

CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION

2023
ANNUAL REPORT



CENTRAL
WASATCH
COMMISSION



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

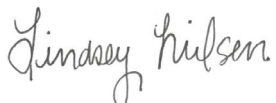
The Central Wasatch Mountains are one of the main place-makers for Utahans in Park City and the Salt Lake Valley. The Wasatch is home to iconic ski resorts and offers world-class recreational opportunities, all year-long. These mountains also provide drinking water for 500,000 people living downstream from Little Cottonwood Canyon Creek. The Central Wasatch Commission was born from the two-year collaborative effort called Mountain Accord, during which over 200 stakeholders gathered to devise plans to sustain the economy, environment, recreation, and transportation systems of the Central Wasatch. The CWC was created to carry out those plans.

This year, the CWC reverted to a traditional staffing structure with a sole Executive Director, a newly hired Director of Operations, and a half-time Community Engagement Coordinator. The Stakeholders Council elected new leadership, and restructured its committees to resemble the Mountain Accord Systems Groups – Environment, Recreation, Transportation, and Economy. The longstanding Stakeholders Council Millcreek Canyon Committee has also continued its work, focusing primarily on a prospective Millcreek Canyon Shuttle program. The new Stakeholders Council Systems Committees are reviewing the correlating Mountain Accord Idealized Systems reports to identify what might need to be updated, added, or what could be prioritized from the reports for current systems committees projects. Our staff created a CWC Youth Council for people aged 16-30 years-old, to serve as an educational forum and a platform for young people to engage directly with the CWC on issues in the Central Wasatch.

It has been a productive year for CWC project work. Earlier this year, CWC released the Big Cottonwood Canyon Mobility Access Plan (BCC MAP), which provides a framework for addressing mobility needs in Big Cottonwood Canyon. The CWC funded the fourth cycle of short-term projects through its small grants program, and the multi-year Visitor-Use Study was released to the public. The trails use data collected through the Visitor-Use Study was also integrated into the Environmental Dashboard to form the foundation of a “human” element on the Dashboard.

The CWC did what it does best in 2023 – convene and collaborate. The restructured Stakeholders Council will engage stakeholders more thoroughly and the newly created Youth Council will platform users of the Wasatch that the CWC has not yet heard from – young people. The release of the BCC MAP, Visitor-Use Study, and the integration of the visitor-use trails use into the Environmental Dashboard furthered the CWC’s mission to create and share data about the Central Wasatch to assist the State, our stakeholders, and everyday people as they make decisions about how to interact with the Central Wasatch. I can’t wait to see what we can achieve for the Central Wasatch in 2024.

Onwards –



Lindsey Nielsen

CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION STAFF



Lindsey Nielsen
Executive Director



Sam Kilpack
Director of Operations



Mia McNeil
Community
Engagement
Coordinator

In 2023, the Central Wasatch Commission restructured its staff to include an Executive Director, a Director of Operations, and a half-time Community Engagement Coordinator.



CWC Address:

41 North Rio Grande Street, Suite 102
Salt Lake City, UT 84101

Email:

comments@cw.utah.gov

Website:

cw.utah.gov

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[@centralwasatchcommission](https://www.facebook.com/centralwasatchcommission)

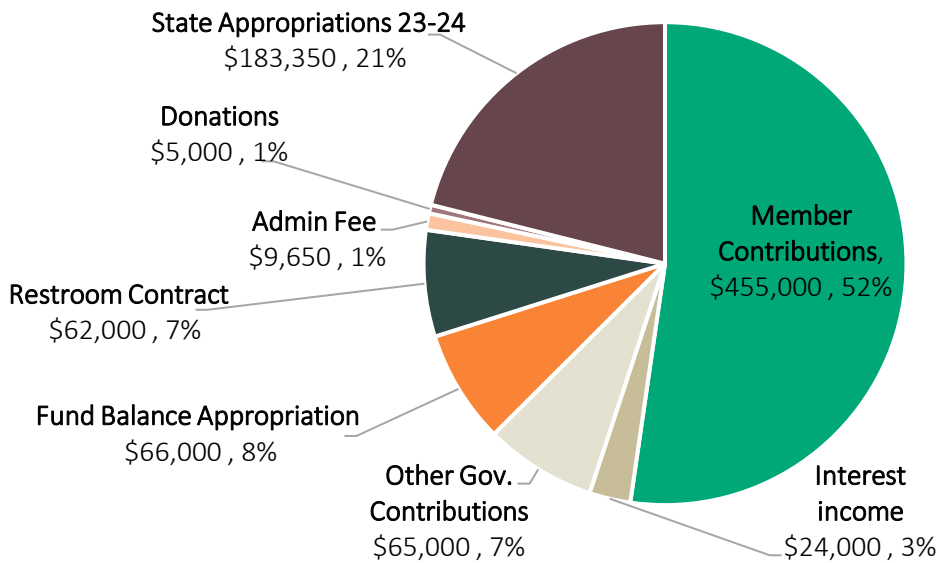
Twitter/X:

[@cwcutah](https://twitter.com/cwcutah)

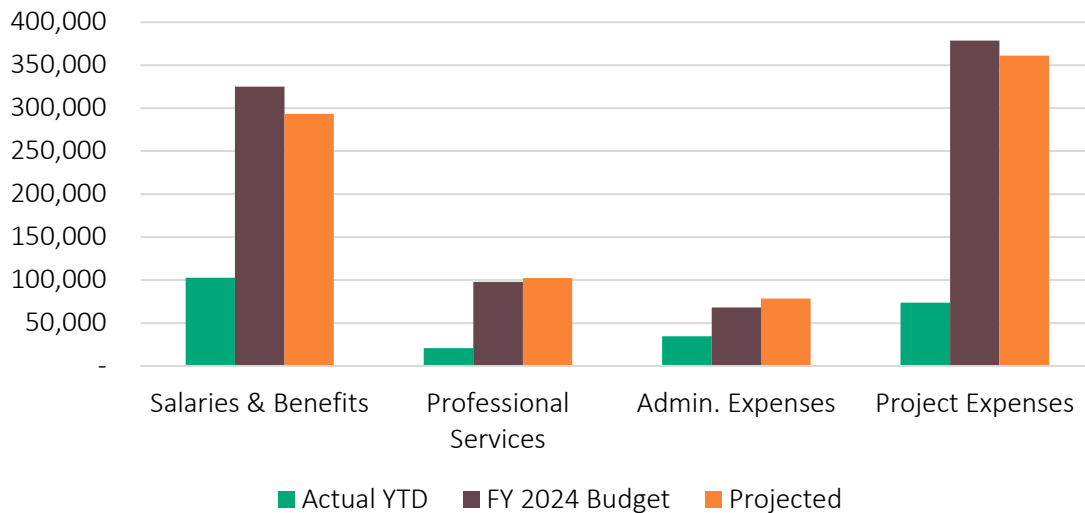
FINANCES

Our 2022-2023 audit was completed and presented during our fall Board Meeting, with no audit adjustments to report. We are also in good financial health this fiscal year, earning strong interest, and on track to come in well under budget. We look forward to the flexibility this affords us to fund more short-term projects, begin new projects of our own, or cover other unanticipated expenses.

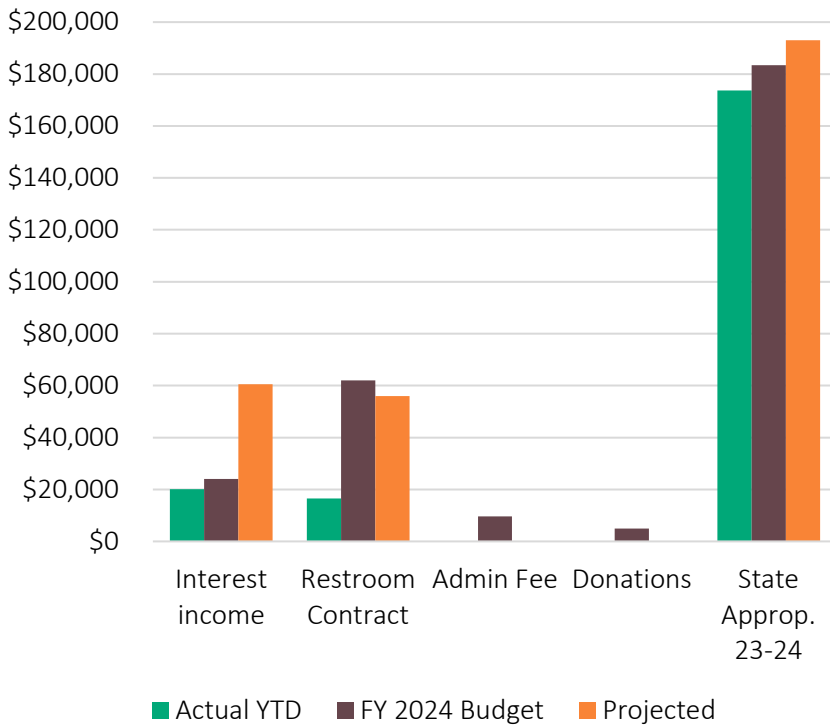
Budgeted Income: FY 2023-2024



Expenses by Category
Actual v. Budget v. Projected

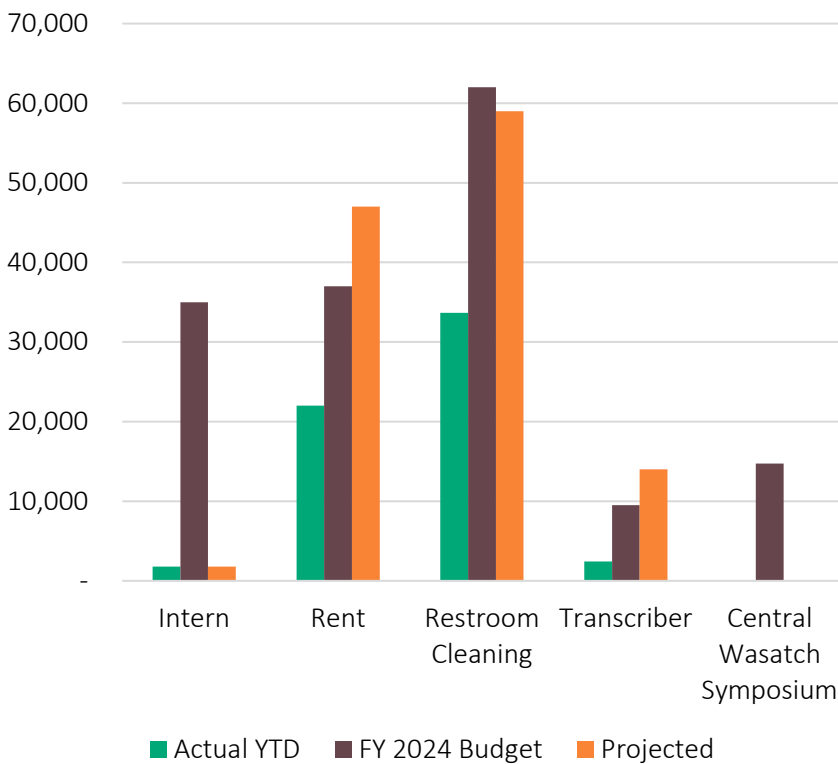


Income Areas of Significant Variance



Our Public Funds Interest Treasury account is earning very high yields. If this trend continues, we will close out the fiscal year with significantly more interest income than was originally budgeted, as shown on the left. In other good news, we were approved for more state appropriations than we budgeted. These benefits are partially offset by budgeted income in admin fees and donations that we will likely not pursue, and a slightly lower receivable amount from our partners in the tri-canyons restroom cleaning contract (see corresponding spending decrease in the next chart). Overall, we expect about \$27,000 in extra income this fiscal year.

Expenses Areas of Significant Variance



Our projected spending is on track to meet the budget, with a few exceptions, shown on the left. We don't anticipate needing the help of an intern this summer, so this expense is likely to come in well below budget, which will more than cover some unanticipated spending in rent (due to a rate increase and a late payment from last fiscal year) and transcription services for our newly restructured Stakeholders Council Systems Committees' meetings. Although planning the Central Wasatch Symposium will commence in 2024, the event and associated spending will occur next fiscal year, so these funds will roll into next year's budget. This all amounts to a \$34,000 decrease in projected spending versus the budget.

STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL

Ski Resorts and Economic Interests

Amber Broadway--
Solitude Mountain Resort and Deer Valley Resort
Mike Doyle -- *Brighton Resort*
Dave Fields – *Snowbird*
Nathan Rafferty – *Ski Utah*
Morgan Mingle – *Park City Chamber of Commerce*
Ed Marshall – *Log Haven Restaurant*

Cultural & Educational Interests

Stuart Derman – *Wasatch Mountain Arts*
Maura Hahnenberger – *Salt Lake Community College*
Hilary Lambert – *Wasatch Mountain Institute*
Dan Zalles – *League of Women Voters*

Conservation Interests

Carl Fisher – *Save Our Canyons*
Pat Shea -- *Friends of Alta*

Megan Nelson – *The Nature Conservancy*
Joanna Wheelton – *Cottonwood Canyons Foundation*
Caitlin Curry – *Wasatch Backcountry Hunters and Anglers*

Transit & Transportation Interests

Roger Borgenicht – *Utahns for Better Transportation*
Mike Christensen – *Utah Rail Passengers Association*
Danny Richardson -- *Salt Lake City resident*

Private Citizens

Michael Marker – *Little Cottonwood Canyon resident*
Kelly Boardman – *Salt Lake City resident*
Adam Lenkowski – *Cottonwood Heights resident*
Linda Johnson – *Salt Lake City resident*

Community Councils and Homeowner Associations

Kurt Hegmann – *Mill D Cabin Owners Association*
Barbara Cameron – *Big Cottonwood Community Council, Brighton Resident*
Del Draper – *Cecret Lake Cabin Owners Association*
Kirk Nichols – *Evergreen HOA, Professor of Outdoor Recreation, University of Utah*

Recreation Interests

Ian Hartley – *Mountain Trails*
Serena Yau – *Salt Lake Climbers Alliance*
John Knoblock – *Mt Olympus Community Council, Trails Utah*
Sarah Bennett – *Trails Utah*
Tom Diegel – *Wasatch Backcountry Alliance*
Dennis Goreham – *Wasatch Mountain Club*

In July of 2023, the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council restructured its committees to more closely resemble the Systems Groups that originally composed the Mountain Accord. In addition to the four systems committees, the long-standing Millcreek Canyon Committee is continuing its work.

Committees are as follows: *Transportation Systems Committee, Recreation Systems Committee, Economy Systems Committee, Environment Systems Committee, and Millcreek Canyon Committee.*

YOUTH COUNCIL

The Central Wasatch Commission Youth Council is an opportunity for young people to participate with the Central Wasatch Commission as it addresses transportation, economic, recreation, and environmental issues in the Central Wasatch Mountains.

The Central Wasatch Commission established its Youth Council in September of 2023. The first meeting was held on November 7th consisting of fourteen members with an age range of 16 - 30. The Youth Council will serve as an educational forum for its members and provide a platform for young people to engage directly with the Central Wasatch Commission on issues that affect them as residents of Utah and as users and stewards of the Central Wasatch. Members will meet every other month to discuss issues regarding the Central Wasatch and coordinate committee activities in the intervening months.

Youth Council Members and Structure:

Chair of Youth Council – Isabelle Chick

Co-Chair of Youth Council – Allison Aafedt

EVENTS AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

This committee meets to plan outreach events regarding the Youth Council.

- Chair: Lily Edwards
- Co-Chair: Kali Jones
- Stakeholder membership:
 - Isabelle Chick
 - Allison Aafedt
 - Ginger Dean

ENVIRONMENTAL DASHBOARD EDUCATION COMMITTEE

This committee meets to discuss educating themselves and others about the CWC's Environmental Dashboard.













- Chair: Dani Poirier
- Co-Chair: Maddy Pewtress
- Stakeholder membership:
 - Shivom Parihar
 - Pete Benda

DEI COMMITTEE

This committee meets to discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Central Wasatch.

- Chair: Pete Benda
- Co-Chair: Faith Bitz
- Stakeholder membership:
 - Jillian Perry
 - Kent Wu
 - Lily Edwards
 - Crystall Chen

MOUNTAIN ACCORD DELIVERABLE STATUS

Deliverable	In Progress	Implemented	Terminated	Yet to be Addressed	Reasoning
Transit Improvements in Parley's Canyon					This project may be addressed in 2024 and beyond.
Transportation improvements for the Cottonwood Canyons					The CWC released the BCC MAP in 2023. Work toward transportation improvements will continue in 2024 and beyond.
Pilot a shuttle service in Millcreek Canyon					Work will continue in 2024 and beyond.
Develop a comprehensive trail and cycling plan					This project may be addressed in 2024 and beyond.
Develop a program for the acquisition of private lands with environmental and recreational value					This project may be addressed in 2024 and beyond.
Develop an Environmental Dashboard to provide accessible and factual information about the Wasatch					The CWC released the Environmental Dashboard to the public in 2022.
Designate a National Conservation and recreation area and new wilderness					Work will continue in 2024 and beyond.
Land exchanges between the U.S. Forest Service and Cottonwood Canyon ski resorts					In 2020, the exchanges were determined to be non-feasible.
Identify long-term funding for programs and systems in the Central Wasatch					Work will continue in 2024 and beyond.
Facilitate long-term and short-term special projects					The CWC initiated the Short-Term Projects Grant Program in 2020 and it will continue every year.
Create a governmental entity, comprised of elected officials, which eventually become the Central Wasatch Commission					The CWC was created by interlocal agreement in 2017.

SHORT-TERM PROJECTS GRANT PROGRAM



**CENTRAL
WASATCH
COMMISSION**



In 2023, the Central Wasatch Commission approved funding for project proposals that resulted from the Call for Ideas opened to the public in the spring. The goal of the for the Short-Term Projects Grant Program is to identify projects for possible funding that implement transportation and transit solutions, protect the ecosystems and watershed, steward recreational access, and sustain the economic viability in the Central Wasatch Mountains.



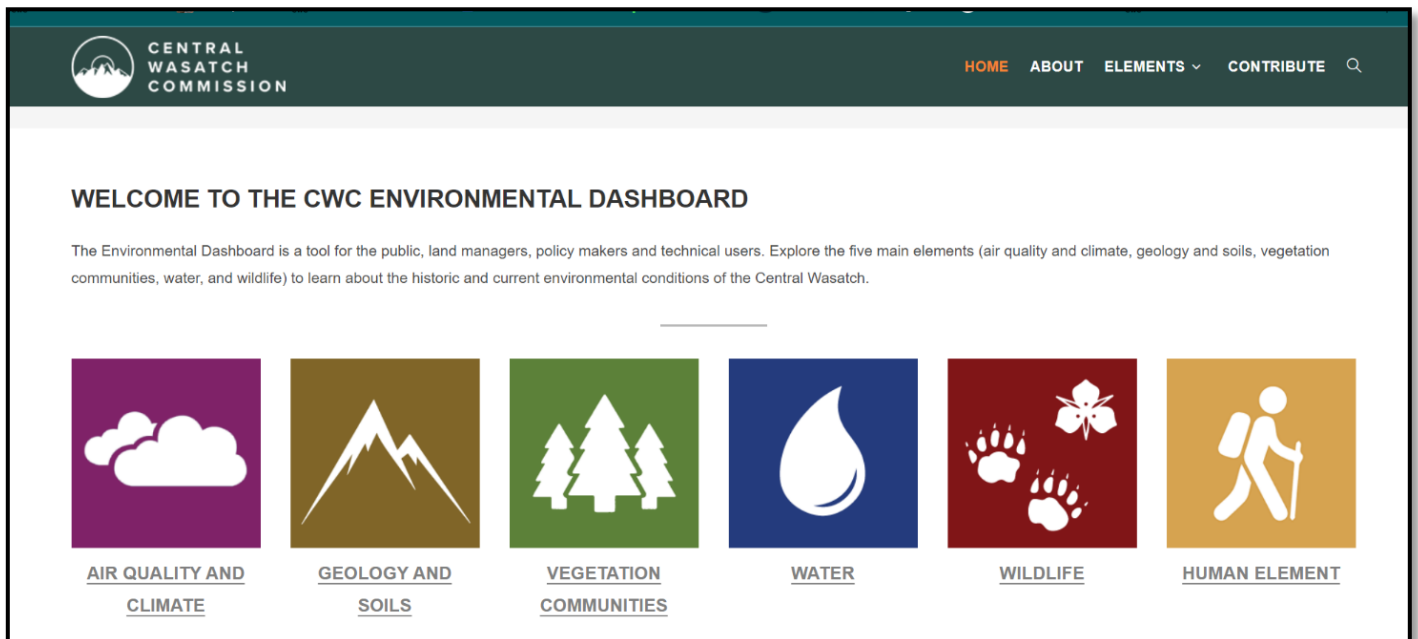
ENVIRONMENTAL DASHBOARD

Good decision-making in the Central Wasatch begins with access to information about the Central Wasatch. Initially released to the public during the summer of 2022, the Environmental Dashboard serves as a data-rich, and technically credible tool that anyone can understand and use. Some may use it to better understand current environmental conditions and monitor changes over time. Others might use it as a framework to consider benefits and tradeoffs of future projects, plans, or other decisions.

The Dashboard compiles spatial data using a Geographic Information System (GIS) linked data information system currently collected throughout the Central Wasatch Mountains. No new environmental data has been collected for inclusion in the Dashboard, however, the Dashboard serves as the centralized data hub for information about the Central Wasatch, while also translating often-esoteric data sets into graphs, charts, and stories that are accessible to everyone. Data sources for the information shown in the Dashboard include, but are not limited to: the Utah Geological Survey, the Utah Department of Natural Resources, the University of Utah, the Utah Department of Transportation, and ski resort live webcams. A full list of data sources may be found on the Environmental Dashboard.

The Central Wasatch Commission, through the maintenance of the Environmental Dashboard, ensures public access to environmental data corresponding to the air quality and climate, geology and soils, vegetation communities, water and wildlife in the Wasatch Front and Back.

Access the Environmental Dashboard on the CWC website here:
cwc.utah.gov/environmental-dashboard



VISITOR-USE STUDY

In 2023, after two years of study and multiple phase reports, the Central Wasatch Commission released the final phase report associated with its Visitor-Use Study. The data collected through the study have been integrated into the Central Wasatch Commission’s Environmental Dashboard, serving as the foundation for a sixth, “human” element, providing insight to the impact that human recreation in the Central Wasatch Mountains may have on the environment. The human element incorporates data that reflect the temporal and spatial dynamics of outdoor recreation use on United States Forest Service land within Little Cottonwood Canyon, Big Cottonwood Canyon, and Millcreek Canyon.

The outdoor recreation opportunities offered in the canyons of the Central Wasatch are some of the most iconic in all of Utah. The final Visitor-Use Study report details the findings of a survey effort designed to better understand the visitors and visitor experiences offered on United States Forest Service land within the Central Wasatch Mountains. The data and findings serve as a base of information that can be used to inform the decisions of both the USDA Forest Service as well as the many entities represented on the Central Wasatch Commission.

Specifically, the survey provides:

- The total recreational visits in the U.S. Forest Service land.
- The total recreational visits to different types of sites within the U.S. Forest Service land.
- The proportion of visits involving different outdoor recreation activities.
- The total time visitors spend participating in different activities.
- The average number of times visitors recreate in the U.S. Forest Service land each year.
- Characterize the variation in use across individual trails within the region.
- Visitors’ perceptions of crowding in U.S. Forest Service land.
- Visitors’ overall satisfaction with their visits to U.S. Forest Service land.
- The importance and satisfaction with site-specific attributes of recreation settings.
- The distance traveled to recreate in U.S. Forest Service land.
- The sociodemographic characteristics of visitors to each U.S. Forest Service land region.



TRANSPORTATION



Mountain transportation is one of the four main tenets that underpin the Central Wasatch Commission's work. In 2023, the Commission released the Big Cottonwood Canyon Mobility Action Plan (BCC MAP), which set out to identify and develop strategies to guide multi-modal transportation investments for Big Cottonwood Canyon with the goal of expanding sustainable transportation choices to support positive environmental, social, and economic outcomes for the canyon.

The BCC MAP resulted in a framework of actionable steps toward addressing the mobility needs in Big Cottonwood Canyon. The months-long process included data collection, mobility network analysis, a thorough review of existing transportation plans for the Canyon, and mobility hub assessment.

The Plan makes recommendations specific to infrastructure and transit. Recommendation highlights include the following:

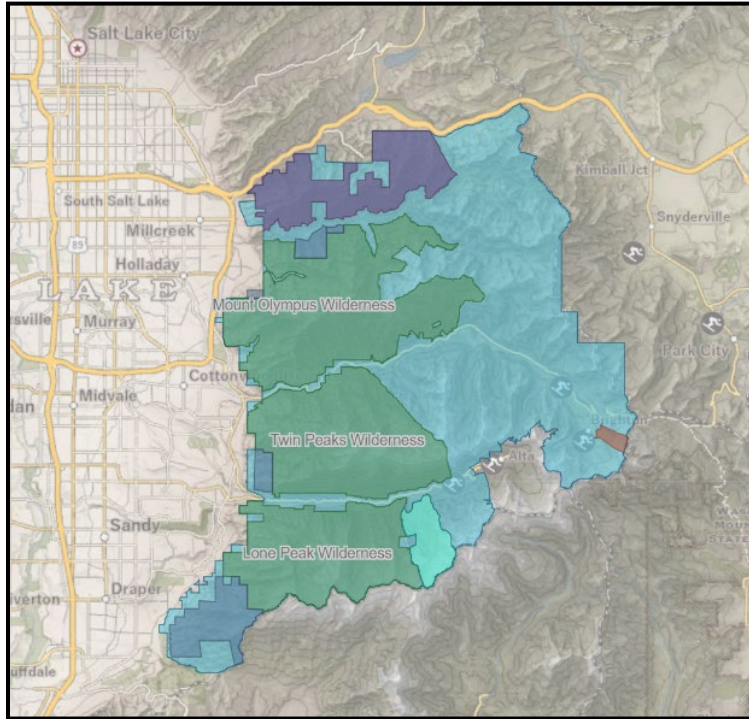
- Restripe Big Cottonwood Canyon Park & Ride lot.
- Implement a supplementary shuttle in Big Cottonwood Canyon.
- Enhanced bus service with a dedicated transit lane with resort mobility hubs.
- Improvements at the intersection between Fort Union Boulevard and Wasatch Boulevard.
- Tolling, restrictions to canyon on-road parking, and incentivizing bus options.
- Year-round bus service featuring canyon trailhead stops.

The CWC's Ski Bus Bypass program continued during the 2022/2023 ski season, and is aimed at reducing canyon traffic congestion, as well as incentivizing public transit for travel to ski resorts. In partnership with UTA and Sandy City, the ski bus is ferried from the UTA Park and Ride lot at 2000 East and 9400 South in Sandy to the Park and Ride lot at the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon by a Sandy City police car on canyon closure days. In its pilot year, the ski bus bypass service reduced travel time by 50 minutes, or 34%, with similar results in subsequent years.



THE CENTRAL WASATCH NATIONAL CONSERVATION AND RECREATION AREA ACT (CWNCRA)

The Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act (CWNCRA) is the cornerstone project for the Central Wasatch Commission. It is a federal lands bill that seeks to create a National Conservation and Recreation Area designation for nearly 80,000 acres of federally-owned land across the tri-canyons as well as along the ridgeline separating Big Cottonwood Canyon and the Wasatch Back, protecting nearly 1,000 acres of National Forest including the Crest Trail, Dutch Draw Monitors and Scott Hill.



If passed, the CWNCRA would create a new Grandeur Peak/Mount Aire Wilderness Area, as well as the White Pine Watershed Protection Area in Little Cottonwood Canyon, facilitate existing Wilderness area additions and offsets to allow for the continuation of the multi-use Bonneville Shoreline Trail, and remove barriers to transportation improvements.

Originally introduced to the Natural Resources Committee during the 114th Congress in 2016, the bill has since been through several re-drafts that reflect hundreds of public comments, and a landmark consensus amongst the various interest groups in the Central Wasatch Mountains. The CWNCRA remained paused this year in order to allow the Utah Department of Transportation time to complete its Little Cottonwood Canyon Environmental Impact Statement.

As of its most recent version, the major necessary refinements and other changes have been made, and the bill should be ready for work to restart, should Commissioners decide to include it in its 2024 strategic plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS

SOCIAL MEDIA

1,629

followers on Instagram

586

followers on Facebook

289

followers on Twitter

In addition to a newly created
Tiktok and Threads

NEWSLETTERS

38

newsletters sent

3,826

subscribers

OUTREACH

2

trail maintenance work days

15

tabling days

CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION

BOARD MEMBERS



**Council Christopher
F. Robinson**

Summit County --
CWC Chair



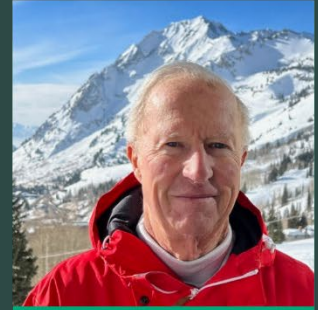
**Mayor Erin
Mendenhall**

Salt Lake City --
CWC Co-Chair



**Mayor Jeff
Silvestrini**

Millcreek City --
CWC Treasurer
and Secretary



**Mayor Roger
Bourke**

Town of Alta --
CWC Commissioner



Mayor Dan Knopp

Town of Brighton --
CWC Commissioner



**Mayor Michael
Weichers**

Cottonwood Heights --
CWC Commissioner



Mayor Nann Worel

Park City --
CWC Commissioner



**Mayor Monica
Zoltanski**

Sandy City --
CWC Commissioner

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS



Carlton Christensen

Utah Transit Authority --
CWC Commissioner



Annalee Munsey

Metropolitan Water District
of Salt Lake and Sandy --
CWC Commissioner



Dave Whittekiend

Uinta-Wasatch-Cache
National Forest Service --
CWC Commissioner

THANK YOU

A special thanks to the Central Wasatch Commission's Board of Commissioners and Stakeholders Council for their dedication, and Millcreek City Hall and staff for hosting many CWC public meetings.

Thank you to the following photographers for providing photos of the Central Wasatch Mountains (as seen in chronological order): Andrew Dibble, Siani Weston, Faith Colonna, Madeline Pettit, Carly Lansche, Tyson Dudley, and Howie Garber.







**CENTRAL
WASATCH
COMMISSION**

Protecting the Central Wasatch through canyon
transportation improvements, concentrated
development, and environmental and recreational
stewardship.