolster the staff of the Salt Lake Ranger District. Several potential user fees were moving forward. He pointed out that there was the potential to toll in the canyons in the future but the Recreational Enhancement Act would allow there to be fees in certain locations to raise revenues.

Chair Knoblock discussed the Ski Hill Resources for Economic Development (“SHRED”) Act, which would establish a framework for national forests to retain a portion of ski fees. The idea was to make it possible for the money to stay within the local district in which the funds were generated.

* 1. **New Stakeholders Council Members.**

Ms. Nielsen reported that there are three current vacancies on the Stakeholders Council. The bylaws stipulate that the Stakeholders Council must have 29 to 35 members. There are currently 32 members on the Council. The process was underway to add new members, one of which was Woody Lee, who is the current Executive Director of Utah Diné Bikéyah, a Native American-led grassroots non-profit organization. Mr. Lee will be officially confirmed by the CWC Board during the CWC Board Meeting in December. He would then join the Stakeholders Council in January 2024.

* 1. **Thank You to Millcreek for Continuing to Host Our Meetings.**

Ms. Nielsen thanked Millcreek City for continuing to host the CWC for many of the in-person meetings.

**Housekeeping**

1. **Staff will Follow Up on Missing Conflict Disclosure Forms.**

Ms. Nielsen reported that Conflict Disclosure forms needed to be signed and collected.

**CWNCRA 101**

1. **Staff will Give an Overview of the History and Status of the CWNCRA.**

Ms. Nielsen reported that there will be a review of the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act (“CWNCRA”). She understood that some on the Council already knows this information but it was worthwhile for there to be a refresher on the history of the CWNCRA. The intention was to provide an overview of the different iterations of the CWNCRA, provide context for the Mountain Accord process, and review actions the CWC Board took in relation to the CWNCRA.

Ms. Nielsen reported that Talisker approached the State and Federal Delegation to essentially force the Forest Service to sell public lands to private ownership. The intention was to usher in a ski development that would create an over-the-ridge connection between the Wasatch Front and the Wasatch Back. That was done without the knowledge of the Salt Lake City Mayor and Salt Lake County Mayor at the time. It was also done without local involvement or environmental analysis. There was a lot of local reaction and the SkiLink proposal did not move forward. In response to that situation, a group of locals concerned about the sustainability of the mountains came together. That resulted in a two-year collaborative process that came to be known as the Mountain Accord. Hundreds of stakeholders came together, which included elected officials, those involved in transportation, ski resorts, environmental groups, private property owners, and more. Participants were then divided into Systems Groups, similar to what was seen with the newly formed Stakeholders Council Systems Committees. The idea was to develop idealized plans for each of the groups.

Each of the Systems Groups developed a plan that outlined the idealized system. In those Idealized Systems Reports, the goals for the specific focus area were outlined. Many of those goals and recommendations made it into the Mountain Accord Charter. Included in the Mountain Accord Charter was a directive to introduce and pass what would eventually be known as the CWNCRA. In addition to the CWNCRA, the Mountain Accord laid out many other deliverables, one of which was to create a governing body that was tasked with carrying out all of the Mountain Accord directives. That was the task of the CWC. Ms. Nielsen reviewed the iterations of the CWNCRA with those present. She explained that the latest version of the CWNCRA was the seventh iteration.

The original CWNCRA was introduced in 2016 by Congressman Jason Chaffetz as H.R. 5718. Ms. Nielsen reported that the original bill called for a nearly 80,000-acre federal designation called the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area in the Wasatch Front and approximately 1,000 acres in the Wasatch Back along the ridge between Big Cottonwood Canyon and Park City. The bill was introduced to the Natural Resources Committee, but it did not make it out of committee.

Ms. Nielsen shared a slide to outline what was included in each iteration of the CWNCRA. The first version of the bill did not impact private land in the study area and only focused on federally owned land. The original bill contained dollar-for-dollar land exchanges between the Forest Service and the Cottonwood Canyons ski resorts. It also provided a catalyst for a new management plan for the area. Helicopter and mechanized travel were originally prohibited in the White Pine Special Management Area, but that changed in later iterations of the CWNCRA. She reiterated that the original bill did not make it out of the Natural Resources Committee back in 2016. In 2017, the CWC was created by Interlocal Agreement. The creation of the CWC caused a brief delay between the introduction of the original CWNCRA in 2016 and the next iteration of the CWNCRA, which was drafted in 2018.

Ms. Nielsen reviewed the August 2, 2018, version of the CWNCRA. In that version, Alta Ski Lifts had requested to be removed from the land exchange portion. Other language was added at that time to reiterate that non-federal lands within the boundary were excluded and that management of National Forest System lands did not apply to non-federal lands. The act would not impact water rights. She shared information about one-time appropriations. It was noted that there was a specific provision in the bill that allowed for the collection of ongoing user fees. Ms. Nielsen reported that each time the CWC released a new version of the CWNCRA, there was a public comment period. To date, the CWC has received over 1,000 public comments on the different iterations of the CWNCRA.

The public comments resulted in another version of the CWNCRA shortly after the August version. The next version attempted to incorporate some of the relevant public comments received. That version fully removed Alta Ski Lifts from the land exchanges and some of the language was updated. It also allowed the ski resorts to find additional land to add to their land exchange. That meant that the ski resorts could include other private lands, not originally identified, in their exchanges. Ms. Nielsen explained that in the updated version of the bill, there was a desire to explicitly state that private property rights would not be impacted by the designation. There were private property owners in Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon who were concerned that the designation would impact them. As a result, clear language had been added. There were also additional provisions added to the White Pine Special Management Area. A section was removed in the Little Cottonwood Canyon Transportation Corridor portion based on further analysis.

At the end of 2018, the CWC Board adopted the October 2018 version of the CWNCRA. Over the next year, work was done to continue to refine the bill and that refinement was reflected in the next version. In August 2019, the CWC released another version of the bill. Some language was cleaned up and some adjustments were made to the different sections. That version of the bill added authorization for the Forest Service to apply area fees to wilderness areas and the White Pine Watershed Management Area. There were changes made to the White Pine Watershed Management Area to add additional clarifications. This version of the bill mostly included definitional changes.

At the end of 2019, the CWC Board decided to pause the efforts that CWC Staff was making to find a sponsor and introduce the CWNCRA in Congress. The CWC Board directed CWC Staff to pause those efforts because the CWC Board wanted to allow UDOT to make forward progress with the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS. In 2020, the CWC initiated the Mountain Transportation System (“MTS”) project work. In October 2020, the latest version of the CWNCRA was released. The most notable change in that iteration of the bill was the removal of the land exchanges. Ms. Nielsen explained that the decision had been made for a lot of reasons. The Forest Service determined that the dollar-for-dollar element of the exchanges would make it difficult to receive a fair amount of land, due to the different valuation of land at the base area of the ski resorts versus the land on ridges and mountaintops. Those differences would make it difficult to have a dollar-for-dollar match. It was also determined that some of the lands were environmentally degraded due to historic mining activity. There was enough degradation that the Forest Service could not trade those into public lands.

Ms. Nielsen reviewed the details of the latest iteration of the CWNCRA. She clarified that the bill was a lands protection bill, but it aimed to involve the different focus areas identified in the Mountain Accord: transportation, environment, recreation, and economy. The bill specifically provided for a 4(f) exemption. 4(f) was a section in the U.S. Department of Transportation 1966 Act that designated specific land as 4(f) lands. Lands that were designated 4(f) were environmentally or historically important lands. Lands designated as 4(f) properties needed to go through specific protections. The CWNCRA would provide an exemption from that because the bill would provide those same protections for the lands. An additional layer of bureaucracy would be removed with that exemption.

Ms. Nielsen shared a timeline that highlighted key dates, such as the initial introduction of the bill and when each of the subsequent versions was written. Patrick Shea asked whether anyone had evaluated the political chances of the bill moving forward in the near future. Ms. Nielsen reported that the first checkpoint was allowing UDOT to move through their EIS process. According to the State and Federal Delegations, there was a desire to allow UDOT to move through their process before the bill was considered. That was now nearing an end and it would be possible to see whether there was renewed support for the CWNCRA. Linda Johnson did not think that UDOT had finished their process and pointed out that work had not been done in Big Cottonwood Canyon yet. Ms. Nielsen clarified that the Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS was referenced at the time, but it would be possible to determine whether there was a desire to see the UDOT work address Big Cottonwood Canyon also.

The CWNCRA Story Map was shared. Ms. Nielsen reported that it could be found on the CWC website. The map provided a visual explanation of what was proposed in the CWNCRA. The teal outline was the acreage included. Different colors outlined other areas, such as the White Pine Special Management Area. Those interested in learning more could visit the CWC website. There was a difference when it came to restrictions for Wilderness. Wilderness had arguably the most stringent protections for Federal land in the United States. For instance, there was no motorized mechanized travel allowed, which included mountain biking, the use of chainsaws for timber cleanup, and so on. Those restrictions would not apply to the whole of the CWNCRA designation. There were restrictions included in the designation, but those were not the same as the restrictions included for Wilderness.

Co-Chair Fisher shared information about the proposed White Pine Special Management Area. He explained that it was intended to address the road access for the South Despain Ditch Company but also for the helicopter skiing that occurred in White Pine Canyon. Helicopter skiing could not happen in the Wilderness. Ms. Nielsen confirmed this. Dan Zalles noted that despite the name, the bill involved more than just the establishment of a National Conservation and Recreation Area. Co-Chair Fisher felt the best way to think about it was that the CWNCRA contained many different sections. It was intended to do many different things within one act. Ms. Nielsen added that the current title of the bill would likely change if it was introduced and passed. The name would likely be workshopped.

Chair Knoblock asked what the White Pine Special Management Area would do. Ms. Nielsen explained that it would protect the land from development, but would also allow for the historic use of the land. The different designations mentioned, such as Wilderness and National Conservation and Recreation Area, had different restrictions included in their definitions. Wilderness would not allow for the South Despain Ditch Company to continue operations and Wilderness would not allow helicopter skiing to continue. That was the reason there was not a Wilderness designation. There was a desire to allow the historic uses in the area while still focusing on the protection of the land.

Mr. Zalles asked for clarification about trails in the Wilderness. For instance, whether new trails were allowed to be created. Ms. Nielsen clarified that Wilderness did not prevent new trails, but the trails would need to be single-use, as mountain bicycles would not be permitted. The trails could be used for hiking. It was noted that there were also limitations about how trees could be removed and so on.

**Systems Committee Discussions**

1. **Environment Systems Committee**
   1. **October 25, 2023 and November 13, 2023.**
   2. **Chair Kelly Boardman and Co-Chair Dan Zalles will Present a Letter for the Stakeholders Council Review and Possible Action.**

Co-Chair Fisher hoped that everyone had enjoyed participating in the Systems Committees so far. He explained that the next section of the Stakeholders Council Meeting would include an update from the Chair and Co-Chair of each of the Systems Committees. He asked that action items be shared.

Mr. Zalles reported that the Environment Systems Committee had met twice and felt it was a priority to focus on the CWNCRA. A letter had been drafted to the CWC Board. It urged the CWC Board to refocus on CWNCRA moving forward. There was an understanding that the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS was a priority, but it now seemed like an appropriate time to reprioritize the CWNCRA. Mr. Zalles explained that the draft letter had been shared with Stakeholders Council Members. The request was for the Council to support forwarding the letter to the CWC Board. The tone of the letter was encouraging in nature and pointed out that there had been recent precedents. An addendum has been attached with excerpts from the Mountain Accord Final Report. The letter stated that the Stakeholders Council was available to assist with strategizing and research. Kelly Boardman explained that the idea was to let the CWC Board know that this matter was important to the Council.

Ms. Nielsen reported that there was an Action Item included on the Stakeholders Council Meeting agenda. The Environment Systems Committee Co-Chairs had introduced the letter. During the Action Item section, the Council Members would be asked whether there was support to forward the letter to the CWC Board for consideration at the CWC Board Meeting on December 15, 2023. Chair Knoblock wondered whether there was anything specific that should be highlighted in the letter outside of what was already included. Co-Chair Fisher explained that the intention was to encourage the CWC Board to move the process forward and prioritize the CWCNCRA work in the future.

Mr. Zalles wondered whether the reference to a National Conservation Area should reference a National Conservation and Recreation Area instead. Chair Knoblock felt it made sense for there to be consistency within the language. Co-Chair Fisher agreed that an amendment could be made. Discussions were had about the name of the CWNCRA and whether it might create complications.

1. **Economy Systems Committee**
2. **October 31, 2023.**
3. **Chair Dave Fields and Co-Chair Morgan Mingle will Discuss the Recent Activities of the Economy Systems Committee.**

Dave Fields reported that there had been one meeting of the Economy Systems Committee. He thanked Co-Chair Fisher for sitting in on the meeting and assisting when needed. There was a small group involved in the Economy Systems Committee. He asked anyone interested in participating to reach out. During the meeting, there had been a discussion about the Economy System recommendations from the Mountain Accord process. There were debates about the merits of a full overhaul of what was true in 2015 compared to what was true now. It was ultimately decided that the focus would be on actionable items that were recommended by Committee Members. One example of an actionable item was the SHRED Act. There would be an Economy Systems Meeting the following day and Committee Members had been asked to share recommendations at that time.

Co-Chair Fisher explained that he and Chair Knoblock had discussions with CWC Staff recently about the SHRED Act. There would likely be more information shared at the January or March Stakeholders Council Meeting. Discussions were had about carrying capacity. Ms. Mingle noted that there had been a lot of discussions about that in Park City. There was a desire to focus on sustainable visitation, so the carrying capacity of certain sites was something to explore. It was necessary to balance the different impacts, which was something she considered during discussions.

Mr. Shea thought an actionable item was a forest survey for each of the ski areas to determine what was sustainable and what was invasive. It would be nice to have some baseline data. Chair Knoblock wanted to know how it would be possible to find enough money to sustain the forest, maintain parking lots, make sure there were enough restrooms, maintain the existing trails, and have enough staffing at a Forest Service level to process permits and manage the land properly. It was important to look into funding sources and he encouraged Committee Members to look into different possibilities.

1. **Transportation Systems Committee**
2. **November 6, 2023.**
3. **Chair Mike Christensen and Co-Chair Amber Broadaway will Discuss the Recent Activities of the Transportation Systems Committee.**

Mike Christensen reported that the first Transportation Systems Committee Meeting had taken place. The next meeting was scheduled for December 11, 2023, at 3:30 p.m. He appreciated the Systems Committees because it was beneficial to look at things in a more focused manner. There was a lot that could be done to implement both short-term and long-term changes. Mr. Christensen has been reviewing prior studies recently. He felt it was important for Committee Members to be familiar with what had already been studied so that efforts were not duplicated. He had looked at the Draft Transportation White Paper and pointed out that it would be beneficial if someone regenerated the pdf file because it was so heavily compressed that the maps and diagrams were difficult to read.

The Transportation Systems Committee was still in the process of getting organized. Mr. Christensen and Amber Broadaway were currently trying to coordinate so the next Transportation Systems Committee Meeting would be well structured. Transportation was an important component to consider. Co-Chair Fisher thought the first meeting had a lot of excellent discussion. There was some talk about a Special Service District or something similar with a revenue capture system that could assist with the funding of a comprehensive transportation system. He was hopeful that the Co-Chairs on the Transportation Systems Committee would share some examples of those types of systems.

Discussions were had about Special Service Districts. Co-Chair Fisher believed there were some barriers. There was a transit entity that had a Service District but did not feel transportation was a priority in their district. Additionally, there was a non-compete clause in that Service District that prevented someone interested in solving the problems from being able to do so. A Transportation District could set up a revenue and capture system to assist with transportation funding. It could also ensure there was a transit provider that wanted to rise to the challenges that were facing the area.

Ms. Johnson reported that she had worked with the Legislature for years. The way to approach something like that was to make a plan and then talk to Legislators who might be willing to change the law so there was no non-compete clause. There were some questions about funding and allocation. She felt these questions were more the business of the Legislature than a group like the CWC. Chair Knoblock believed work needed to be done in collaboration with UTA and the Wasatch Front Regional Council (“WFRC”). UTA was a Special Transportation District. What was being discussed could potentially change the boundary of UTA and add an additional district. Co-Chair Fisher shared information about the Cottonwood Connect. UTA did not seem to have a problem with private providers having transit service in their service area but had an issue with other transit providers providing that service. There was an instance where High Valley Transportation wanted to come in and UTA stated that there was a non-compete. That was the issue that needed to be addressed.

Council Members discussed some of the existing issues and how it might be possible to create change. Co-Chair Fisher reminded those present that the Systems Committees and Stakeholders Council could forward ideas, suggestions, and recommendations to the CWC Board for consideration. It was appropriate for Council Members to share ideas because it could move things forward in a positive direction. Ms. Nielsen added that the CWC Board liked to hear from the Stakeholders Council. Ms. Johnson thought that the Transportation Systems Committee and Stakeholders Council should present a realistic approach. The CWC Board could then decide whether or not to pursue that approach.

Mr. Shea thought it would make sense to ask the CWC Board to reach out to UDOT and UTA to brief them on who was determining the future transportation plans. Some clarity there would be beneficial. Chair Knoblock suggested that the Transportation Systems Committee coordinate with Mayor Dan Knopp. He was the Chair of the CWC Transportation Committee and could provide some insight.

1. **Millcreek Canyon Committee**
2. **October 16, 2023 and November 20, 2023.**
3. **Chair Tom Diegel and Co-Chair Del Draper will Discuss the Recent Activities of the Millcreek Canyon Committee.**

Del Draper shared information about the Millcreek Canyon Committee. He reported that the Committee met on a monthly basis. At the last meeting, there had been discussions about the 18-acre parcel that was for sale at the mouth of Millcreek Canyon. It could potentially be subdivided into three parcels. There appeared to be water rights, so the land could be developed if it was sold. He hoped it would be possible to look into conservation easements to make sure the land was not developed. Mr. Draper reported that there had been some communication with the Crossroads of the West Council, who managed Camp Tracy in Millcreek Canyon. According to the Crossroads of the West Council, there was no interest in pursuing any type of conservation easement on that land.

The Millcreek Canyon Committee also continued to discuss the Federal Lands Access Program ("FLAP") grant. There would be $19 million of road improvements in upper Millcreek Canyon. There had not been a lot of recent contact with those involved in the FLAP grant work. Mr. Draper reported that the Committee had also discussed a potential shuttle in Millcreek Canyon. The Forest Service pushed back on a recent proposal to do the environmental analysis at the same time as the FLAP grant work. The Forest Service objected to the shuttle proposal because there did not seem to be viable parking options for the shuttle. There were meetings conducted with UDOT and Millcreek City recently and two possible locations for shuttle parking had been identified. He hoped that since two parking locations had been identified, the Forest Service would reengage with the shuttle concept.

Mr. Draper reported that the Millcreek Canyon Committee had also discussed the need for cell phone service in the canyon. There was a meeting with a former Verizon executive, who had been involved in getting cellular service in Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon. In those canyons, fiber was run up the road. It was noted that there were some towers in the canyons as well, but those were different than a lot of the towers that were typically seen. Mr. Draper explained that the Millcreek Canyon Committee wanted the FLAP grant to include conduit. There were some uncertainties about what was needed to have cell phone service in Millcreek Canyon. The Committee was trying to determine what it would take from an engineering standpoint and what the estimated costs would be for that service. From there, it would be possible to consider implementation.

Something else that the Millcreek Canyon Committee was working on was fire reduction. Scott Frost with the Forest Service had talked about reducing excess combustibles in broad areas. There were also discussions about a simpler cleanup within the County right-of-way along the road. Chair Knoblock shared additional information about the Millcreek Canyon Committee Meeting. He explained that in addition to the need for shuttle parking, the Forest Service also wanted to make sure there was some envisioned source of funding for the shuttle service. He believed there needed to be a cost estimate shared as well as ideas about potential funding sources for the shuttle.

1. **Recreation Systems Committee.**
2. **The Recreation Systems Committee will have its first meeting on December 14, 2023.**

Sarah Bennett reported that the Recreation Systems Committee would meet for the first time on December 14, 2023. Barbara Cameron was the Co-Chair of the Recreation Systems Committee. So far, a lot of homework has been done to examine the recreation goals outlined in the Mountain Accord. She looked forward to sharing information and action items with the Council in the future.

Ms. Johnson noted that many outstanding issues had not been addressed. There was high visitation, but a lot of what needed to be addressed related to the trails. It bothered her that so much time had passed but many of the existing issues had not been adequately handled. Ms. Bennett noted that she heard a lot of feedback about trails and the desire to improve existing trails. Ms. Johnson pointed out that there were more visitors now than when the Mountain Accord was written.

Ms. Bennett believed there were many different reasons for the existing trail issues. The Forest Service was underfunded and understaffed, but work was continuing to be done to address the needs. The Wasatch Front had grown incredibly quickly over the years. Chair Knoblock noted that the Mountain Accord referenced a Tri-Canyons Trails Plan. That was underway as the Forest Service was working on the Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan. Ms. Johnson reiterated her concerns. Chair Knoblock explained that there was a desire to identify all of the trailheads and have proper facilities. There was also a desire to ensure that there was a variety of trails for different skill sets. There will be more information shared about the Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan in the next few months.

Additional discussions were had about the trail-related work that was currently taking place. Ms. Johnson explained that she wanted to see a balance when it came to the types of trails. It was important for many different types of users to have access to trails. She did not want to see trails built that only a select number of users could enjoy. It was important to have a good variety available.

**2024 Meeting Schedule**

1. **The Council will Decide on a Meeting Schedule for 2024.**
2. **A memo with Proposed Meeting Times is Included in the Attachments.**

Ms. Nielsen reported that a memo was included in the Meeting Materials Packet. The original schedule for the Stakeholders Council Meetings had meetings on the third Wednesday of every other month. There was an option to return to that schedule. The second option was for the fourth Monday every other month, which was the current schedule. There would not be an official vote on the schedule, but she wanted to determine which schedule there was a preference for moving forward. Based on the feedback, there seemed to be a preference for the third Wednesday every other month.

**Action Items**

1. **(Action) The Council will Consider Approval of the Environment Systems Committee Letter Requesting Prioritization and Reconciliation of Issues in the CWNCRA.**

Ms. Nielsen reported that a copy of the Environment Systems Committee letter was included in the Meeting Materials Packet. The Stakeholders Council was being asked to vote in favor of, in opposition to, or to abstain from sending a letter from the Stakeholders Council to the CWC Board, urging them to reprioritize the CWNCRA in 2024. Discussions were had about the action item and what the pathway forward could look like for the CWNCRA. Some concerns were expressed about the fact that there was not a clear plan in place. Co-Chair Fisher pointed out that the best way to not pass a land bill was not to make an attempt. He felt it was important to try to make a difference.

Mr. Zalles made a motion to approve the letter. The motion was seconded by Mr. Draper. Discussions were had about the motion, the letter, and the CWNCRA work. Mr. Zalles clarified that the letter to the CWC Board was intended to remind Board Members of the importance of the CWNCRA. From there, the CWC Board could determine the best strategy. Mr. Shea pointed out that the future of the CWNCRA might depend on the outcome of the next election. Co-Chair Fisher agreed but pointed out that the CWNCRA work needed to start before that occurred. The CWC was created to focus on the Mountain Accord and the CWNCRA was an outcome of that. The Council simply stated that the CWNCRA was a foundational piece of the Mountain Accord and asked that the CWC Board make that a priority in the new year. Ms. Johnson thought there should be a sentence in the letter that suggested soliciting the support of the State Legislature. Mr. Shea pointed out that the National Congress was very different than the State Legislature. Co-Chair Fisher pointed out that the first step in this process would be to see where the CWC Board stood and if there was support for the bill.

Chair Knoblock noted that the letter was asking the CWC Board to read the letter and consider re-engaging with the CWNCRA work. After that point, the CWC Board could decide whether it was appropriate to speak to the Federal Delegation to determine the viability. It was proposed that the CWC take a different approach and work more closely with the State and Federal Delegations to find support at those levels. Ms. Johnson shared some amended language for consideration:

* Hence, we beseech the Commission to resume its efforts to exert its political capital to persuade our State Legislature and our Federal, Senate, and House representatives to push for Congress to designate the Central Wasatch Mountains as a National Conservation Area.

Another strategy was suggested, which was to invite leaders at a local and federal level to talk about the issues. It might be possible to achieve a certain level of support or interest. Mr. Zalles did not believe it was a good idea to mention the State Legislature in the letter. That was a detail that the CWC Board might disagree with in terms of strategy. The CWC Board might then reject the request. The purpose of the letter was to motivate the CWC Board and remind them about the importance of the CWNCRA. It was not necessarily intended to lay out a potential strategy for the CWNCRA. Co-Chair Fisher reiterated that the goal of the letter was to remind the CWC Board to make the CWNCRA a priority. How the CWC Board made the CWNCRA a priority could be determined in the future.

Ms. Boardman pointed out that a lot of work had been done on the CWNCRA over the years. That being said, there had not been momentum for some time. The question being presented to the CWC Board was: “If this was a foundational concept of the Mountain Accord, why is it not being pursued currently?” The letter would remind the CWC Board that the Council thought it was important.

Co-Chair Fisher reminded those present that a motion and a second had been made. Dave Fields suggested language to be added to the letter, which was, “adopting a new strategy to pursue passage of the NCRA.” Instead of the words, “…exert its political capital to persuade…” it would state, “Hence, we beseech the Commission to resume its efforts and explore new strategies to engage our Senate and House representatives to push for Congress to designate the Central Wasatch Mountains as a National Conservation Recreation Area.” There was support for the amendments.

**MOTION:** Dave Fields moved to AMEND the previous motion that was made by Dan Zalles and seconded by Del Draper, to include some proposed changes to the language. Linda Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Council.

**MOTION:** Dan Zalles moved to APPROVE the Environment Systems Committee Letter Requesting Prioritization and Reconciliation of Issues in the CWNCRA, as amended. Del Draper seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Council.

**Stakeholders Open Comment**

Co-Chair Fisher reported that this would be his last meeting with the CWC. He would also be resigning from Save Our Canyons at the end of the year as his family would be leaving the State. It had been a pleasure to work with everyone over the years. He hoped that the CWC would continue to work on forwarding the CWNCRA. It was a keystone piece in addressing recreation, conservation, and transportation issues in the area. The Legislation provided a framework that could solve a lot of problems. Mr. Shea suggested that someone from the Stakeholders Council attend the CWC Board Retreat with Chair Knoblock since Co-Chair Fisher would no longer be a member of the Council. Ms. Nielsen clarified that both Chair Knoblock and Co-Chair Fisher would attend the CWC Board Retreat. The Stakeholders Council will discuss a new Co-Chair for the Council in January 2024.

**Closing**

1. **Chair Knoblock will Call for a Motion to Adjourn the Stakeholders' Council Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Dennis Goreham moved to ADJOURN the Stakeholders Council Meeting. Dave Fields seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Council.

The Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council Meeting adjourned at 5:44 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council Meeting held on Monday, November 27, 2023.***

**Teri Forbes**

Teri Forbes

T Forbes Group

Minutes Secretary

Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_