**June Report to the Central Wasatch Commission**

**Ralph Becker, Executive Director**

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you and our mission for the Central Wasatch Commission. I have had a whirlwind entrée to my job and to our work. I appreciate all the understanding, direction, and ample assistance by all of the Commissioners and their jurisdictions to lend support as we get the Central Wasatch Commission functions up and running. Special thanks go to Laura Briefer and Carly Castle, Salt Lake City, Kimi Barnett, Salt Lake County, Janna Young, Summit County, and Michelle Kellogg, Park City.

Pursuit of Congressional Legislation

Upon being selected as the Executive Director of the Central Wasatch Commission, I received a call from Bill Simmons, the D.C. representative for the Commission, inviting the Commission to present Congressional legislation for possible action this year. Given the short timeline for this Congress, I have been working with the Commission Chair, Chris McCandless, Bill Simmons, Commission members, other jurisdictions (e.g., the Forest Service), the range of stakeholders, and comments from the general public on possible changes to HR 5718, the bill introduced and subject of a Hearing in 2016 by Congressman Chaffetz.

We have received a range of comments from general support, general opposition, specific concerns about provisions, and proposals for major substantive changes. In addition to Central Wasatch Commission notices, a Press Release has been sent out for the media to help us notify the general public. I, with staff from the jurisdictions and consultant assistance, have endeavored to hear and/or read every comment. We are working to review and address every comment. I intend to bring to the Central Wasatch Commission at its July 9 meeting a summary of comments, by person or entity and by topic, and any recommendations on addressing the comments for your consideration.

I also took a quick trip to D.C. and, with Bill Simmons, had meetings with the Forest Service (Chief, and head of Legislation), and Members of the Utah Congressional delegation and/or their staffs. I wanted to get as good a sense as possible about the receptivity of our D.C. partners and their needs and expectations before the July 9 Central Wasatch Commission meeting. A summary of those meetings prepared by Bill Simmons is attached to this Report.

There is an opportunity for consideration of legislation in Congress this year. The Central Wasatch Commission will need to decide whether to proceed with a proposal to our Congressional delegation at its July 9 meeting.

Meetings with Stakeholders

To re-acquaint myself and provide clear, open communications, I’ve met or had phone conversations and digital communications with a range of interests and jurisdictions, often accompanied by Chair McCandless and others from the Central Wasatch Commission members’ staff. The meetings, communications, and conversations have included, in general terms, ski resorts, environmental organizations, legislative members of Commissioners, business organizations, community councils, and members of the public. I will continue to reach out as much as possible with all interested parties.

A next step will be to set up a Stakeholders Committee. Preparations are underway to send out a solicitation for applicants.

Central Wasatch Commission Membership and Administration

As a startup organization, we have all been spending time establishing Central Wasatch Commission membership, bylaws changes, interlocal government reviews, administration functions review and approvals, and refinement of roles and responsibilities. Shane Topham, Central Wasatch Commission Counsel, and Dave Sanderson, Central Wasatch Commission Budget and Finance Advisor, have been responsive and very helpful to all of us.

Staffing of Central Wasatch Commission

With the direction of Central Wasatch Commission Chair McCandless and Vice Chair Mike Peterson, I have embarked on two hires: a Chief of Staff (COS) and Communications Director. Those positions have been advertised, have received a strong response, and a Selection Committee has been established to complete the selection for those positions in the next few weeks, subject to Commission approval.

Office Space

The Central Wasatch Commission has an office at the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon. I’ve expressed an interest in moving that office to downtown Salt Lake City. The existing landlord has apparently expressed an interest in use of the existing space, which would release the space to the owner. Chair McCandless and I have met with potential owners/landlords about space, and are exploring options for a possible office move. We will bring a recommendation to the Commission or the Executive Committee for any changes.

**Notes from Central Wasatch Commission D.C. Meetings 6/28**

**(From Bill Simmons, D.C. Representative, Central Wasatch Commission)**

Congressman John Curtis, Ryan Leavitt (Deputy Chief of Staff) and Jake Bornstein (Legislative Assistant)
Our meeting built upon the formal meeting/formal briefing with the CWC from a couple of months ago.  We had the chance to provide further background and information to Ryan and Jake as well as the ideal timeline for introduction and moving the federal legislation.  Congressman Curtis remains very supportive of the legislation and voiced his continued strong interest in taking a very active role in supporting Congresswoman Mia Love as the legislation moves forward.  We invited them to the scheduled July 9th CWC meeting as well as getting them to a tour and briefing with other Delegation Staff in July.

Josh Satterfield (Legislative Aide handling the federal legislation for Congresswoman Mia Love)
We had a long and productive conversation with Josh who as you know, is the lead for Congresswoman Love on the federal legislation.  We talked in detail about what needs to occur for them to introduce legislation and what the CWC is doing to assure that proper input is being gathered, analyzed, considered and put into a formal draft that the CWC will deliver to the Delegation for their consideration and introduction.  We talked about the scheduled July 9th CWC meeting and when ideally introduction would need to happen in order to put the bill in a position to be considered during this Congress.  We also discussed the Delegation Staff tour/briefing on July 27th as he is planning to be out in Utah around that date and could make that work.  He said that he would fully brief Congresswoman Love and update us after his discussion.

Congressman Chris Stewart and Clay White (Legislative Director)
We were able to brief Congressman Stewart and his Legislative Director Clay White on the most recent developments.  We talked about the outcome of the most recent CWC meetings as well as the ideal schedule for the federal legislation.  He was an original cosponsor of the Chaffetz bill and expressed his continued support for this effort.  Clay White who was the Legislative Director for Congressman Chaffetz when H.R. 5718 – CWNCRA was introduced, talked about the strong benefits of the legislation and the importance of getting enacted into law.

Matt Jensen (Legislative Director – Senator Hatch), Romel Nicholas (Energy and Environment Legislative Aide – Senator Hatch), and Monique Mullenaux Laing (Transportation Legislative Aide)
Like the other meetings with the Delegation, we had a long and detailed conversation about the latest information related to the CWC and the federal legislation.  Matt and Romel talked about the support that Senator Hatch has had for the Mt. Accord and the federal legislation.  They talked about the fact that when the legislation is ready to be introduced that Senator Hatch would continue to like to take the lead in the Senate.  In order to have the highest likelihood of success, they believe that we likely need to secure a hearing in the Senate Energy Committee and that with Senator McConnell cancelling the bulk of the August Recess for Senators, that there is an opportunity if we move quickly enough to having a chance for a legislative hearing in August.  We informed them of the July 9th CWC meeting and the process that we are undertaking to assure that proper input is being gathered, analyzed, considered and put into a formal draft that the CWC will deliver to the Delegation for their consideration and introduction.  Romel said that in preparation for possible introduction, he has formally made a request of the Forest Service to make the necessary updates to the maps.  They are engaged and supportive and look forward to continuing to work with us as the process moves forward.

Vickie Christiansen (Interim Chief of the Forest Service), Doug Crandall (Director of Legislative Affairs – USDA Forest Service)
The Interim Chief was very gracious with her time as we provided a full briefing on the Mt. Accord and the CWC.  She talked about the great work that she was aware of that has been done to bring us to this point and expressed the Forest Service’s strong support for the process and the federal legislation.  They talked about the fact that the Forest Service testified in support of H.R. 5718 and that they were remain supportive of the federal legislation.  They remain ready to provide the necessary technical capabilities that will be needed as the process continues to advance.  We all talked about and expressed appreciation for the great work and cooperation of Dave Wittekiend and his staff.  They are appreciative as are we of the great professional working relationship shared by the Forest Service and the CWC.

Heath Hansen (Environment and Energy Legislative Aide – Senator Lee) and Carolyn Hansen (LC for Environment and Energy – Senator Lee)
Like the other meetings with the Delegation, we had a long and detailed conversation about the latest information related to the CWC and the federal legislation.  We talked about the desire of Senator Hatch to take the lead in the Senate and expressed our strong desire on behalf of the CWC to have Senator Lee’s strong support as an original cosponsor.  Ralph was able to provide background to Heath and Carolyn regarding Senator Lee’s involvement and support for the Mt. Accord process.  We invited their continued involvement and participation in the CWC meetings including our next meeting scheduled for July 9th.