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12 13 MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION ("CWC") STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL MEETING, HELD WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2024, AT 3:30 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS MILLCREEK CITY HALL, 1330 EAST CHAMBERS AVENUE, MILLCREEK, UTAH.

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16 **Present:** Maura Hahnenberger, Chair 17 Dan Zalles 18 Danny Richardson 19 Roger Borgenicht 20 Doug Tolman 21 Hilary Arens 22 Olivia Juarez 23 Craig Williams 24 Dennis Goreham 25 Morgan Mingle 26 John Knoblock 27 Eva De Laurentiis 28 Mike Marker 29 Brenden Catt 30 Erin Ferguson 31 Ed Marshall 32 Kurt Hegmann 33 Jonny Vasic 34 Mark Baer 35 Tom Diegel 36 Kelly Boardman Barbara Cameron 37 38 Kim Doyle 39 40 Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director Staff:

41 Samantha Kilpack, Director of Operations 42 Ben Kilbourne, Communications Director

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44 Others: CJ Blye Dani Poirier 45 46 Kirk Nichols

Opening

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1. <u>Chair Maura Hahnenberger will Open the Public Meeting as the Chair of the Stakeholders Council of the Central Wasatch Commission.</u>

Chair Maura Hahnenberger called the Central Wasatch Commission ("CWC") Stakeholders Council Meeting to order at approximately 3:30 p.m. and welcomed those present. Chair Hahnenberger explained that she is the new Chair of the Stakeholders Council. There is still a need for a Co-Chair.

2. <u>Chair Hahnenberger will Call for a Motion to Approve the Minutes from the June 4, 2025, Stakeholders Council Meeting.</u>

MOTION: Dennis Goreham moved to APPROVE the Meeting Minutes from the June 4, 2025, Stakeholders Council Meeting. Kelly Boardman seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Council.

June Meeting Recap

1. Chair Hahnenberger will Give a Recap of the Stakeholders Council Retreat.

Chair Hahnenberger shared some highlights from the Stakeholders Council Retreat. It was nice to have more informal discussions in a different setting, but there were also some business items on the meeting agenda. For example, the Stakeholders Council discussed the proposed parking expansion at Solitude Mountain Resort and voted to forward a letter to the CWC Board for consideration. The recommendation was that the CWC Board express opposition to the proposed parking expansion.

 The CWC Board discussed the letter at their last meeting, but decided not to take a specific action. This was not due to a lack of appreciation for the Stakeholders Council perspective, but because, at the current time, the proposal is not moving forward because of the processes in place. If the parking expansion seems to be progressing, the Council can bring this matter back to the CWC Board.

At the last meeting, Council Members also discussed a recommitment to the Mountain Accord. Some changes have been made in the last few years to the Stakeholders Council structure to better align with the Mountain Accord. This is seen through the System Committees: Recreation System Committee, Transportation System Committee, Environment System Committee, and Economy System Committee. There was consensus at the last meeting that it is possible to recommit to the Mountain Accord, but there was also an acknowledgement that the Mountain Accord is a static document. As a result, it is not the only source of guidance when it comes to determining what items move forward. During the last meeting, it was noted that many of the goals in the Mountain Accord have been achieved. There are several outstanding items that the System Committees are focused on.

There was also a discussion about the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act ("CWNCRA") and whether that will be redrafted. Chair Hahnenberger reported that at the Stakeholders Council Retreat, there was a discussion about some of the Stakeholders Council concerns. This largely had to do with the effectiveness of the Council and whether the CWC Board is appreciative of the efforts that are being made. Based on interactions between the Stakeholders Council Retreat and now, it is clear that the CWC Board appreciates and values the work of the Stakeholders Council. One example is the proposed parking expansion at Solitude Mountain Resort. Even though the CWC Board chose not to take a specific position on that item at their last meeting, there was an appreciation that the issue was brought forward to them for discussion and consideration.

The Council has had discussions about potential land acquisition and land conservation within the Central Wasatch. That is something of interest to the Stakeholders Council as well as members of the CWC Board. Chair Hahnenberger recently communicated that the Council would like to have involvement in those discussions at the CWC Board level. She is interested in seeing what role the Council will have in that future process. That item will be discussed at the next CWC Board Meeting.

Chair Hahnenberger reiterated that the CWC Board wants Council Member input, but work can continue to be done to improve the level of interaction with the CWC Board. John Knoblock reported that at previous retreats, that same issue has been discussed. The Stakeholders Council wants to interact more with the CWC Board and have a better idea of what the CWC Board wants from them.

It was noted that the presenter for the next agenda item is running late for the Stakeholders Council Meeting. As a result, the Central Wasatch Baseline Study discussion on the agenda took place next.

Recreation Capacity Presentation

1. Recreation and Tourism Researcher CJ Blye will Discuss Carrying Capacities in the Central Wasatch.

Dr. CJ Blye is a Recreation and Tourism Researcher at the University of Utah and is present at the Stakeholders Council Meeting to discuss carrying capacities in the Central Wasatch. Dr. Blye shared presentation slides titled "Carrying Capacity and Visitor Use Management." She works with data on visitor use management on a regular basis and offered to assist with the Baseline Study document before it is forwarded to the CWC Board. Dr. Blye is new to the Salt Lake Valley and the University of Utah, but attended the first Central Wasatch Symposium. She is fortunate to have Kirk Nichols as a colleague, from whom she has learned a lot. The first presentation slide showed the agenda:

- Mountain Accord;
- Visitor Use Management;
- Carrying Capacities:
 - o Social;

- o Ecological;
- o Physical; and
- o Cultural.
- Management Tools and Strategies.

Dr. Blye reported that the Mountain Accord references opportunities for the future. In order to manage for the future, some level of sustainability needs to be applied now. There are also references to a natural ecosystem that is conserved, protected, and restored so that it is healthy and functional. One of the most important things from a visitor use management perspective is the idea of a recreational system that supports high levels of use at thoughtfully designed locations (nodes). She explained that not every place has to be the same. There do not need to be high-use trails all throughout the Central Wasatch, just like all recreational activities do not need to be in the same place.

The Visitor Use Management ("VUM") framework was discussed. Dr. Blye explained that VUM is an interagency framework. Different agencies came together from 2011 to 2016 to create this framework. She reported that the framework provides legally defensible guidelines, as there is a detailed rationale for how to manage visitors on a given landscape. It is no longer just being applied at the Federal level, but is being seen in municipal-level recreation planning as well. VUM is a proactive and adaptive process that applies different strategies to achieve desired resource conditions. It is supported by natural science and social science data. Dr. Blye stated that it is important to think about how natural science informs social science management and noted that VUM applies to all visitor-based recreation amenities. Dr. Blye informed the Council that this framework is not exclusive to Federal lands. It can be applied to a range of amenities, activities, and land bases.

When it comes to visitors and the recreation impact, the average assumption is that recreation impacts (crowding, user conflicts, ecological degradation, waste, infrastructure impacts, and negative community impacts) have a direct linear relationship with visitation. Essentially, there is a view that more visitors equal more impacts. However, the reality is that impacts are not linear and can vary based on a number of factors, such as durability, seasonality, and management strategies. Dr. Blye shared a graph that looks at an unmanaged recreation situation. It compares the impact to the volume and intensity of use. When there are management interventions, the situation can change. The way that visitors behave in a recreational environment matters more than the specific number of visitors.

Information about carrying capacity and recreation was shared. Dr. Blye reported that carrying capacity is largely understood as the limit or maximum number of people a given unit of land (trail, park, town, city, and so on) can support on a sustained basis without destruction of the resource base. She shared a graph that looks at overshooting population, enhanced carrying capacity, carrying capacity, degraded carrying capacity, and stable population. There are different ways of thinking about carrying capacity: ecological, social, cultural and community, and physical. Ecological limits consider impacts on wildlife, flora and fauna, and water quality, as well as soil degradation and other factors. The social carrying capacity is different and looks at the experience of the visitors. For instance, the maximum number of people that a given recreation experience can support without that experience degrading. What is challenging with social carrying capacity

is that people tend to have a different perception of when the experience has degraded. Social carrying capacity is subjective, but it is possible to conduct surveys, consider averages, and determine what the social norms are.

Cultural and community carrying capacity is something that is being considered more often. Dr. Blye explained that this considers who lives within that recreational asset and how recreation influences community well-being. As for physical carrying capacity, this looks at the infrastructure, such as what the parking lots can accommodate, restrooms, benches, and other physical facilities in the area. The capacity of the physical facilities in a recreational location can be taken into account. There are different metrics and measurements available to gather data on the different types of capacities.

Dr. Blye next discussed social norms. A social norm curve can look similar to what is included in the presentation slides, depending on what is being measured. Typically, in social science research, there is a scale of acceptability. This is essentially the most someone is willing to accept before their experience is degraded. She explained that there are ways to measure this, and there are tools that can be used to balance social norms and experiences with other types of carrying capacity.

There is no set equation or calculation to solve what the capacity of a given area might be. That does not mean there cannot be limits or thresholds set, but that it needs to be understood more holistically. There are tools and frameworks that can be used. The VUM framework uses the term visitor capacity. It is one tool within a larger toolbox of management strategies. Dr. Blye explained that it is best described as the maximum amounts and types of use that an area can accommodate while sustaining desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that are consistent with the purposes for which the area was established. This considers the optimal condition of a recreation area and the optimal type of visitor experience. The four guidelines to determine visitor capacity are as follows:

- Determine the analysis area(s);
- Review existing direction and knowledge;
- Identify the limiting attribute(s); and
- Identify capacity.

Dr. Blye discussed the second guideline, which mentions existing direction and knowledge. Once an analysis area has been selected, it is necessary to think about the applicable laws and policies, prior applicable planning and guidance, existing conditions in the analysis area, existing indicators, triggers, thresholds, and objectives, applicable existing management strategies and actions, and use patterns for commercial and other allocation categories. Some questions to consider include:

- Can capacity limits be managed? Is there an entry point? Existing management tools?
- What are the agreed-upon desired conditions? Where are we today? Where do we want to be in 10 years?
- How can we measure change?
- What data is available to make these decisions?

In order to set capacity limits, it is necessary to think about the tools that exist to effectively manage the capacity. For example, Zion National Park is straightforward to manage because whoever arrives at the shuttle can be allowed in or denied. When there are multiple entry points, it becomes more complicated to manage. As a result, there needs to be some creative approaches taken.

Dr. Blye reported that the third step in the process of identifying visitor capacity is to identify the limiting attributes. All of the variables that would influence achieving the desired conditions must be considered. When it comes to identifying capacity, all of the information from the first three steps needs to be considered. This framework is beneficial because it provides defensible decision-making. There is a rationale and detailed documentation created. Dr. Blye explained that visitor capacities are one tool in a much larger toolbox. Other strategies can be applied before or at the same time:

- Modify the type of use;
- Modify visitor behavior;
- Modify visitor attitudes and expectations;
- Modify the timing of use;
- Modify the location of use;
- Increase the ability of sites to handle use;
- Modify the spatial distribution of use; and
- Reduce use or increase the supply.

Dan Zalles asked about addressing the differences in user types. Dr. Blye reported that there is no blanket model. Most of the time, it is estimated that 80% of visitors will follow the rules and will be motivated by different management strategies, 10% could be swayed one way or another, and 10% will do whatever they want to do regardless of what has been communicated. The strategy is not necessarily to forget about that 10%, but not to stress as much about the 10% compared to the others. It makes more sense to focus on management for the people who are more likely to be managed. Different tools can be used to communicate and manage new recreationalists versus locals.

Tom Diegel appreciated the presentation. It seems like there are many different factors that need to be taken into account. He asked if a matrix had been created to look at all of the different factors and evaluate them more objectively. Dr. Byle confirmed this and explained that this is done in VUM planning. Depending on the scope of the project, the amount of time available, and the data, it is possible to create a matrix. Kelly Boardman enjoyed the presentation and likes that the carrying capacity is being discussed in the context of management and planning. She believes it is important to clearly understand the goals for each of the canyons in order to determine the desired capacity.

Dr. Blye explained that once there is an understanding of what areas of the canyons will be focused on, it is possible to determine a number and make decisions about how to apply that to transportation. It is also possible to look at the current conditions, such as congestion and parking, and state that it is unacceptable to have a certain number of vehicles on the side of the road. From there, tools can be used and implemented to manage the number of vehicles. A lot depends on how the numbers are set and what there is a desire to look into first. Dr. Blye noted that there is a

reference in the Mountain Accord about equitable access, so that is something that needs to be taken into account as well.

Olivia Juarez asked what areas of the Central Wasatch need attention as far as the carrying capacity. Dr. Blye commented that this is something the Stakeholders Council can discuss. She has only been in the area for a short time and does not know the area well enough to make that determination. Ms. Juarez asked if visitor capacity is incorporated in the Forest Management Plan for the U.S. Forest Service. Dr. Blye confirmed that the Forest Service uses the VUM framework, but does not necessarily have the resources or the mandate to do that granular level of analysis in this area.

Mr. Knoblock commented that there is a dichotomy between the carrying capacity of the resource, land, and ecology, and the carrying capacity of the roadway. Dr. Blye confirmed that those are different. Mr. Knoblock explained that this is one of the reasons there is a struggle in this area, because the carrying capacity of the road needs to be considered. For instance, how many vehicles can be on the road before the traffic becomes problematic. Dr. Blye shared an example scenario with the Council. Ms. Kilpack thanked Dr. Blye for taking the time to speak to the Stakeholders Council.

Recreation and Mountain Accord Discussion

1. <u>The Council will Break into Discussion Groups and Consider the Following Questions:</u>

a. The Mountain Accord Calls for "A Recreation System that Provides a Range of Settings and Accommodates Current and Increasing Demand by Encouraging High Levels of Use at Thoughtfully Designed Locations (Nodes) with Convenient Access, While Protecting Solitude, Nature, and Other Backcountry Values."

i. What is Needed to Make this Type of Recreation System a Reality?

Ms. Kilpack reported that the Stakeholders Council will break out into Discussion Groups. She explained that Council Members will take a few minutes to discuss each question with those sitting at the same table. Online meeting participants will discuss the questions with one another. She asked those attending virtually to pay attention to the Zoom chat box in order to know when to move forward to the next question. The first question has to do with the Mountain Accord, and it asks what is needed to make the type of recreation system described a reality. The Council discussed the first question.

b. The Mountain Accord Also Calls for a Study to "Analyze the Capacity of the Environmental Resources in the Cottonwood Canyons to Remain Healthy Under Increasing Recreational Use."

i. What Kind of Carrying Capacity, If Any, Might Be the Most Appropriate for the Central Wasatch?

ii.	How Can	We Balar	ice Acc	<u>ommodatiı</u>	ng Incr	easing	Dem	nand	and	ł
	Promoting	Equitable	Access	to Public	Lands	With	the l	ldea	of a	ı
	Carrying C	apacity?								

iii. Are There Examples of This Being Done Successfully Elsewhere in the U.S. or Beyond?

After a few minutes of discussion, the Stakeholders Council was asked to consider the second set of questions. These focus on carrying capacity, equitable access, and successful examples elsewhere.

2. Recap Discussion

a. <u>Each Group will Share 1-3 Takeaways and/or Viable Action Items That Came From Their Group Discussions.</u>

Following the time allotted, the Discussion Groups shared some of the highlights from their conversation on the question sets. Ms. Kilpack asked that someone from each table share a takeaway or potential action item. Mr. Zalles reported that his table was most intrigued by the concept of the nodes, which allows there to be a determination of the sense of acceptability and thresholds of acceptability by node. It is possible to create some meaningful ideas when the nodes are considered.

Chair Hahnenberger shared a suggested action item, which is to think about how to bring aspects of each discussion to the System Committees. There are some items that the Committees can start to look into. It was noted that the online participants shared their comments in the Zoom chat box.

Central Wasatch "Baseline Study" Discussion

1. <u>John Knoblock will Discuss System Committee Progress on a "Baseline Study" Data Gathering Effort to Document Current Visitor Use Data in the Canyons.</u>

Mr. Knoblock shared information about the Baseline Study data gathering process that has been taking place at a System Committee level. He explained that this started after the release of the Visitor Use Study that Dr. Jordan Smith from Utah State University conducted. That study followed the Forest Service protocol on visitor use, which resulted in data that seemed somewhat incomplete. For example, there was no data on rock climbing or backcountry skiing. Following the release of the Visitor Use Study, there were discussions about some of the information that appeared to be missing. Volunteers on the different System Committees looked into some of the outlined Baseline Study data.

Mr. Knoblock presented the data that has been collected. He explained that some of the data is from the Visitor Use Study, such as the hiking data. Some of the other numbers are from trail counters and shuttle companies. Salt Lake Climbers Alliance has trail counters at Jacob's Ladder Trail and on the Alpenbock Loop, which is where the 22,000 number shown comes from. There are still some data gaps, such as the trail count information from Big Cottonwood Canyon. There has been an effort made to obtain road bicycling information from the Utah Department of

Transportation ("UDOT"), because UDOT has technology that separates out bicycles from vehicles on their road counters. It has been difficult to receive that information from UDOT, but he will continue to work on that.

The Wasatch Backcountry Alliance has winter trail counters. Mr. Knoblock explained that it is difficult to receive exact numbers, but a reasonable estimate has been included in the document. As for events, such as the Wildflower Festival and Oktoberfest, there are over 20,000 people in Little Cottonwood Canyon. The picnicking number that is shown comes from the Visitor Use Study. Mr. Knoblock reviewed the transportation tab and the information included there. There is data related to Big Cottonwood Canyon, Little Cottonwood Canyon, and Millcreek Canyon. The data is broken down into winter and summer data. Interesting, the winter and summer numbers shown are similar.

 There are a lot of Utah Transit Authority ("UTA") vanpools, which take employees to the ski resorts in order to leave more room on the roads for canyon visitors. Mr. Knoblock reviewed the bus information that has been collected. There are approximately 100,000 people using transit, which means that approximately 90% are still using personal vehicles to access the canyons. There was discussion about the data collected and different ways to analyze the data. Comments were made about year-over-year data. Mr. Knoblock informed Council Members that there is still some additional work that needs to be done on the Baseline Study data that has been collected so far.

Kurt Hegmann thanked Mr. Knoblock and others for their efforts. Mike Marker shared comments about the Visitor Use Study and some of the limitations of what was collected. Danny Richardson stated that the UDOT and UTA numbers are useful to have. He was surprised by the vanpool numbers. Mr. Knoblock reported that the data will continue to be examined, some graphs will be created, and the information will be sent out to Council Members. He noted that feedback can be submitted. Work can continue to be done until there is a final Baseline Study document to share.

Committee Membership

1.

a. Millcreek Canyon Committee

There were no additional requests to join the Millcreek Canyon Committee.

Stakeholders May Request to Join System Committees:

b. Environment System Committee

There were no additional requests to join the Environment System Committee.

c. <u>Transportation System Committee</u>

i. Kim Dovle

ii. Eva De Laurentiis

Eva De Laurentiis and Kim Doyle have asked to join the Transportation System Committee.

d. Recreation System Committee

i. Craig Williams

Craig Williams has asked to join the Recreation System Committee.

e. <u>Economy System Committee</u>

i. <u>Becca Gerber</u>

Becca Gerber has asked to join the Transportation System Committee.

Mr. Diegel reported that this is his last Stakeholders Council Meeting. He will be leaving the county in a month for some time and wanted to take a moment to express his appreciation for Mr Knoblock and CWC Staff when he served as Co-Chair of the Stakeholders Council. He encouraged someone to volunteer to serve in the Co-Chair position. Dani Poirier from the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance will take his place on the Stakeholders Council, and she will be a wonderful addition to the Council.

Ms. Kilpack added that Kurt Hegmann will step into the Co-Chair position in January. There is a desire to find a temporary Co-Chair to serve in that role until Mr. Hegmann can do so. She asked if there was anyone willing to be the Co-Chair for that four-month period. Dan Zalles volunteered.

Next Steps

1. <u>The Council Will Discuss any Interim Action Items, System Committee Work, etc., that will be Done Between Now and the Next Meeting.</u>

Chair Hahnenberger asked if there are any action items for the Stakeholders Council or System Committees to work on before the next Stakeholders Council Meeting. She reminded Council Members that it is possible to think about carrying capacity and potential action items based on the Discussion Group process that took place. Mr. Marker believed the System Committees would benefit from considering capacity. He pointed out that there are references to this in the Mountain Accord and wondered when the CWC will focus on the establishment of capacity in the area.

Mr. Knoblock thought it made sense to discuss roadway capacity versus node capacity. Mr. Zalles pointed out that node capacity is something that the Environment System Committee and Recreation System Committee could potentially discuss further. Additional comments were made about nodes.

Staff Announcements

1. <u>Millcreek Canyon Shuttle Feasibility Study.</u>

The Millcreek Canyon Shuttle Feasibility Study update is underway. Fehr & Peers has been working on this update for one month and is expected to complete the work in September or October.

2. <u>CWC Youth Council Announcements.</u>

Communications Director, Ben Kilbourne, reported that there is one new member on the CWC Youth Council. He met with everyone individually recently, and there seems to be a desire to integrate the CWC Youth Council more into the Stakeholders Council and CWC Board. He invited Council Members to email suggestions to CWC Staff to ensure the CWC Youth Council is more involved.

3. The Next Meeting is on October 15, 2025.

Ms. Kilpack reported that the next Stakeholders Council Meeting will take place on October 15, 2025.

Stakeholders Open Comment

Doug Tolman reported that the Presidential Administration is attempting to rescind the Roadless Rule, which is one of the more important layers of protection in some of the forest areas. He informed the Council that there will be an open comment period on that within the next four to six weeks.

Another update was shared with the Council. It is likely that United States Secretary of the Interior, Doug Burgum, will release a Secretarial Order that would redirect conservation easement land acquisition funding within the Land and Water Conservation Fund away from land acquisition and into the park services' deferred maintenance backlog. That is something to be aware of when it comes to land acquisition discussions. Council Members were reminded to complete the survey that was sent out about the Central Wasatch Symposium. CWC Staff has started to think about what the event will look like this year. Ms. Kilpack asked Council Members to fill out the survey in the next week.

Closing

1. <u>Chair Hahnenberger will Call for a Motion to Adjourn the Stakeholders Council Meeting.</u>

MOTION: Danny Richardson moved to ADJOURN the Stakeholders Council Meeting. There was no second. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Council.

The Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council Meeting adjourned at 5:19 p.m.

1 I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council Meeting held on Wednesday, August 20, 2025.

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