

HR 5718

- Apologize missing the last CWC meeting and the public comment period regarding the language of HR 5718
- Alta Ski Area's perspective regarding the Mountain Accord Process and HR 5718 is that it did not fully meet the expectations of the Utah State Legislature or Governor's office. While it resulted in HR 5718 that creates a conservation and recreation area, makes adjustments to wilderness boundaries and creates additional wilderness and facilitates the exchange of private lands for public lands in the ski areas, it did not adequately address transportation, parking and accommodating the projected growth along the Wasatch.
- It is our understanding that the Central Wasatch Commission desires to have HR 5718 reintroduced in the House prior the congressional summer recess. Alta Ski Area can support the re-introduction of HR 5718 under the following conditions:
 - The Bill needs to include or be tied to a significant transportation improvement. One of the reasons the Bill did not move forward when introduced in July of 2016, was its lack of a significant transportation improvement component.
 - The Conservation and Recreation Area not overlay or include the ski areas.
 - The language of the Bill and maps associated with the Bill are updated to reflect the land exchange as currently proposed between the ski areas and Forest Service. Since 2016 additional lands to be exchanged have been identified and some land originally included in the exchange have, such as Grizzly Gulch, have been removed from the exchange. Additional adjustments are anticipated as the land exchange process moves forward to ensure a fair value exchange is achieved between the ski areas and U.S Forest Service.
 - The ski areas are allowed to expand their boundaries to accommodate growth outside of the Conservation and Recreation Area.
- We recognize the work that has been accomplished by a diverse body of stakeholders with significantly different interests to get to this point. Alta Ski Area can support the Bill with the changes we have requested. We believe that with these changes the bill is a win-win for all parties. A conservation and recreation area is created, adjustments to wilderness are made and new wilderness is created, private lands are exchanged for ski area base lands, the ski areas are put in a position to accommodate some of the projected growth and transportation improvements are tied to conservation elements in the Bill.
- Alta Ski Area recognizes that individuals and groups have concerns with the removal of the private land the ski area owns in Grizzly Gulch from the land exchange process with the Forest Service. Alta Ski Area purchased Grizzly Gulch many years ago as an area to expand into if demand warranted it to preserve the Alta experience. We have been providing cat skiing services in Grizzly Gulch for over 15 years. During this time frame we have allowed the

backcountry community free access to ski in Grizzly Gulch and to use it to access other backcountry terrain. Given our decision to retain Grizzly Gulch as an area to accommodate additional skiing, we are willing to work the US Forest Service and backcountry groups to address concerns regarding their future access to and use of Grizzly Gulch.

We encourage CWC to continue to work with the various stakeholders to address accommodating the projected growth of individuals desiring to recreate in our canyons in a manner that manages their impact. From our perspective significant improvements in transportation, infrastructure, recreational opportunities and environmental protections will be needed to do so.

Thank you for your time.

ALTA SKI AREA

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July 9, 2018

Central Wasatch Commission
10 West 100 South, Suite 300
Salt Lake City, UT 84101

Re: Alta Ski Area's decision to remove Grizzly Gulch from the land exchange with the US Forest Service

Dear members of the Central Wasatch Commission Board,

Alta Ski Area celebrated its 80th anniversary of providing skiing in Little Cottonwood Canyon this past season. The Alta that we love and cherish today is significantly different than it was prior 1938. From 1850 to 1885 Alta was a booming mining town which at one time had 36 Saloons and approximately 5,000 residents. Upper Little Cottonwood Canyon had been stripped of timber for the mines and was blanketed with mining equipment, buildings, trails and roads. There was little to no erosion control and thunderstorms often polluted Little Cottonwood Creek with debris as the denuded slopes were unable to hold the water.

A fire in 1878 and an avalanche in 1885 destroyed most of the original mining town. Declining silver prices, the difficulty of accessing the ore and the expense of the smelting process led to the demise of Alta as a mining town. By the 1930's, only one resident, George Watson, remained in the town. Facing back taxes on mining claims he owned, Watson donated much of the land in Alta to the U.S. Forest Service with the stipulation that the Forest Service use the land to construct a ski area. In 1935, Norwegian skiing legend Alf Engen was hired to help develop the area, and Alta operated its first ski lift in 1938.

During the past 80 years Alta Ski Area has developed, maintained and operated the ski area under a special use permit with the US Forest Service. From its early beginnings through today, Alta has worked to preserve, protect and enhance the natural resources within and adjacent to the ski area. Today, we have a healthy forest, clean water and a management plan that provides roads, trails and erosion control in a sensitive alpine environment. Residents from the Salt Lake Valley are able to enjoy the beauty and natural resources in Alta during the winter and summer because of the development and management of the area by Alta Ski Area.

Our mission statement is that we are in the business of providing authentic skiing experiences in a natural mountain environment. One of our guiding principles is to generate sufficient revenues to take care of our company, employees, community and the environment we have stewardship over. While we are passionate about skiing and protective of the ski experience, we also consider ourselves the primary environmental proponents and stewards of Alta. We strive to provide recreational opportunities in a manner that minimizes their impact on and protects the environment and wildlife.



ESTABLISHED 1938

Our actions over the past 80 years demonstrate our love, passion and commitment to protecting and managing the natural resources in Alta. Alta Ski Area is recognized in the ski industry as a leader in environmental stewardship and many of our practices for managing and enhancing the environment are being duplicated at other ski areas in the industry. The Forest Service has recognized Alta Ski Area actions in environmental stewardship and has used Alta's management practices as a template for other ski areas.

The Alta Environmental Center (AEC) was established by Alta Ski Area to help us protect and improve the well being of Alta's environment. Through AEC we are actively engaged in activities that protect and improve the public and private lands we have stewardship over. Some of those activities include hosting and coordinating several weed pulls each year to remove invasive species, planting trees from seeds we have collected and grown for three years (we have planted over 28,000 trees during the past ten years), annually planting and transplanting various native other shrubs and plants in disturbed areas, minimizing and mitigating wetland disturbances, enhancing wetlands, erosion control of trails and service roads, using local seed collected each fall from plants within the ski area to enhance and re-vegetate disturbed areas and hosting various educational events relating to sustainability and environmental issues. Alta Ski Area partners with organizations such as the Friends of Alta, Cottonwood Canyons Foundation, Hawk Watch of Utah, the University of Utah, Tree Utah, the National Forest Foundation and the Town of Alta in activities and events that protect and improve the public lands in Alta. Alta Ski Area was also one of the first ski areas in America to join the National Ski Areas Association Climate Challenge, a voluntary program dedicated to helping participating ski areas reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and reap other benefits in their operations, such as reducing costs for energy use.

Alta Ski Area was an active participant in the Mountain Accord process. A process that started out as a study of how to manage the growth of recreation along the Wasatch in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner with an emphasis on transportation. Four areas of concern (transportation, recreation, economic and environment) were identified and studied. The Mountain Accord process did not provide a plan of how and where to accommodate projected growth. Specific transportation solutions were not planned or identified nor were future recreational infrastructure needs identified or planned. The result was a non-binding Mountain Accord agreement and the introduction of legislation (HR 5718) to create a national conservation and recreation area, designate additional wilderness and facilitate land trades between the Forest Service and the ski areas. HR 5718 was introduced in July of 2016. The legislation was rushed and introduced before consensus on the legislative language was achieved or transportation solutions were included.

Alta Ski Area was approached during the Mountain Accord process and asked if there were conditions under which Grizzly Gulch could be included in the land exchange with the Forest Service. At that time, Alta was amenable to doing so if there was a transportation solution implemented between Big and Little Cottonwood Canyon and preferably Park City, a transportation solution was implemented in Little Cottonwood Canyon to reduce congestions and improve traffic flow, additional water was provided for snowmaking and water was provided for a new 100 room hotel in the Town of Alta.

Grizzly Gulch is private land owned primarily by Alta Ski Area with a few Forest Service parcels scattered throughout it. It was purchased as an area the ski area could expand into if the demand for developed skiing continued to increase. Alta Ski Area has been providing snow cat skiing experiences in Grizzly Gulch for over 15 years.

Due to the lack of a progress in developing a transportation solution between Big and Little Cottonwood Canyon and because Alta needs the flexibility to deal with the projected population growth along the Wasatch Front, Alta Ski Area has decided to preserve Grizzly Gulch as an area to accommodate additional developed skiing if demand warrants. While Alta Ski Area currently has some excess capacity, additional terrain will be required to accommodate the projected growth and preserve the Alta skiing experience.

Given the importance of Grizzly Gulch to the backcountry skiing community Alta Ski Area is willing to work with them and the US Forest Service to develop options that address access, parking and amenities for the backcountry community. We do not believe it is in the best interest of the public, Alta Ski Area, the Town of Alta, the State of Utah nor all the skiers who visit Alta to freeze the current ski area boundaries and try to accommodate the projected growth within the current boundaries of the ski area. We believe that a plan should be developed to accommodate the growth of developed recreational skiers, slack/side country skiers and the backcountry skiers. Growth of each skier segment should be expected and planned for in a manner that minimizes impact on and preserves the natural resources in Little Cottonwood Canyon.

The ski areas in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyon provide skiing experiences to over 1.6 Million visitors annually on less than 7,000 thousand acres. These visitors have minimal impact on the natural resources in the Cottonwood Canyons due to the infrastructure and resources put in place by the ski areas to support them. The backcountry skiing community is significantly smaller in size and currently has over 70,000 acres for their use with limited to no infrastructure in place to support the backcountry community. Allowing the ski areas to expand and accommodate a significant portion of the projected growth may help alleviate the pressure in the backcountry.

The State of Utah and Wasatch Front municipalities continue to promote the Wasatch Front as a place to move your business to with one of the selling points being its close proximity to recreational opportunities in the Cottonwood Canyons. We encourage the CWC to promote and implement solutions that accommodate this projected growth while managing the impact. Since we have invited and enticed them to come, we have a responsibility to provide a better transportation system, improve the recreational infrastructure and accommodate their desire to recreate in environmentally sustainable ways. Failure to plan for and embrace the growth will inevitably result in the growth managing us in less environmentally friendly and sustainable ways.

Alta Ski Area supports the purposes outlined in the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Act (HR 5716). These purposes are in harmony with the Alta's management plans and practices regarding the public and private lands within the ski area. As the population along the Wasatch Front continues to grow we are committed to accommodating growth in a manner that manages the impact within the ski area and Little Cottonwood Canyon.

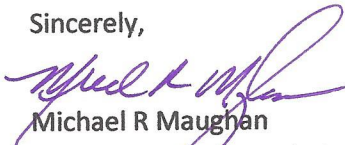
It is our understanding that the Central Wasatch Commission desires to have the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Act reintroduced in the House prior to the congressional summer recess. Given that one of the primary reasons the Act did not move forward when introduced in July of 2016, was its lack of a significant transportation improvement component, we are not supportive of reintroduction of the Act unless it includes or is tied to a significant transportation improvement.

It should also be noted that since the introduction of the Act in 2016, the ski areas have continued to refine a land exchange with the U.S. Forest Service which is supported in the Act. Additional lands to be exchanged have been identified and some lands originally considered for exchange, such as Grizzly Gulch, have been removed from the exchange. Additional adjustments are anticipated as this process moves forward to ensure a fair value exchange is achieved between the ski areas and U.S. Forest Service. Before this bill is re-introduced the current land exchange language in the Act and maps introduced in July of 2016 need to be updated before Alta Ski Area can support its re-introduction.

Alta Ski Area is not comfortable with the Conservation and Recreation area overlaying the ski area. The Forest Service and ski areas have worked well together for many years in providing recreation opportunities on public lands while managing the impact and protecting the environment. There is no need to include the ski areas in the Conservation and Recreation area and Alta Ski Area requests they be removed from the conservation and recreation area.

We recognize the work that has been accomplished by a diverse body of stakeholders with significantly different interests to get to this point. Alta Ski Area can support the act with the changes we have requested. We believe that these changes allow the bill to be a win-win for all parties. A conservation and recreation area is created, adjustments to wilderness and new wilderness is created, private lands are exchanged for ski area base lands, the ski areas are put in a position to accommodate some of the projected growth and transportation improvements are tied to conservation elements in the Bill. It would be shame for this to all unravel over the unwillingness of some parties to consider solutions that accommodate growth, minimize impact and preserve the environment. We hope the CWC and these stakeholders are willing to continue to collaborate and work together to achieve a solution that accommodates those wishing to recreate in the Cottonwood Canyons while managing their impact and protecting the watershed and environment. We believe the re-introduction of HB 5718 is premature at this time and suffers from lack of consensus and transportation solutions.

Sincerely,



Michael R Maughan

President and General Manager
Alta Ski Area

Meeting notes – June 27, 2018
Prepared by Michael R Maughan, President and General Manager, Alta Ski Area

On June 27, 2018 representatives from the ski areas located in Little Cottonwood Canyon (Alta, Snowbird, Solitude, Brighton), the US Forest Service, Save Our Canyons and the Central Wasatch Commission met to explore alternatives that would address concerns the various parties have concerning the Central Wasatch National Recreation and Conservation Act and proposed land exchange between the ski areas and US Forest Service.

In this meeting the ski areas indicated they are supportive of concepts and values in the Central Wasatch National Recreation and Conservation Act and would like it to move forward if the following concerns could be addressed:

- Concerns were expressed about the the conservation and recreation area overlaying the ski areas.
- The maps introduced with the bill in 2016 needed to be updated to reflect land exchange and ski area boundary adjustments that have occurred since the bill's introduction.
- Alta Ski Area confirmed that Grizzly Gulch was no longer included in the proposed land exchange. Alta Ski Area has elected to keep Grizzly Gulch as an area to accommodate the anticipated growth expected in the next 10-20 years.

Save our Canyons indicated that they could not support the Bill if Alta was removing Grizzly Gulch from the land exchange. When questioned why including Grizzly Gulch in the land exchange was so important to them they indicated the following:

- Grizzly Gulch has some of the most accessible and low level backcountry ski terrain on the Wasatch Front.
- Grizzly Gulch is an access point to other world class backcountry ski terrain and has been historically used by backcountry users.
- A ski lift in Grizzly Gulch may increase slack country skiing and reduce the terrain available for true backcountry skiing.
- Development of Grizzly Gulch would change the aesthetics of Little Cottonwood Canyon and the Alta Area.

In response to Save our Canyons concerns, Alta Ski Area presented the following:

- Alta owns Grizzly Gulch and has operated Snowcat skiing in Grizzly Gulch for more than 15 years. Alta has allowed backcountry skiing on and access through their private land. Backcountry use, including use of Grizzly Gulch, has increased significantly in the past 10 years. Currently, all parking and facilities used backcountry skiers accessing Grizzly Gulch were developed by Alta Ski Area and have been available for backcountry users to use free of charge. The increase of backcountry users is financially impacting the ski area since the parking developed and maintained for visitors to the ski area is being used by backcountry skiers visiting Grizzly Gulch and not available for visitors to the ski area..

Meeting notes – June 27, 2018

Prepared by Michael R Maughan, President and General Manager, Alta Ski Area

- Alta Ski Area expressed a willingness to explore alternatives that allow the ski area to use Grizzly Gulch for additional lift served terrain while developing backcountry access routes for backcountry skiers and minimizing the impact of slack country skiers in conjunction with the US Forest Service. Suggested alternatives also included providing parking and toilets for backcountry skiers.

The Forest Service confirmed that the demand to recreate in the Forest is increasing and it is changing the backcountry and slack country experience. The Forest Service also indicated its preference is to have one land exchange between the ski areas and the Forest Service.

Alta's proposed solutions to the issues raised by Save our Canyons regarding Grizzly Gulch were dismissed. It was suggested that the only solution that would work for their constituents would be to have Alta Ski Area trade away the private land it owns in Grizzly Gulch.

Chris McCandless, Chairman of the Central Wasatch Chair indicated that he and Ralph Becker would propose a solution based upon what they had heard in the meeting that potentially could work for all parties involved.

From: Linda Johnson

Sent: Monday, July 9, 2018 4:17 PM

To: Paula Melgar <PMelgar@ch.utah.gov>; Bryce Haderlie <BHaderlie@ch.utah.gov>

Subject: Comments Linda Johnson July 9 re proposed HB5718

Last time I spoke about this, I suggested waiting for and complying with USFS climate change plan. Lance will email it to you if you request it, it is finished.

Current Wilderness regulations are dangerous in current conditions, I believe, as it has become necessary to do more deadwood removal, and mechanical means are cheaper and faster. You are making a new kind of recreation area, I suggest you also invent a new kind of protected area of wilderness not Wilderness as regulated now.

It is of great concern to me that no proper public process has been done. People don't know what you are doing, and you need a process like Envision and WFRC have done for 2050 planning. There has been no press discussion of your meetings on this matter, and when people asked me where I was going today, the response Where? Who? What? And that's not acceptable.

Your time would be better spent to serve your public by doing things Mt Accord was originally formed for. It had been years now. Fix the canyons transit. Provide basic human amenities, toilets and water to drink, wash hands, and flush with, and improve more trails and trailhead access. Make a valuable resource more available and plant for our increasing population and our tourist visitors.

For further discussion, I would have said a great deal of what Mike Maughn said, but he beat me to it, and I won't waste your time.

Linda Johnson,



July 9, 2018

Central Wasatch Commission Members,
CWC Executive Director Ralph Becker

As we have previously reported to you, Trails Utah, Save Our Canyons, Utah Sierra Club, and the Bonneville Shoreline Trail Committee have been working together under the guidance of the National Park Service Trails Assistance Program and the US Forest Service on wilderness boundary adjustments for the Bonneville Shoreline Trail. As a team, we agreed that what was needed was field verification of the boundary adjustments, and we are happy to report that staff from the Salt Lake Ranger District of the USFS has completed that task.

We have reviewed and are now recommending wilderness boundary adjustments needed for the 2018 submittal of the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area legislation. These adjustments are critical to ensuring the Bonneville Shoreline Trail (BST) can exist as a shared use trail—meaning mountain bike legal—along the Western slope of the Wasatch Mountains through Salt Lake County wherever practical. Every effort was made to minimize wilderness removals and avoid private property while maintaining enough space to create sustainable and reasonably accessible trail alignments for the BST in the future. Accomplishing connectivity for the entire BST through the study area will remain challenging due to private property issues. Land or easement purchases should be considered to complete the BST in the coming years.

In our examinations we determined there are 12 separate areas along the periphery of the Mount Olympus, Twin Peaks, and Lone Peak Wilderness areas where the wilderness boundary needs to be minimally adjusted from the original allowances identified in the 2016 version of the CWNCR bill. Total acreage needing to be relieved of wilderness status to allow for BST considerations totals 240 acres. This compares to 130 acres that were in the original CWNCR legislation. During our review process we have identified 480 acres of USFS land contiguous with the Mount Olympus Wilderness that we believe have outstanding wilderness characteristics. We are recommending these acres be included in the bill to become designated wilderness. This addition would result in no net loss of wilderness in the study area but would, in fact, constitute a net gain of wilderness lands.

At this time, we are requesting that language in the bill be modified to reflect the amount of acres to be removed for BST considerations and the specific intent of those removals—to allow for shared-use trail connectivity, be clearly articulated. Language describing additional acreage to be included into the Mt. Olympus Wilderness area also needs to be included in the bill. Finally, we request that language be added to the bill that states that any USFS lands removed from wilderness for the purposes of establishing a shared-use BST trail be protected in perpetuity from any kind of future development. This last point has been key in to reaching consensus in our working group and being able to forward these recommendations today.

The attached three pages show pictures of the boundary adjustment areas and the proposed additions to Mount Olympus Wilderness. We have all the needed GIS data for the boundary adjustments and additions but still need the revised bill language. We will continue to work with our partners, the Central Wasatch Commission, and the office of Congressman Love to ensure these language changes are made to the bill.

Thank you,

Sarah Bennett
Executive Director, Trails Utah

John Knoblock
Board Chair, Trials Utah
Bonneville Shoreline Trail Committee

