



MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL ENVIRONMENT SYSTEM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD TUESDAY, JULY 8, 2025, AT 3:00 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS THE CWC OFFICES LOCATED IN THE BRIGHTON BANK BUILDING, 311 SOUTH STATE STREET, SUITE 330, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.

Committee Members: Kelly Boardman, Chair
Dan Zalles, Co-Chair
Brenden Catt
Olivia Juarez
Meaghan McKasy
Maura Hahnenberger
Ella Abelli-Amen
Doug Tolman
Adam Lenkowski

Staff: Samantha Kilpack, Director of Operations
Ben Kilbourne, Community Engagement Coordinator

Others: John Adams, Stakeholders Council
Scott Hotaling, Utah State University

OPENING

1. Co-Chair Dan Zalles will Open the Public Meeting as Co-Chair of the Environment System Committee of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council.

Co-Chair Dan Zalles called the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Stakeholders Council Environment System Committee Meeting to order at 3:04 p.m. and welcomed those present.

2. Review and Approval of the Minutes from the June 10, 2025, Meeting.

MOTION: Dan Zalles moved to APPROVE the June 10, 2025, Meeting Minutes. _____ seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

PRESENTATION ABOUT CENTER FOR MOUNTAIN FUTURES

1. Guest Scott Hotaling will Discuss the Center for Mountain Futures Being Developed at Utah State University.

Co-Chair Zalles introduced Scott Hotaling, who is present at the Environment System Committee Meeting, to share information about the Center for Mountain Futures. Mr. Hotaling explained that he is a professor at Utah State University, but is local to the Central Wasatch. He clarified that the Center for Mountain Futures does not formally exist at this time, but is currently being developed.

Mr. Hotaling shared presentation slides with the Environment System Committee as well as his contact information. He has two roles at Utah State University, including a research role where he runs the Climate Change in Mountains Lab. Mr. Hotaling reported that he has a PhD in Ecology, but the lab does broader work and looks at how climate change is impacting mountain regions. He next shared information about Utah State University Extension and explained that he was hired as the first Climate Resiliency Specialist. He looks at climate impacts in the State of Utah as part of the Utah State University Extension. An example of the kind of research occurring is an evaluation of the potential for rock glaciers, which are large masses of ice in the mountains of Utah and elsewhere. He shared an image of rock glaciers for reference. There is ice internal to the structure, but it is covered by debris. That debris cover insulates the internal ice and theoretically prevents it from melting.

Co-Chair Zalles asked how common rock glaciers are and why some glaciers turn into rock glaciers. Mr. Hotaling reported that there are roughly 800 to 1,000 rock glaciers in Utah, so these are common. Their formation depends on how much rock and debris falls into ice, how much snow accumulates, and so on. LiDAR data was used to evaluate how glaciers and rock glaciers have changed in the Teton range from 2040 to 2022. These tools can also be applied in the Wasatch, but there is not enough data at this time. Mr. Hotaling shared information about Grand Teton National Park and explained that the red shown on the presentation slides indicates ice loss. When glaciers are compared to the rock glaciers in the same area, the rock glaciers are not changing as quickly. There are no surface ice glaciers in Utah, but there are a lot of rock glaciers, and if these rock glaciers persist amidst a warming climate and have an impact on water resources, then it is important to understand them.

Co-Chair Zalles wanted to know more about glaciers in Utah. Mr. Hotaling reported that Timpanogos was the most recent ice glacier, being surface ice as recently as the beginning of the 1900s. Recently, it became a debris-covered rock glacier. Co-Chair Zalles believed the reason it became a debris-covered rock glacier had more to do with the geology, avalanches, and rockfall rather than climate change. Mr. Hotaling stated that there was likely surface ice over some kind of debris-covered ice. When that surface ice went away, there was a climate element involved, but he believed it changed over before the Industrial Revolution. He clarified that this is simply one example.

Mr. Hotaling reported that for Utah State University Extension, he runs a Climate Adaptation Intern Program. There are 10 undergrads each semester who work on climate adaptation issues in

1 Utah, and the students produce publications about those issues. Some examples were shared for
2 reference.

3
4 The Center for Mountain Futures was discussed. Mr. Hotaling explained that the goal of the Center
5 is to integrate research, knowledge, and expertise to solve complex challenges in mountain
6 systems. He informed the Committee that the mountains in Utah and the western United States
7 are changing quickly. Even though he works on climate change primarily, it is not just climate
8 change that is causing these changes. There are a lot more people in the Wasatch and similar
9 locations than there used to be. Development is also a factor, as is wildfire. All around the State,
10 there are people with expertise in economics, water resources, recreation, and other relevant areas.
11 Mr. Hotaling noted that there are a lot of entities working to address portions of the problem, but
12 none of these entities are looking at the change in the mountains specifically. The idea of the
13 Center for Mountain Futures is to bring different elements together in a way that is relevant while
14 also focusing on applied research.

15
16 Co-Chair Zalles believed the Center for Mountain Futures refers to all of the mountains in Utah
17 rather than only the Wasatch area. Mr. Hotaling explained that it covers mountains in the western
18 United States broadly, but Utah is a focus area. If it is possible to solve certain issues in Utah,
19 then it is possible to be ahead of the curve for places like Montana, Washington, and other areas.
20 He believes Utah is the best place to work on these mountain-related issues. Mr. Hotaling further
21 reviewed the presentation slides and explained that there is a desire to create an integrated entity.
22 The mountains are critical to collective wellbeing, as the mountains supply water and drive
23 economies. However, the mountains are changing quickly, and there is no full understanding of
24 how those changes are occurring or how those changes impact various systems. Mr. Hotaling
25 believes there needs to be more coordination in order to accomplish shared goals. Certain entities
26 are working on this, such as the CWC. The idea is to take a model that is already working in Utah
27 and apply it to mountains specifically. As for the reason to move forward with the Center for
28 Mountain Futures now, some changes need to be examined, and there are the future Olympic
29 Games to consider.

30
31 Co-Chair Zalles asked how the statistic about a 16% decline in snowpack was calculated. He
32 pointed out that in certain years, there is more snow than in others. Mr. Hotaling explained that
33 all of the data from the SNOTEL sites in Utah is collected and compared over time to determine
34 the overall trend. It was noted that what is more dramatic is how much less snow there is further
35 down in elevation. Mr. Hotaling reported that data has been broken out by north and south in the
36 State, and the trend is more extreme in southern Utah. Lower elevation in southern Utah is the
37 most extreme example.

38
39 As for what the Center for Mountain Futures would actually look like if it was fully operational,
40 there would be four focus areas: research, engagement, outreach, and training. There would be a
41 Director of the Center for Mountain Futures and scientist positions to work on applied issues as
42 determined by the Center for Mountain Futures leadership and partners. There would also be
43 communications positions, a program coordinator, graduate students, and undergraduate interns.
44 Mr. Hotaling shared some example research that could take place, including additional research
45 about rock glaciers.

1 Adam Lenkowski asked how deep under the dirt the rock glaciers usually are. Mr. Hotaling stated
2 that the depth is usually one to two meters, but it can vary quite a bit. He shared information about
3 ice stupas, which are the creation of an artificial glacier. It is possible that these could work well
4 in Utah. These are seasonally constructed in other parts of the world for water storage. It is a
5 common practice in other areas. While he is not certain whether it would work in Utah, it is
6 something that could be explored through the Center for Mountain Futures' efforts. Another
7 element of the Center for Mountain Futures would be a training program where the existing
8 Climate Adaptation Intern Program is used. There could be mountain-focused interns who work
9 with partners on this kind of research. There was discussion about snow making and whether that
10 could be a climate solution. Mr. Hotaling clarified that he does not know the answer, but that
11 question has been posed by ski area operators and public utilities employees. There appears to be
12 an interest in finding out more.

13
14 Mr. Hotaling spoke about the communication component of the Center for Mountain Futures. He
15 recently started a YouTube channel called Mountain Futures in preparation for this effort. There
16 is a clear appetite for this kind of information. Mr. Hotaling reported that there has been media
17 success so far. He next shared a presentation slide with the deliverables for the Center for
18 Mountain Futures each year, if it formally exists and is able to move forward. He would love to
19 see a one or two-day Mountain Futures Forum in the State where a conference is held with
20 researchers, members of the public, and partners to talk about issues and solutions. Mr. Hotaling
21 expressed support for the Central Wasatch Symposium that was held in January. There could
22 potentially be a partnership established.

23
24 Mr. Hotaling explained that he is at the Environment System Committee Meeting because he wants
25 to hear from others about the gaps that currently exist and how something like the Center for
26 Mountain Futures could add value. He shared his contact information and reiterated that there is
27 a desire to have additional discussions. It is possible to talk or even have a field visit to a rock
28 glacier.

29
30 Co-Chair Zalles asked if there has been any political resistance to the Center for Mountain Futures.
31 Mr. Hotaling denied this but noted that there has not been any political outreach at this point.
32 There is no support or resistance currently. That being said, there has been a lot of support within
33 Utah State University and from outside partners that he has spoken to so far. Mr. Hotaling thanked
34 the Environment System Committee for listening and asked that there be continued
35 communication.

36
37 Ella Abelli-Amen reported that she works for the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation and does plant
38 stewardship work in the canyons. A lot of the questions that come to mind for her are related to
39 plants. For instance, how species will be moving elevation-wise as a result of climate change. She
40 wondered whether the Center for Mountain Futures would include plant-related research as well.
41 Mr. Hotaling explained that there is evidence that the plants living on rock glaciers are a unique
42 habitat that does not exist anywhere else in a place like Utah. He would like to see some Utah-
43 focused research about what plant species live on rock glaciers and how those compare to what is
44 seen in other areas. This is not necessarily his area of expertise, but it is an interest that could be
45 pursued.

1 Mr. Hotaling stated that the goal of the Center for Mountain Futures would be broader than his
2 areas of expertise. He would like there to be a staff scientist looking at other issues and for studies
3 to be funded related to topics such as plants living on rock glaciers and whether the tree line is
4 changing in the Wasatch. There could also be some undergraduate projects where existing data is
5 collected.

6
7 Co-Chair Zalles reported that the Stakeholders Council has an avenue to communicate with the
8 policymakers and influencers who sit on the CWC Board. He believes the work on rock glaciers
9 is important and asked that information be shared with the Stakeholders Council. If
10 communication is maintained as research continues, it will be possible to forward that information
11 to the members of the CWC Board. Mr. Hotaling was asked whether he had reviewed the Central
12 Wasatch Dashboard, which was confirmed. He clarified that while he has seen the dashboard, he
13 has not looked too closely at what is included there. Co-Chair Zalles explained that the Central
14 Wasatch Dashboard has information about the Central Wasatch organized by broad topics. It can
15 be accessed from the CWC website. The Environment System Committee recently conducted a
16 survey about how to improve the resource. There is nothing about rock glaciers there currently,
17 but some of that data could be added in the future.

18
19 Doug Tolman left a question in the Zoom chat box asking whether there is a GIS layer or if there
20 is a publicly accessible one with up-to-date rock glacier information. Mr. Hotaling confirmed this.
21 There was one published for the western United States in 2019, and someone with the Utah
22 Geological Survey has a Utah-specific rock glacier layer that is possible for the Committee to
23 review. Committee Members expressed an interest in knowing how many rock glaciers are in the
24 Central Wasatch area.

25
26 Co-Chair Zalles asked when more will be known about the Center for Mountain Futures. Mr.
27 Hotaling believes it will likely be official in the fall, as the committee that determines such matters
28 is an academic year committee. There will be a process that takes place in the fall. While he feels
29 confident the Center for Mountain Futures will move forward, it is not official at this time.

30
31 Co-Chair Zalles believes the work mentioned related to rock glaciers is meaningful. He is
32 interested in that work and the research that has been conducted. This is something that he would
33 like to learn more about. Co-Chair Zalles suggested that Mr. Hotaling take some time to look at
34 the Central Wasatch Dashboard to see if some of that research might make sense to be included
35 on there. Mr. Hotaling offered to send a link to the YouTube channel as well as the rock glacier
36 information. Olivia Juarez left a comment in the Zoom chat box asking about the possibility of a
37 field visit. Director of Operations, Samantha Kilpack, stated that she will send out the contact
38 information that was shared.

39 40 **LITTLE COTTONWOOD CANYON TRANSPORTATION DISCUSSION**

41 42 **1. Committee Member Patrick Shea will Discuss Transportation Alternatives in Little** 43 **Cottonwood Canyon.**

44
45 It was noted that Patrick Shea is not present at the Environment System Committee Meeting. As
46 a result, the transportation alternatives discussion will be rescheduled to a future meeting.

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODEL DISCUSSION

- 1. The Committee will Discuss the Concept of a Sustainable Business Model in the Central Wasatch.**
- 2. The Committee will Discuss Sustainability Plans and Efforts of Businesses in the Central Wasatch.**

Co-Chair Zalles explained that the next item on the Environment System Committee Meeting agenda relates to sustainable business models. In order to prepare for the discussion, Committee Members were asked to review the Ski Utah website and look at the section on sustainable practices. There was a lot of interesting information listed there, but he noticed there was no sustainability information about Solitude or Brighton. It is suggested that the Committee discuss the concept of a sustainable business model as well as sustainability plans and efforts for businesses within the Central Wasatch.

Chair Kelly Boardman thinks one of the greatest resources for environmental protection is the businesses. She pointed out that businesses influence the way that people think about sustainability. It might be worthwhile to invite some of the resorts and smaller businesses to a future meeting to talk about their visions for the future. She liked the comment made at the last meeting by Community Engagement Coordinator Ben Kilbourne, related to environmental responsibility. Chair Boardman noted that there could be a reframing of the concept of sustainability, because sustainability could mean sustainability of the business as well, which is something to consider. It would be meaningful to allow the businesses to showcase the work that is being done and their efforts. She also likes the idea of discussing what the businesses can do to promote environmental responsibility.

Chair Boardman pointed out that Mr. Shea had intended to speak about the transportation alternatives in Little Cottonwood Canyon. Due to the lawsuits in Little Cottonwood Canyon, there are some simpler solutions that are not being considered. For example, better transportation solutions for employees, making sure the Utah Transit Authority (“UTA”) vans are four-wheel drive, and so on. She likes the idea of having discussions about solutions that are environmentally responsible and can be implemented despite the delays that have occurred due to the Little Cottonwood Canyon lawsuits.

Co-Chair Zalles asked if the lawsuits have delayed progress from being made on transportation solutions. Chair Boardman stated that her understanding is that the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) has held off on Phases I and II of the solutions for Little Cottonwood Canyon because of the gondola-related lawsuit. However, some environmentally responsible items could move forward if there were work done with UTA, UDOT, and others. Chair Boardman thinks there are simple solutions that could be implemented before the winter season.

Chair Boardman noted that she reviewed the Ski Utah website, and there is a mention of the Solitude Mountain Resort transportation solutions and how CO2 emissions are being reduced with employee shuttles. There are also better communication systems in place than before. Ms. Kilpack

1 reported that there are three ski resort representatives on the Stakeholders Council and at least one
2 small business owner. It is possible to work on some outreach to those individuals to see if there
3 is an interest in attending a future Environment System Committee Meeting to discuss
4 sustainability.

5
6 Meaghan McKasy likes what has been suggested by Chair Boardman. It makes sense to provide
7 a platform for the resorts to discuss their sustainability efforts, but she is curious about what kind
8 of format there would be for that kind of discussion. She believes the Committee needs to think
9 about how to provide an opportunity for representatives to share, but also ensure there is a critical
10 discussion about what else can be done. Chair Boardman believes the Environment System
11 Committee can further discuss the format. She noted that representatives could address what is
12 anticipated in terms of growth and transportation solutions. There could also be collaboration
13 between businesses about responsible recreation, so the public can better understand how to
14 responsibly recreate in the canyons.

15
16 Co-Chair Zalles noted that through the discussion, there could be an identification of the pain
17 points that exist and to what extent those can be addressed. Chair Boardman wants to plant the
18 seed of collaboration between the resorts, businesses, and the Environment System Committee.
19 John Adams suggested that transportation be separated out of the conversation as much as possible,
20 because it tends to take over. He would also suggest looking at the National Ski Areas Association
21 (“NSAA”) website, because there is a sustainability section that provides guidance for the resorts
22 as far as sustainable slopes and climate change. Mr. Adams referenced the issue of greenwashing.
23 Aspen One releases a sustainability report each year, which is less about carbon counting and more
24 about doing the right things. There was discussion about different sustainability efforts and
25 approaches.

26
27 Co-Chair Zalles pointed out that an action item could be to invite resort and business
28 representatives to a future meeting. There can be questions prepared ahead of time to drive some
29 of the discussion. He asked whether the ski resort representatives are on the Economy System
30 Committee. Ms. Kilpack reported that some are on the Economy System Committee and some
31 are on the Transportation System Committee. Co-Chair Zalles thought it would be best to invite
32 them to a future Environment System Committee Meeting so there can be a focused discussion
33 about this particular topic.

34
35 Mr. Adams acknowledged that the business model for the resorts will be different than a restaurant
36 business. He asked if discussions would focus on the Wasatch Back as well. Chair Boardman
37 stated that there are efforts taking place in both the Wasatch Front and Wasatch Back. It would be
38 beneficial to understand all of them. She stressed the importance of educating visitors about
39 sustainability.

40
41 Ms. Kilpack stated that the sustainability discussion could take place at the next Stakeholders
42 Council Meeting instead of at a future Environment System Committee Meeting. Co-Chair Zalles
43 liked that suggestion. There could be a one-half hour discussion at the Stakeholders Council level.
44 It was noted that the next Stakeholders Council Meeting is scheduled to take place in August. Co-
45 Chair Zalles commented that what the ski resorts do is consequential, because the resorts are a
46 component of the lifestyle in the area and are also a driver of the economy. Chair Boardman

1 believes increasing education about how daily choices impact the quality of the snow long-term
2 could be meaningful.

3
4 Co-Chair Zalles asked how to formally make this an action item for the next Stakeholders Council
5 Meeting. Ms. Kilpack wanted to understand what the scope of the conversation is envisioned to
6 be. This will determine whether it would be better suited to an Environment System Committee
7 Meeting or a Stakeholders Council Meeting. Co-Chair Zalles believes the discussion will be useful
8 for the Stakeholders Council, because it relates to the economy and environment. Even if
9 transportation was left out of the conversation to be discussed separately at another meeting, it
10 seems to be something that would be worthwhile for all Council Members to participate in. He
11 suggested that there be 30 minutes set aside during the next Stakeholders Council Meeting to have
12 a sustainability-related discussion.

13 14 **RESCISSION OF ROADLESS RULE DISCUSSION**

15 16 **1. The Committee will Discuss the Recent Rescission of the Roadless Rule and Potential** 17 **Impacts on the Central Wasatch.**

18
19 Co-Chair Zalles reported that the next item on the Environment System Committee Meeting
20 agenda relates to the recent rescission of the Roadless Rule. He sent out an email earlier that
21 morning with some articles and resources for Committee Members to review. There was a timeline
22 about the history of the Roadless Rule included in those materials. Mr. Kilbourne shared a map
23 of the Roadless Rule areas in the Wasatch so Committee Members could better understand the
24 implications of this shift. He noted that the crosshatched areas represent the 2001 roadless
25 inventory. It aligns fairly closely with the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation
26 Area Act (“CWNCRA”) with a few exceptions. For example, there are a few places that do not
27 quite overlap in Millcreek Canyon.

28
29 Mr. Tolman clarified that the Roadless Rule has not been rescinded at this time, but the current
30 administration has announced there is a plan to rescind it. In order to conform to the
31 Administrative Procedure Act (“APA”), there must be a full rule-making process. As it stands
32 currently, these areas are still protected, but the current administration has expressed a desire to go
33 through the process to remove that protection. This will likely be met with several levels of appeals
34 and lawsuits.

35
36 Co-Chair Zalles noted that the Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office is a government agency
37 that will likely be influential as far as possible impacts on the Wasatch. He included a link to that
38 website in the email that was shared with Committee Members earlier. Their philosophy is active
39 management of forests. Typically, active management is the umbrella term for inroads into forests
40 for the sake of wildfire management and prevention, but it often means there can be salvage
41 logging. There is some controversy about whether salvage logging is good or bad for forest
42 sustainment. It might be worthwhile to connect with the Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office
43 in the future.

44
45 Mr. Tolman shared some background information about the Public Lands Policy Coordinating
46 Office. In terms of managing the national forests, he does not necessarily believe they will be an

ally. He reported that the Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office is focused on getting Federal lands into State hands. As for wildfire mitigation, there is an ongoing project by the Salt Lake Ranger District, along with the State and Salt Lake City, for fuel mitigation treatments in the Wasatch Mountains. Starting next year, 4,000 acres will be treated in Big Cottonwood Canyon. The majority of that work will take place in roadless areas. In the Wasatch, there are thousands of acres being treated in roadless areas. The difference is that a commercial logging company cannot come in and receive money for the logs that are cut down. Co-Chair Zalles reported that there was previously fuel reduction work in Millcreek Canyon. He asked if money is made from these kinds of projects. Mr. Tolman does not believe so. He was in a meeting about the work for Big Cottonwood Canyon, and there will be no commercial involvement. It is not that commercial logging does not have a place, but completely removing the Roadless Rule and stating that it is for wildfire needs is not accurate.

Mr. Tolman reported that there is a difference between a fire crew that has fire engines and training to handle fuel treatments with the resources available to put out small fires and a private logging company that is cutting corners to make the most profit possible. It was noted that there can be an economic incentive associated with thinning activities. Mr. Tolman was asked to share information about the fire that happened last year. He reported that the Yellow Lake fire occurred when a commercial logging operation thinned fuels in an area with a high fire risk. As opposed to going in and doing the treatment, the Forest Service Ranger District in that area received bids, and a commercial logging operation came in to do the work. During their operations, something happened, and a 33,000-acre fire was started. Logging and roads are often the source of fires. The argument of Save Our Canyons is that preserving areas as roadless and then having well-thought-out fuel treatment is the best approach. He does not support rescinding the Roadless Rule.

Co-Chair Zalles asked if there is anything the Environment System Committee can be doing to be proactive. Mr. Tolman reported that there is a movement called the Protect Our Roadless Forests Act. There will be a lot of recommendations shared at that level about involvement. There is an Act that has been proposed in Congress called the Roadless Area Conservation Act. It might be possible for the Stakeholders Council to recommend that the CWC Board consider expressing support for that.

Mr. Tolman feels it is important to prove that wildfire mitigation can be done in roadless areas. There will be an Environmental Assessment (“EA”) released next month about the Big Cottonwood Canyon fuel reduction program, so commenting on that and spreading awareness would be useful. Mr. Tolman does not believe there needs to be a formal action item created for the Environment System Committee at this time. Co-Chair Zalles asked Mr. Tolman to send an email to Committee Members with links to relevant information. Mr. Tolman confirmed that he can continue to share resources.

NEXT MEETING AGENDA

1. The Committee will Discuss Items for the Next Meeting Agenda.

There were no additional discussions about the next meeting agenda.

1 **OTHER ITEMS**

2
3 There were no other items discussed.

4
5 **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

6
7 There were no public comments.

8
9 **CLOSING**

10
11 **1. Co-Chair Zalles will call for a Motion to Adjourn the Environment System**
12 **Committee Meeting.**

13
14 **MOTION:** Doug Tolman moved to ADJOURN the Environment System Committee Meeting.
15 Olivia Juarez seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the
16 Committee.

17
18 The Environment System Committee Meeting adjourned at 4:37 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 System Committee Meeting held Tuesday,*
3 *July 8, 2025.*

4
5 Teri Forbes

6 Teri Forbes

7 T Forbes Group

8 Minutes Secretary

9
10 Minutes Approved: _____