

**Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council  
Recreation Systems Committee Meeting**

Thursday, December 14, 2023; 2:00 p.m.  
41 N. Rio Grande St., Suite 102, SLC, UT 84101

Notice is hereby given that the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council Recreation Systems Committee will hold a meeting on Thursday, December 14, 2023, beginning at approximately 2:00 p.m. You may attend the meeting at the anchor location: the CWC offices located at the Gateway, 41 N. Rio Grande Street Ste 102, Salt Lake City, or virtually by registering at the below link. Please note that after registering, you will receive an email containing a meeting access link.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZctc-uqrDgpH902NrPQ4H6f1CCCYnBojjLQ>

Please take notice that a quorum the Board of Commissioners (the “Board”) of the Central Wasatch Commission (the “CWC”) may attend the meeting of the Stakeholders Council Recreation Systems Committee scheduled for Thursday, December 14, 2023; beginning at 2:00 p.m. The agenda for that meeting of the Committee is accessible here: Utah Public Notice Website, the anchor location, The Salt Lake Tribune, and Deseret News.

Civility and decorum should be applied in all discussions and debate. Difficult questions, tough challenges to a point of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of a free democracy in action. Public officials and the public are encouraged to refrain from making belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments.

**2:00 P.M.      Opening**

1. Chair Sarah Bennett will open the public meeting as Chair of the Recreation Systems Committee of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council.

**2:05 P.M.      Review of the Mountain Accord Charter**

1. Committee members will review the Mountain Accord Charter and identify key takeaways.
2. Committee members will discuss and rank potential goals for the Committee to pursue.

**2:25 P.M.      Consideration of Winter Recreation**

1. Committee members will discuss winter recreation interests within the Committee and potential goals and topics for consideration.

**2:55 P.M.      Review and Discussion of Committee Purpose and Goals**

1. Committee members will discuss their vision, purpose, and goals of the Committee.

**3:30 P.M.      Closing**

1. Chair Bennett will call for a motion to adjourn the Recreation Systems Committee meeting.

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**CERTIFICATE OF POSTING**

At or before 2:00 p.m. on December 13, 2023, the undersigned hereby certifies that the above notice and agenda was:

1. Posted on the Utah Public Notice Website;
2. Posted at the meeting’s anchor location at 41 N. Rio Grande Street Ste 102, Salt Lake City; and
3. Provided to the Salt Lake Tribune and/or Deseret News and to a local media correspondent.

The audio recording and transcript of the meeting will be posted for public review. Commissioners will/may participate electronically. Meetings may be closed for reasons allowed by statute.

Final action may be taken in relation to any topic listed on the agenda, including but not limited to adoption, rejection, amendment, addition of conditions and variations of options discussed.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals needing special accommodations or assistance during this meeting shall notify the CWC at 801.834.5950 at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. TDD number is (801) 270-2425 or call Relay Utah at #711.

Sam Kilpack for the Central Wasatch Commission.

## MEETING PACKET ITEMS

The following summaries are designed to help the CWC Recreation Committee generate a plan of action based on the 2023 Visitor Use Study and the 2015 Mountain Accord objectives and Supporting Narrative.

# MOUNTAIN ACCORD SUMMARY



## 2015 MOUNTAIN ACCORD BRIEF SUMMARY

### Recreation

- Improve and connect the regional trail network, with special attention given to connecting corridors.
- Connect recreation destinations with trails.
- Improve transit service to trailheads and other recreation destinations.
- Direct future recreation growth to the resorts.
- Explore user fees that could be reinvested in recreation infrastructure.

### Additional Ideas from the Recreation Co-Chairs

- Improve trailhead signage and information about nature, history, stewardship, safety, and trail etiquette.
- Create awareness of winter trails that are resort and non-resort-based with trailhead safety information.
- Compile a list of trails for short hikes that include interpretive signage and adequate amenities.
- Focus trail use at the base of the canyons and foothills.
- Identify and protect wildlife corridors and sensitive wetlands.
- Acquire private lands to protect trail connectivity and public access.
- Identify and protect wildlife corridors and sensitive wetlands.
- Reroute and rehabilitate trails to broaden watershed protections.
- Study the feasibility of a year-round trail connecting Brighton to Cardiff as an alternative to highway travel for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Consider the impact of well-managed trails as a means to mitigate wildfire danger.

### Environment

- Preserve federal public land with permanent and predictable management
- Encourage ski areas to place their private land into public ownership.

- Acquire private land from willing sellers.
- Protect wildlife corridors.
- Broaden watershed protections.
- Find ways to monitor environmental health.
- Provide transportation alternatives.

### Transportation

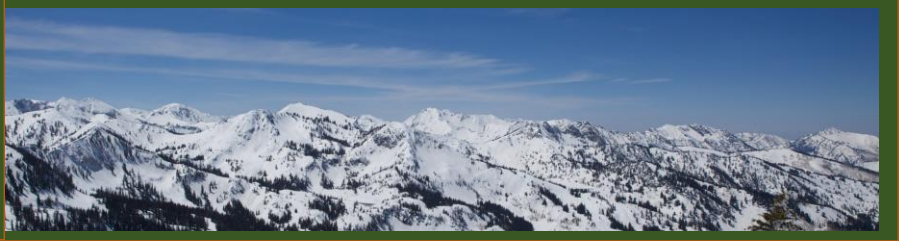
- Investigate connection between Little Cottonwood and Big Cottonwood, and between Summit County and Big Cottonwood.
- Keep Guardsman Pass Road closed in winter.
- Develop transit incentives including parking/pricing strategies.
- Provide year-round bus service in Big Cottonwood.
- Provide fast transit from airport to Park City via I-80.
- Improve transit connections in Summit County.
- Provide a shuttle service in Mill Creek Canyon.
- Evaluate regional urban parking to limit auto use.
- Improve high-capacity transit connections in the eastern Salt Lake Valley.
- Ensure safety and access improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians.

### Economy

- Focus most future development in urban areas, not in the mountains.
- Invest in walkable urban communities.
- Encourage public transit.
- Create sustainable funding that can be reliably invested in the Central Wasatch.
- Keep Utah's tourism market competitive.
- Develop a unique urban-mountain brand.
- Improve visitor experience in summer and winter with high quality transit to mountain activity centers.
- Allow limited new development in the mountains focused around transit stops to multi-use types of recreation.



# VISITOR USE STUDY SUMMARY



## 2023 CWC VISITOR USE STUDY SUMMARY

- Concentrate trail use to areas where it is already high, so a smaller area of the forest is impacted.
- Infrastructure (restrooms, signage, clear boundaries, and hardening of trails where appropriate) is needed.
- Concentrate trail use near ski resorts at the tops of the canyons where amenities and parking already exist. Public transportation would focus on transit to resorts.
- Concentrate trail use at the base of the canyons where amenities and parking already exist.
- Mass-transit to Mid-Canyon trails may bring more use than we want in those areas.
- Begin to focus on ways to accommodate those 49-minute hikers.

For more information go to: [CWC Final Visitor-Use Study](#)

## Idealized Recreation System Supporting Narrative

### Problem Statement

The accessibility, quality, and variety of recreation opportunities in the Wasatch Mountains are key elements of the active, healthy lifestyles and high quality of life enjoyed by residents of adjacent communities. However, recreation in the Wasatch is changing. Population growth, changes in recreational use, land development, climate change, and changes in transportation performance are affecting existing recreation opportunities. The current system is stressed and struggles to respond to and provide recreation experiences desired by residents and visitors. Without active planning and investment in the future, the Wasatch that we leave to our children will not have the accessibility, quality, and variety of recreational opportunities that we enjoy today. The region may experience:

- Additional roadway and parking congestion resulting in decreased accessibility to recreation destinations;
- Unplanned and unmanaged growth in recreational use at all locations;
- Reactive management and limitations on recreation;
- Crowding and degraded recreational experiences;
- Decreased quality of life;
- Decreased ability to attract visitors and employers; and
- Missed opportunities to mitigate conflicts between recreational user groups, environmental, economic, and regulatory interests.

Through the Mountain Accord process, communities along the Wasatch Front and Back have an opportunity to address shared challenges and leave a lasting legacy of accessible, high quality recreation opportunities for future generations.

### Idealized System Development

#### **Overview of process**

The ideal future for recreation in the Central Wasatch was developed by the Recreation System Group, comprised of members from various stakeholder groups with input from topical experts, research, case studies of other recreation planning efforts, the best available data, and professional judgment. The development of the idealized system was guided by the vision and goals developed by the Recreation System Group earlier in the Mountain Accord process.

#### **Focus of the Idealized Recreation System**

In order to address the challenges outlined above, the Recreation System Group developed a vision and goals centered on promoting access to recreation opportunities while preserving the recreational quality and variety so valued by Central Wasatch communities and visitors. Despite the pressures associated with increasing recreation use, the group determined that the community benefits of a healthy, engaged, and active population provided by accessible recreation outweigh the recreation quality benefits of across the board access limitations. As a result, the proposed vision, goals, and actions were not designed to limit or restrict use in the mountains as a whole.

However, the Recreation System Group acknowledged that the quality of recreation experiences is also a key consideration when planning for the future of the Wasatch Mountains, and that crowding could decrease the quality of these experiences. To avoid this decrease in quality, the idealized recreation system promotes recreation use in areas that can accommodate recreational infrastructure expansion, or improvement, that will be necessary to accommodate more users and maintain quality experiences. The actions proposed would also protect difficult to access, pristine areas and locations with a unique setting or recreation character; connect and improve the trail system; and provide transit service that integrates recreational needs. As a whole, the actions proposed in the idealized recreation system would provide access to a diversity of recreation uses and accommodate a range of use levels while promoting the high quality recreation experiences which make this area such an attractive place to live and to visit.

### **Key Considerations**

- Quantitative data on existing recreational uses in the Central Wasatch is limited and therefore, in some cases, decisions were based on the best available understanding of recreational use and dynamics. Ongoing efforts to collect data on recreational use in the Central Wasatch or data collected during subsequent phases of Mountain Accord will help inform specific design and may provide rationale for refining elements of the idealized system.
- Many site specific details will need to be worked out in subsequent planning efforts and will require public involvement and feedback. However, it is important to note the system group supports additional recreational developments focused on maintaining or establishing the desired recreational quality in the areas identified. These could include trail developments, transit stops, management strategies to reduce social encounters between users, infrastructure improvements to facilitate increased use while preserving character, etc.
- The system group achieved broad consensus on the majority of proposed actions but is divided on two actions that were discussed during the development of the idealized system: (1) One Wasatch and (2) a new public transit connection between Little and Big Cottonwood Canyons and the Wasatch Back. The discussion generated the following arguments for and against each of these potential actions:

One Wasatch	
How action would support vision and goals	How action would detract from vision and goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase connectivity between winter high use recreation areas</li> <li>• Expand opportunities to manage for high density recreation at resorts</li> <li>• Provide new and unique recreation experience</li> <li>• Ability to participate in discussions about where, how, and under what conditions (e.g., public access and conservation requirements) connections occur.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of beginner areas and accessible terrain for growing backcountry user group in the resort expansion areas</li> <li>• Displacement of current demand for backcountry recreation into smaller area</li> <li>• Impacts on backcountry skiing terrain from skiers leaving from resort expansion areas</li> <li>• Degradation of undeveloped character and setting in expansion areas</li> </ul>
Transportation Connection	
How action would support vision and goals	How action would detract from vision and goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote accessibility of mountain recreation from population centers</li> <li>• Decrease roadway congestion that detracts from recreation experience</li> <li>• Create opportunities for new loop hiking and biking, as well as other unique recreation experiences</li> <li>• Connect flagship recreation destinations</li> <li>• Transit can be used as a tool to focus and manage demand for recreation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern that anticipated increased number of resident and out of state recreational visits would degrade experience</li> <li>• Would alter existing character of “dead end” canyons</li> <li>• Transportation mode would determine specific impacts – difficult to determine how would support or detract without knowing specifics about mode and alignment</li> </ul>

### Proposed Actions

The following proposed actions should be implemented in order to achieve the idealized recreation system as conceived by the system group.

Proposed Action*	Goals Served**					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Adjust Wilderness boundaries to complete the Bonneville Shoreline Trail</b> (see Land Management map)		X	X			
<p><i>Intent:</i> The full construction of the master planned Bonneville Shoreline Trail will provide unmatched opportunities to connect recreation destinations and key access nodes along the Wasatch Front. Completed sections of the trail are popular with multiple user groups and serve as a close to home destination that reduces recreational pressure at other destinations within the canyons and Wasatch Back. Completing the remaining sections of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail will require construction of trail within existing Wilderness areas, which preclude bicycle use. Bicycle use on the trail is a key component of the group’s vision and minor modification of Wilderness boundaries and/or exchanging current wilderness along the proposed trail corridor for more appropriate areas to the east would allow completion of this key trail connection.</p>						
<b>Place areas into special management to protect against future development and preserve natural landscapes</b> (see Land Management map)		X			X	
<p><i>Intent:</i> The Central Wasatch has many unique environments, including USFS-administered lands important for backcountry recreation and high quality scenic vistas. While many of these areas already receive various levels of protection, development occurring in these critical recreation environments could result in permanent modification or loss of the recreational value in these areas. The recreation system group supports a protection mechanism that would protect areas from development while allowing flexibility for future recreation and management adaptability.</p>						
<b>Preserve lands that provide unique recreation experiences, are currently used for recreation, and are adjacent to existing open space</b>		X		X		
<p><i>Intent:</i> As a result of historical recreational use and management in the Central Wasatch, many popular recreation destinations occur on privately owned lands to which permanent public access has not been secured. Additionally, some lands that are not in public ownership contain opportunities to develop recreation amenities that would be contribute to the future vision of the recreation system group. The recreation system group has provided recommendations to and supports the Land Preservation Subcommittee of the Executive Board’s efforts with regard to land preservation.</p>						



<b>Design and manage branded areas to attract high levels of use by supporting many activities and user groups</b> (see Connections map)	X				X	
<i>Intent:</i> Identifying, branding, and designing carefully selected areas for high levels of use and providing attractions and infrastructure to bring users to these areas is a key strategy for managing increasing recreation use and preserving overall recreation quality. Managing branded areas promotes user safety, increases the predictability of recreation experiences for all users, and allows for the burden of increased use to be concentrated in areas appropriately designed to handle high volumes of use as opposed to spreading users equally across the entire Wasatch. The locations the recreation system group has identified for these areas leverage existing infrastructure including ski resorts for increased and different types of uses, especially outside of the winter ski season.						
<b>Design and manage key recreation areas for increased use while maintaining existing character and recreation opportunities</b> (see Connections map)	X				X	
<i>Intent:</i> With branded, high use areas being identified at existing ski resorts and select other areas, the recreation system group also sought to identify recreation areas where future recreation use could be focused that would serve only dispersed, non-commercial recreation. Locations were selected because they can physically accommodate infrastructure improvements to allow a moderate level of increased use. These areas should be designed and managed to ensure the character and available recreation opportunities remain similar to current conditions.						
<b>Complete key non-motorized urban and mountain trail connections to provide a more robust trail network</b> (see Connections map)			X		X	
<i>Intent:</i> Outside of the winter ski season, the trail network in the Central Wasatch is the main attraction for recreational users and provides the avenue by which the population experiences the outdoors. This network should connect recreation and trail hubs to one another and connect communities to those opportunities. Completing key trail connections will help accommodate increasing levels of use, provide new recreation opportunities, provide alternatives to private vehicle use to access mountain areas, provide non-motorized connections between recreation destinations, and limit natural resource degradation. In addition to these connections, the group supports ongoing trail planning efforts within areas where increased use is proposed.						
<b>Provide year-round, public transit service to connect users with recreation destinations</b> (see Connections map)	X				X	
<i>Intent:</i> Connecting communities adjacent to the Wasatch Mountains with recreational opportunities, improving recreation experiences, and promoting healthy lifestyles requires providing convenient year round transit service to recreation destinations. Transit service provided to support recreation should consider the planned recreation character and level of use for each recreation destination and provide service appropriate for this level of use.						

<b>Establish transit-focused nodes to reduce vehicle use in the canyons</b> (see Connections map)						X
<p><i>Intent:</i> Traffic congestion was identified by the group as a factor affecting recreation experiences. The recreation system group proposed transit-focused nodes at the mouths of the Wasatch Front canyons and in two locations on the Wasatch Back. These are locations where it is convenient and accessible to drive and park a personal vehicle and take public transportation to a final recreation destination. Transit nodes should function year-round and will contribute to reductions in traffic congestion on mountain roads accessing recreation destinations.</p>						
<b>Establish and fund an organization to provide long-term recreational planning, management, and public education</b>						X
<p><i>Intent:</i> The recreation system group supports the multi-jurisdictional planning being conducted through Mountain Accord and sees continued planning and management as key to achieving the group’s long term goals. The system group recommends creating an organization or modifying existing partnerships (i.e., Wasatch Legacy Partnership) to provide funding and oversee ongoing management, maintenance, enforcement, and adaptability of the recreation system. Funding mechanisms may include user fees, property taxes, bonding measures, allocations from government entities, public/private partnerships, and leveraging donations. A fundamental purpose of this organization will also be educating the public about responsible use of the Wasatch Mountains and associated recreation facilities and providing information that will lead users to appropriate facilities for recreation.</p>						
<p><i>*The intent of Mountain Accord is not to take over responsibility of existing agencies (e.g., U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) and programs, but rather to work collaboratively with them.</i></p> <p><b>**Recreation System Goals:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify and establish high use areas to focus where future growth in recreation occurs</li> <li>2. Preserve special, unique recreation areas and settings to maintain opportunities for solitude and naturalness</li> <li>3. Provide a well-designed, appropriately maintained, well-signed, and interconnected trail network that meets demand and can adapt to evolving uses</li> <li>4. Pursue the most appropriate and feasible means of securing legal public access to critical recreational opportunities</li> <li>5. Establish appropriate levels of access and designed settings in harmony with the desired recreation experience</li> <li>6. Establish an organization, with authority to act based on public support, that fosters long-term success of the Central Wasatch recreation system by promoting collaborative and united management, user education, and acquisition of ongoing funding for continued system maintenance, evolution, and management.</li> </ol>						