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9 **MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) STAKEHOLDERS**
10 **COUNCIL ENVIRONMENT SYSTEMS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD TUESDAY,**
11 **MARCH 12, 2024, AT 3:00 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON**
12 **AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS CWC OFFICES**
13 **LOCATED AT 41 NORTH RIO GRANDE STREET, SUITE, 102, SALT LAKE CITY UTAH.**

14
15 **Committee Members:** Kelly Boardman, Chair
16 Dan Zalles, Co-Chair
17 Joanna Wheelton
18 Maura Hahnenberger
19 Caitlin Curry
20 Tom Diegel
21 Kirk Nichols
22 John Knoblock
23 Patrick Nelson
24

25 **Staff:** Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director
26 Samantha Kilpack, Director of Operations
27

28 **OPENING**

- 29
30 1. **Chair Kelly Boardman will Open the Public Meeting as Chair of the Environment**
31 **Systems Committee of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council.**
32

33 Chair Kelly Boardman called the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Stakeholders Council
34 Environment Systems Committee Meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and welcomed those present.
35

- 36 2. **Review and Approval of the Minutes from the February 13, 2024, Meeting.**
37

38 **MOTION:** Kelly Boardman moved to APPROVE the February 13, 2024, Meeting Minutes. Caitlin
39 Curry seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.
40

41 **DISCUSSION OF “HUMAN IMPACTS” WORKSHOP**

- 42
43 1. **Committee Members will Discuss Preparations for “Human Impacts” Workshop within**
44 **the Context of the Committee’s Environmental Dashboard Needs Assessment.**
45

46 Executive Director, Lindsey Nielsen, reported that a Human Impacts Workshop was something
47 discussed during the early days of the Mountain Accord process with the Environmental Dashboard
48 Steering Committee. She noted that the Human Element of the Environmental Dashboard currently

1 includes the data collected through the Visitor Use Study. Kirk Nichols shared additional background
2 information. He explained that in the past, he created a list of elements he felt belonged in the
3 Environmental Dashboard. He is a recreation ecologist and there were certain human impacts he
4 thought needed to be considered. Eventually, the decision was made to focus on that area later on.

5
6 Mr. Nichols clarified that he does not still have the list of everything he proposed during the
7 Environmental Dashboard Steering Committee meetings. However, he has submitted an Area
8 Assessment Proposal, which is included in the Meeting Materials Packet. Reading through the Utah
9 State University (“USU”) assessment, there was a solid inventory done on trails. The trails were even
10 ranked on a scale of 1-5 based on the human impact levels. There were a number of Class 4 trails
11 they thought would go to the U.S. Forest Service as high priorities. The Forest Service now has its
12 Draft Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan. That draft plan was recently released to the public for feedback.
13 There was a meeting with the Big Cottonwood Community Council last night, and at that time, he
14 stated that something was missing. Mr. Nichols noted that the Draft Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan
15 and the Visitor Use Study have done an excellent job with trails. The Draft Tri-Canyon Trails Master
16 Plan has three areas of focus: trailheads, trail networks, and recreation strategies. He feels that the
17 draft plan is missing trail destinations. The Area Assessment Proposal was reviewed.

18
19 The Area Assessment Proposal states that trail destinations, such as passes, high alpine lakes, and
20 water features, do not have a good inventory of human impacts. For example, how much vegetation
21 is lost and how much the vegetation has changed. At the bottom of the proposal, there were items
22 listed that Mr. Nichols felt should be in the Human Element of the Environmental Dashboard. An
23 area assessment was proposed. The 1-5 class evaluation was as follows:

- 24
- 25 1. Ground vegetation flattened out but not permanently injured. Minimal physical change except
26 for possibly a simple rock fireplace.
- 27 2. Ground vegetation worn away around a fireplace or center of activity.
- 28 3. Ground vegetation was lost on most of the site, but humus and litter are still present. (Litter
29 means leaf litter, not human trash.)
- 30 4. Bare mineral soil is obvious. Tree roots exposed to the surface.
- 31 5. Soil erosion is obvious. Trees reduced in vigor and dead.
- 32

33 Mr. Nichols explained that the information above is information that does not currently exist. There
34 is no inventory, but there is a fairly good idea of where those issues are happening around the lakes
35 and other destinations. He stressed the importance of collecting that information. Until there is an
36 inventory, it is not possible to determine whether the conditions are getting better or worse. The trail
37 inventory is in good shape, but it is also necessary to have a destination area inventory to match. He
38 tried to propose this to Chelsea Phillippe with the Forest Service. She suggested adding that kind of
39 information to the trail assessment, but he believes the information needs a category of its own.

40
41 As far as a Human Impacts Workshop, people who were on the Environmental Dashboard Steering
42 Committee could be brought together to share information. Mr. Nichols stated that there is a lot to
43 learn from those Committee Members. Ms. Nielsen noted that several members of the Environmental
44 Dashboard Steering Committee are current members of the Stakeholders Council. Those involved in
45 the Environmental Dashboard work, including Phoebe McNeally and Jim Ehrlinger from the
46 University of Utah, were also on that initial Environmental Dashboard Steering Committee. Ms.
47 Nielsen thought it was an excellent idea to have some of the original Environmental Dashboard
48 Steering Committee Members address the Environment Systems Committee at a future meeting.

1
2 Co-Chair Dan Zalles wondered whether that meeting would be separate from the Human Impacts
3 Workshop. Ms. Nielsen explained that the workshop would be where the actual work occurred, while
4 members of the Steering Committee presenting would be part of the necessary research ahead of the
5 Human Impacts Workshop. She reiterated that the workshop and presentation would be separate.

6
7 Chair Boardman asked for feedback from other Committee Members about human impacts in the
8 Central Wasatch outside of trail data. One example related to advances in snowmaking, which
9 impacted the water. Large-scale capital investments from corporations purchasing ski resorts as well
10 as traffic issues were other human impacts that affect the environment. Chair Boardman referenced
11 the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) proposal to build a gondola in Little Cottonwood
12 Canyon. She wondered whether UDOT used a GIS model to model current traffic patterns and future
13 scenarios. Ms. Nielsen was not sure whether UDOT did that forecasting work. Chair Boardman
14 thought it would be worthwhile to have someone model the different scenarios in order to understand
15 the possibilities. Mr. Nichols stated that UDOT did some modeling, but that information was not
16 published. Chair Boardman wondered whether it would be possible for that information to be shared.
17 Alternatively, it might be advantageous to have a more neutral party handle the GIS model work.

18
19 Chair Boardman clarified that she envisioned GIS model work for the entire Central Wasatch. She
20 pointed out that the Mountain Accord visualized a sustainable transportation system. Any
21 transportation solutions will have significant impacts on the environment. Having a model that shows
22 a more comprehensive system for the entire Central Wasatch is something that would be beneficial
23 to all. It doesn’t seem that there can be appropriate solutions if only Little Cottonwood Canyon is
24 considered. Mr. Nichols referenced the UDOT Cottonwood Canyons Transportation Action Plan
25 (“CC TAP”). He explained that UDOT dropped that larger regional focus to focus on one canyon.

26
27 Caitlyn Curry felt that it is important to consider other types of human impacts, as human impacts
28 extend beyond trails. Motorized traffic is something that comes to mind. With the increased
29 development seen in the Wasatch Front, there are human/wildlife conflicts. Additionally, with the
30 Draft Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan, it is also necessary to think about the fragmentation of habitat
31 and how recreation can influence wildlife patterns. Chair Boardman asked for additional suggestions.
32 Mr. Nichols stressed the importance of considering water quality. Chair Boardman reported that there
33 have been significant improvements in snowmaking and that water ends up back in the watershed.
34 Though it is earmarked for snowmaking in some cases, there can be impacts on the flow. It was noted
35 that the human experience or overall user experience in the environment should be considered as well.

36
37 Director of Operations, Sam Kilpack, shared a list the Environment Systems Committee created
38 previously. It included several potential items for the Human Element. Chair Boardman wondered
39 whether it is possible to obtain information about the number of visitors to the different resorts. She
40 believed the Cottonwood Canyon resorts, with the exception of Solitude, are willing to share those
41 numbers. That information ties into transportation solutions, which in turn, impacts the environment.
42 Ms. Nielsen liked the ideas that have been shared during the meeting so far. She reminded Committee
43 Members that it is best to assign different ideas to a Committee Member so action can be taken.

44
45 Discussions were had about reaching out to the ski resorts. Tom Diegel noted that it is possible for
46 someone on the Environment Systems Committee to reach out to the General Managers of the ski
47 resorts. Chair Boardman reported that a patroller at Solitude had some thoughts about a mechanism
48 that would allow people to see what their impact is based on their decisions. This included how the

1 visitor made it to the canyon, what their activities were, and so on. It would essentially look at how
2 individual choices impact the environment. She thought that was a really interesting idea.

3
4 Chair Boardman asked for volunteers to reach out to UDOT about the modeling and reaching out to
5 the ski resorts for visitor data. Joanna Wheelton asked what specific questions the Committee wanted
6 to ask the ski resort General Managers. Chair Boardman explained that the intention was to find out
7 about visitor information. Ms. Wheelton offered to reach out to the General Managers. Chair
8 Boardman offered to reach out to UDOT to find out more about the modeling that was done.
9 Additionally, she would speak to Ms. McNeally at the DIGIT Lab for some information.

10
11 Mr. Digel reported that there was a presentation from Transit Project Manager, Devin Weder, at the
12 last CWC Board Meeting. He seemed to be amenable to communicating with the organization. Ms.
13 Nielsen explained that Mr. Weder is the point person for the implementation of Phase 1 of the Record
14 of Decision (“ROD”). Josh Van Jura is still the point person for the UDOT Little Cottonwood Canyon
15 Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”). Both have been willing to speak to the organization.

16
17 Co-Chair Zalles asked about the discussion with members of the Environmental Dashboard Steering
18 Committee. Chair Boardman wanted to know how to reach out to members. Ms. Nielsen explained
19 that she has a list of the members. She offered to do the initial outreach but wanted to make sure she
20 fully understood what was being requested. She believed the request is for members to address the
21 Environment Systems Committee, provide background information on the Environmental Dashboard
22 Steering Committee, and potentially assist with the Human Impacts Workshop. This was confirmed.

23 24 **CONSERVATION LEASING IN CENTRAL WASATCH**

25 26 **1. Committee Members will Discuss the Status of Conservation Leasing in the Central** 27 **Wasatch, including the Nature Conservancy’s Work.**

28
29 Chair Boardman explained that the next item on the meeting agenda relates to the Central Wasatch
30 National Conservation and Recreation Area (“CWNCRRA”) Act and conserving more of the lands in
31 the Wasatch. Co-Chair Zalles discussed the challenge of conserving parcels in the Central Wasatch.
32 One of the challenges has to do with the purchasers, especially since a seller is far more likely to sell
33 a parcel to a developer for a higher price than sell a parcel to someone interested in conservation.

34
35 Co-Chair Zalles has started to keep track of natural asset companies. He sent an email out to
36 Committee Members earlier that day about misinformation and what these companies are doing.
37 There seems to be a lot of fearmongering that this will be a way for foreign governments to purchase
38 public land. However, the focus is on creating natural asset valuation. The New York Times article
39 he sent out to Committee Members earlier that day has links to the application, criteria for valuation,
40 and metrics. The article directly addresses some of the criticisms. It also clarifies that it is possible
41 to use the land, but it must be done in sustainable ways. Preservation is the main focus. Co-Chair
42 Zalles noted that The New York Times article was not clear about the status of the application.

43
44 Co-Chair Zalles is not sure whether parcels in the Wasatch could potentially be taken care of in this
45 manner, but it is a way for conservation to occur with regenerative and sustainable practices. He
46 encouraged all Committee Members to read the email he sent out, as it provides more information
47 about natural asset companies. John Knoblock wondered whether there are specific areas in the

1 Wasatch this could apply to. Co-Chair Zalles mentioned locations that were formally mines. Those
2 lands could potentially become conservation leases using this natural asset system.

3
4 Chair Boardman wanted to know if there are specific properties that the Committee believed would
5 be ideal for this type of situation. Looking forward, if there was a time when the CWC pursued the
6 CWNCRA, she wanted to know if those properties could be enclosed in that area or if there would be
7 restrictions. She wanted to understand how something like this could work in terms of future
8 planning. Ms. Nielsen discussed the CWNCRA. There seems to be a question about what can happen
9 if the CWNCRA is passed and whether lands could be incorporated through this kind of land
10 acquisition mechanism, which she confirmed. She also noted that Salt Lake City has money in its
11 budget to acquire lands in the watershed area. Ms. Nielsen reported that the Legislative and Land
12 Tenure Committee convened last week for the first time in over a year and there is a plan to convene
13 again in either April or May. She suggested that Environment Systems Committee Members attend
14 the next meeting. Land tenure and land acquisition were discussed at the recent meeting.

15
16 Ms. Nielsen reported that there were previous discussions at the Environment Systems Committee
17 and Millcreek Canyon Committee level about compiling a catalog of available land parcels for sale.
18 She did not encourage that work, as it would likely encourage a falsely inflated market. Research
19 about what could potentially be possible for lands in the Central Wasatch was ideal. She thanked Co-
20 Chair Zalles for bringing this matter to the attention of the Committee. It was reiterated that
21 Committee Members could attend the next Legislative and Land Tenure Meeting.

22
23 Co-Chair Zalles noted that natural asset companies were not necessarily focused on acquiring land.
24 It was about working with existing property owners and turning them into investors who could profit
25 from the preservation of the land. It is possible to preserve the natural values and earn money. Mr.
26 Knoblock was not certain that the Utah Legislature would be interested in something like this.
27 Additional discussions were had about natural asset companies and whether there is interest in the
28 approach. Co-Chair Zalles did not believe this was a matter of government, but private owners.
29 Ms. Curry informed those present that House Bill (“H.B.”) 496 passed during the Legislative Session.
30 It seems their fear with natural asset companies is the potential for leases on public lands. Co-Chair
31 Zalles reiterated that he believed there was some misinformation and fear-mongering happening.

32
33 Ms. Curry believed the intention of the current discussion is to find ways to conserve lands in the
34 Wasatch. It is necessary to think about the tools that will allow that to happen. Natural asset
35 companies might be one possible tool. There is also conservation leasing, acquisition, conservation
36 easements, and other tools. Ms. Wheelton reported that the Nature Conservancy holds conservation
37 easements in Utah. There is a mechanism in place, but there is not the community interest to do that.
38 If people were willing to donate to put conservation easements in place, the Natural Conservancy
39 would be able to take that money and focus on conservation easements, but the money is not there.

40
41 Co-Chair Zalles believed the reason there are so many dead ends when it comes to preserving parcels
42 is because it is not possible to compete financially. Resources are then extracted or developed because
43 that is where the money is. The natural asset company movements focus on assigning economic
44 value, so people can make money from the preservation of the natural environment. He feels this is
45 something worth looking into further. Mr. Knoblock noted that a lot of land trusts that do
46 conservation easements have been successful when the land has other value. For instance, when there
47 is a farm and the farmer can continue to earn income by producing crops, but there is an easement.
48 A lot of the lands in the Central Wasatch do not have ongoing economic value other than

1 development. That complicates the matter further. It was noted that some are interested in conserving
2 the land in general and will allow a non-profit to place a conservation easement on the land.

3
4 Chair Boardman wondered whether it would be worthwhile to approach a natural asset company and
5 explain the interest of the Committee in learning more. Ms. Wheelton noted that some conservation-
6 minded people have issues with the idea. She did not want to ostracize anyone over an idea that is
7 still considered to be political in nature. Ms. Curry agreed that it is young in the concept and there
8 are still a lot of questions that need to be answered. Mr. Knoblock thought that doing some research
9 and becoming more educated about the idea would be worthwhile. Co-Chair Zalles understood the
10 sensitivity around the idea in Utah but reiterated that it is something he thinks could be interesting.

11
12 Mr. Knoblock asked Patrick Nelson whether there were any active purchases in the works for Salt
13 Lake City. Mr. Nelson reported that there was a lot of pressure constantly pushing up property values.
14 He is unable to speak about ongoing purchases but noted that having these kinds of conservations is
15 useful. Mr. Knoblock discussed the 18-acre parcel at the bottom of Millcreek Canyon. Chair
16 Boardman thanked everyone for their contributions during the meeting and reviewed action items.

17
18 **CLOSING**

19
20 **1. Chair Boardman will Call for a Motion to Adjourn the Environment Systems Committee**
21 **Meeting.**

22
23 **MOTION:** Kelly Boardman moved to ADJOURN the Environment Systems Committee Meeting.
24 Caitlin Curry seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

25
26 The meeting adjourned at 4:02 p.m.

1 *I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central*
2 *Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council Environment Systems Committee Meeting held on*
3 *Tuesday, March 12, 2024.*

4

5 Teri Forbes

6 Teri Forbes

7 T Forbes Group

8 Minutes Secretary

9

10 Minutes Approved: _____