

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) HYBRID STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL MEETING, HELD WEDNESDAY, MAY 18, 2022, AT 3:00 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS THE WASATCH FRONT REGIONAL COUNCIL OFFICES.**

**Present:**  Will McCarvill, Chair

 Barbara Cameron, Co-Chair

 Brian Hutchinson

 Carl Fisher

 Del Draper

 Ed Marshall

 John Knoblock

 Kirk Nichols

 Megan Nelson

 Nathan Rafferty

 Pat Shea

 Paul Diegel

 Randy Doyle

 Sarah Bennett

 Troy Morgan

 Alex Porpora

 Kelly Boardman

 Maura Hahnenberger

 Roger Borgenicht

 Hilary Lambert

 Amber Broadaway

 Danny Richardson

 Jennifer Eden

 Serena Yau

 Joanna Wheelton

**Staff:** Ralph Becker, CWC Executive Director

 Blake Perez, CWC Deputy Director

 Lindsey Nielsen, Communications Director

 Kaye Mickelson, Office Administrator

**Others:**  Mike Doyle

Jeff Bossard

 Carolyn Keigley

 Ned Hacker

 Aaron London

 Roger Bourke

**Opening**

1. **William McCarvill will Conduct the Special Meeting as the Chair of the Stakeholders Council.**

Chair William McCarvill called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. He reported that the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Stakeholders Council Meeting was a hybrid meeting.

1. **The Stakeholders Council will Consider Approving the Stakeholder Council DRAFT Minutes of Wednesday, April 20, 2022.**

**MOTION:** Will McCarvill moved to APPROVE the April 20, 2022 Stakeholders Council Meeting Minutes. There was no second. The motion passed unanimously.

**Visitor Use Study Progress Update**

1. **Dr. Jordan Smith will Give a Progress Update on the Second Phase of the Central Wasatch Visitor-Use Study.**

Dr. Jordan Smith shared information related to the Visitor Use Study. He reported that in October 2021, results from Phase I of the Visitor Use Study were shared with the Stakeholders Council. That information was overviewed for context. Dr. Smith explained that the Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism was created in 1998 by the State Legislature. It was created to be a resource for different land management agencies, local municipalities, and governmental entities. The intention was to provide information about how to best manage outdoor recreation. Most of the Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism's work was related to visitor use monitoring and management. It looked at how many people were participating in recreation, the economic benefits generated by that use, and what activities were participated in most. This was examined in a variety of ways, such as sending individual crews out to trailheads and mobile location data.

Dr. Smith overviewed some of the information that would be shared during the presentation. He explained that there would be an overview of the Visitor Use Study objectives, the Phase I results, and detailed findings for the work that had been completed as part of Phase II. There would also be information about high elevation lakes in Little Cottonwood Canyon and the use those lakes were receiving. Dr. Smith outlined the objectives of the Visitor Use Study, which were as follows:

* To provide the diverse set of stakeholders who use and value the canyons with a scientifically grounded understanding of the following:
	+ The spatial and temporal dynamics of current and projected outdoor recreation use;
	+ The extent to which outdoor recreation activity within the canyons affects key indicators of ecological and physical resource conditions; and
	+ The likely changes in ecological and physical resource conditions under the projected levels of use.

All of the resource conditions that were monitored across the Central Wasatch fell within one of three buckets:

* ecological conditions (trail conditions, habitat, and water quality);
* social conditions (use, economic benefits, and satisfaction levels); and
* physical conditions (parking and restroom facilities).

Most of the work so far had focused on the social conditions, which had to do with the amount of use that was happening. There had also been some focus on how the social conditions were impacting the ecological conditions. For instance, how use levels impacted the trails.

The Visitor Use Study work was grounded in the framework of Federal Land Management Agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, and how those agencies managed outdoor recreation on public lands. Dr. Smith overviewed the Interagency Visitor Use Management Framework. It began with the foundation, which clarified the purpose and need of a Recreation Management Plan. The existing conditions were examined and management to suit those conditions was considered. The Visitor Use Study would provide a lot of the data that would be used in that foundational piece. From there, management agencies could work to define what the desired conditions were.

Dr. Smith shared some of the Visitor Use Study history as it related to Phase I of the project. He explained that the work started at the beginning of 2021. There was a scoping period where a series of interviews were conducted with stakeholders to better understand the key issues and concerns about recreation use in the Central Wasatch. There was also a Legislative review, where all of the policy and regulatory guidance documents that related to outdoor recreation use were identified. Additionally, there was an exhaustive data review, where existing data was examined and identified. Lastly, some potential indicators were identified for long-term monitoring. The Phase I Report was available online for further Stakeholders Council review.

Dr. Smith reported that the Visitor Use Study was currently at the beginning of Phase II. There had been a short window for data collection at the end of the fall season in 2021, but the Utah State University team was looking toward data collection for Phase II. Through the first scoping effort, in Phase, I of the project, a variety of different indicators were identified. These indicators could be used to monitor recreation use and the potential impacts. The indicators included:

* Trails;
* Areas around high elevation lakes;
* Backcountry campsites;
* Water bodies; and
* Access points.

The trails were focused on first because those were areas that were highly susceptible to increases in both use and environmental degradation. Trails tended to be relatively flat and could experience a loss in vegetation as use continued to increase. Over the course of the project, the Utah State University team would look at how use impacted the indicators. Dr. Smith discussed the trail condition work, which was done at White Pine, Red Pine, Cecret Lake, and Lake Catherine.

The CWC expressed a desire to understand how much use was too much use. For example, how much use was impacting resource conditions. Use was the primary variable that the study focused on, but other variables were considered as well, which could indicate why a trail was in its current condition. The variables were environmental (slope of the trail and the vegetation around the trail) and managerial (variables that determine what use was allowed on individual trails and whether the use was limited to specific days or times of the year).

Dr. Smith discussed the amount of data there was related to trail use across the Central Wasatch. Over the last several years, the Forest Service and Wasatch Backcountry Alliance had collected trail use data at different trailhead locations. A map was shown to illustrate the specific geographic coordinates where the trail counters had been set out. Over 40 trail counters had been placed over the last several years, which had resulted in a good amount of data. However, there were some drawbacks to consider as well. Dr. Smith explained that the counters were only out for specific periods of time. Often the decision was made to rotate the counters to different locations. Some of the counters had consistent data, but others only had data for one month out of the year. As a result, the data was somewhat inconsistent and was not comprehensive.

The Visitor Use Study would look at the data that had already been collected through the trail counters. That data would be used to calibrate the mobile location data. Dr. Smith reported that a statistical model had been created that would predict trail use across the Central Wasatch. The model predicted trail use at every location where a trail counter was present. Some known predictors could be used, such as the canyon (Millcreek Canyon, Little Cottonwood Canyon, or Big Cottonwood Canyon), as well as the month, and the day of the week. The model made it possible to estimate use for all trail counter locations for all times of the year. This would make it possible to overcome some of the previously mentioned data gaps. Dr. Smith shared an example graph from White Pine Trailhead using the predictive model.

Dr. Smith noted that most of the trail counters were located at trailheads. They were 100 to 200 meters off of the trail and tended to be located away from major ski resorts. The mobile location data made it possible to overcome a lot of the data barriers. Dr. Smith reported that the mobile location data used for the Visitor Use Study came from smartphone apps that had location-based services (“LBS”) installed on them. LBS collected geographic data related to the position and movement of the phone. That data could be used to estimate trail use at destinations where counters were not located. This meant there would be a highly accurate representation of the amount of use occurring at different trails across the entire Central Wasatch area.

The work so far had focused on four of the high elevation lakes in the canyons: Red Pine, White Pine, Cecret Lake, and Lake Catherine. The way the mobile location data was accessed was through zones or geofences. It covered both the formal and informal trails leading to Red Pine, White Pine, Cecret Lake, and Lake Catherine. Over the next several months, the work would be expanded to the rest of the Central Wasatch. Dr. Smith explained that the zones or geofences made it possible to quantify and visualize use patterns around the lakes. This was a valuable way to understand the amount of use that was happening and recognize where use was not happening. He shared example images of the high elevation lakes and pointed out the zones or geofences.

Based on the data from the high elevation lakes, the average daily trip count for both Lake Catherine and Cecret Lake was higher than White Pine and Red Pine. Dr. Smith explained that this may be due to access and parking availability. In terms of use levels, Cecret Lake had 800 average daily trips in the summer of 2021, which was 27,000 trips per month. He noted that it was important to look at how the use impacted resource conditions. When the Utah State University team was out collecting data at the end of 2021, information about the condition class and the trail width of the informal trails was collected. Condition class was a common way to measure and quantify the amount of degradation. Trails were ranked from 1 to 5, with 1 being a very good trail and 5 being a trail with a lot of erosion. Condition Class and Trail Width maps were shared.

Dr. Smith explained that there was a similar breakdown between the four lakes. Most of the condition classes were on the upper end of the spectrum (Class 4 or Class 5). Additionally, many of the trail widths were quite narrow. He noted that use level may not be the only factor contributing to the poor conditions. There were environmental and managerial factors as well. Some of the factors connected to this particular analysis included surrounding vegetation, trail grade, trail slope alignment, the distance to the lakeshore, and the distance to a formal trail.

A statistical analysis was conducted to disentangle the effects of the factors that influenced trail conditions. For instance, the influence of use relative to trail slope or the influence of use relative to the distance to the water body. Dr. Smith explained that as the use increased, the trail was more likely to become wider. For trail grade, lower trail grades had considerably more influence than other factors that affected trail conditions. As trails became steeper, they became narrower. Dr. Smith noted that the distance to formal trails and the distance to the lakeshore had a significant impact on the trail width. Informal trails that were closer to formal trails tended to be wider. The further trails were from the lakeshore, the narrower the trails tended to be.

Dr. Smith explained that it was important to consider what all of this data meant for management. He posed the following question as well as some recommendations based on the data:

* What does this mean for recreation management around these lakes?
	+ Use and Impact:
		- Trails that are not yet heavily impacted, receive low use levels, and don’t fulfill critical functions for visitors should be closed and restored. Use should be concentrated on trails that are already well established, receive high levels of use, and appear necessary for visitors.
	+ Surface and Location:
		- Visitors should be concentrated on durable, walkable surfaces when available and trails close to water bodies should be hardened where possible.
	+ Trail Slope Alignment and Trail Grade:
		- Use should be concentrated on trail sections with sustainable trail grades.

Dr. Smith explained that this information was a small piece of the bigger Visitor Use Study project. Over the remainder of 2022, more data would be collected and there would be a focus on Little Cottonwood Canyon, Big Cottonwood Canyon, and Millcreek Canyon as well as backcountry campsites and the quality of water above and below campgrounds. It was currently the beginning of Phase II and most of the data collection efforts would take place throughout 2022 with the intention of the data being collected by the end of the calendar year. That meant there would be a full 12-months of data to represent use and resource conditions within the canyons.

Co-Chair Barbara Cameron wondered if there was a timeline for the trail assessment in Big Cottonwood Canyon. Dr. Smith explained that the work was somewhat dependent on the weather. The field crews would be out as soon as it was possible to access the high elevation locations. He anticipated that this would be within the next month or so.

John Knoblock assumed that the Utah State University team was collaborating with the Forest Service. He noted that the Forest Service had been working to classify and categorize all of the user-created trails. Dr. Smith explained that the Forest Service primarily focused on the formal trails and that was the reason the Visitor Use Study would focus on the informal trails around high elevation lakes. A lot of the informal trails had not been studied to the same degree as the formal trails. There was coordination with the Forest Service to ensure that no efforts were being duplicated. Mr. Knoblock noted that Chelsea Phillippe had put together a map of the informal trails. Dr. Smith was aware of what data had been collected and there had been coordination.

Mr. Knoblock wondered if a single, well-designed, and constructed trail around the lake would be a beneficial management strategy. Dr. Smith felt that would be appropriate in certain locations. However, he believed the broader intention was to concentrate the use. Around the high elevation lakes, there were always informal trails, because visitors wanted to walk around the lake or had a desire to reach a campground or formal trail. If the use could be directed, this would be a benefit. However, the trails needed to be clear and understandable for visitors.

Pat Shea wondered if invasive species were examined and cataloged through the Visitor Use Study process. He also wanted to know what kind of interface the study would have with the Environmental Dashboard. Dr. Smith explained that the invasive species had not been studied. The condition class and trail width had been explored, but it may be possible to focus on invasive species in specific areas moving forward. As for how the data would integrate into the Environmental Dashboard, all of the data on visitor use would be aggregated and shown on the Environmental Dashboard. There had been discussions with the team at the University of Utah about how to best do that. All of the use volume data would be directly integrated. Mr. Shea asked if there would be an Appendix, which would list the best practices to regulate overused areas. Dr. Smith stated that this was something that would be included in the report. It could also be integrated into the Environmental Dashboard. The intention was not just to provide numbers, but to provide context and information about how to best manage use.

Kirk Nichols thanked Dr. Smith for sharing updates on the Visitor Use Study. He wondered what the social assessment would look like. For instance, would there be interviews, would there be data related to crowding, or would the information relate to conflicts. The social aspect was listed as part of Phase II. Dr. Smith reported that the social assessment was an addendum or additional sampling above what the Forest Service did to monitor visitor use. The Forest Service used the National Visitor Use Monitoring Program. There was a set survey with questions related to recreation activities, home locations, and satisfaction. Unfortunately, it did not collect information about the perceptions of crowding or perceptions of change in use over time. If he was to seek out use-specific or experience-specific information, that would need to go through an additional review process. That timeline was normally several years out. As a result, the Visitor Use Study was not able to look at some of those experience-specific indicators, but there would be a lot of information related to the activity profiles and the origins of visitors.

Jennifer Eden asked if the Visitor Use Study work would be integrated into the Wasatch Wildlife Watch. She explained that the Wasatch Wildlife Watch showed animal traffic and it could determine whether there were conflicts between animals and users. Additionally, she wondered whether concentrating use in areas where use was already concentrated was the best methodology. Dr. Smith reported that there had been conversations with the Wasatch Wildlife Watch and the intention was to look at how the trail use data could be integrated into their predictive models related to wildlife presence and absence. He looked forward to that aspect of the study, but there needed to be further discussions to determine how the data sets would work together. As for concentrated use, he stated that across recreation resource management literature, the concentration of use often led to a minimal amount of further degradation. Concentrated use that was done in a well thought out and consistent manner was often the best solution.

Chair McCarvill thanked Dr. Smith for his presentation. He asked that any additional Stakeholders Council questions be shared with Dr. Smith following the Stakeholders Council Meeting.

**Committee Discussions**

1. **Committee Chairs will Provide Any Updates to the Stakeholders Council.**

Co-Chair Cameron explained that the Stakeholders Council subcommittees had met recently. She asked for updates. Mr. Knoblock, the Chair of the Trails Committee, reported that the Forest Service was moving forward with their Tri-Canyons Trails Master Plan in cooperation with Salt Lake County. Salt Lake County would assist with some of the GIS work and public outreach, such as open houses and public comment periods. The County would not do a County-Wide Trails Master Plan, as initially discussed, but would focus on assisting the Forest Service. Mr. Knoblock stated that the Salt Lake City Watershed Management Plan would dovetail with that work. The expected completion time for the Tri-Canyons Trails Master Plan was two years from now.

Co-Chair Cameron noted that there would be open houses related to the Salt Lake City Watershed Management Plan. It would take place on May 25, 2022, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Salt Lake City Public Library (in-person meeting) and on June 1, 2022, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. (online). Co-Chair Cameron noted that the Millcreek Canyon Committee had canceled their latest meeting. Del Draper explained that the meeting had been postponed. The intention was to first attend the Federal Lands Access Program (“FLAP”) grant open house. The FLAP grant was an expenditure of $19 million to improve the road from the winter gate to the top of Millcreek Canyon. He believed the open house would have additional information for the Committee to discuss.

There had been Stakeholders Council discussions related to the Environmental Dashboard. Co-Chair Cameron wanted to know whether additional public outreach could be done. She suggested that there could be a subcommittee related to the Environmental Dashboard outreach. She intended to reach out to teachers she knew to promote the Environmental Dashboard and she asked that other Council Members think about opportunities to share. Additional Stakeholders Council subcommittee ideas could be shared with Stakeholders Council leadership. Carl Fisher noted that he had previously asked whether there were specific areas or topics that the CWC Board wanted guidance on. However, he did not feel there had been a serious response to that inquiry. Chair McCarvill explained that the CWC Board had updated the Strategic Plan. He believed over the next week or two, additional information would be shared with Council Members.

Discussions were had about short-term projects. CWC Communications Director, Lindsey Nielsen explained that the Short-Term Projects Committee met in April 2022 and recommended partial or full funding for nine projects. Those projects had already begun work or would begin work as soon as the work season started in the canyons. Ms. Nielsen noted that the projects included:

* Cottonwood Canyons Foundation, 2022 Tri-Canyon Trail Deferred Maintenance and Invasive Weed Control Project ($7,500);
* Salt Lake Climber's Alliance, Jacob's Ladder Trail Reroute to Lone Peak Cirque ($5,000);
* Wasatch Backcountry Alliance, Shuttle Program ($15,000);
* Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Willow Heights Pond Beaver Reintroduction ($2,000);
* Trails Utah, BCC to Ferguson BST Completion ($4,000);
* Utah Open Lands, Bonanza Flat Trailhead Transit ($15,000);
* Friends of Alta, Friends of Alta Junior Ranger Activity Book ($750);
* Private Citizen, Rattlesnake Gulch Bicycle Parking ($1,000); and
* Save Our Canyons, Wasatch Wilderness Stewardship and Education Project ($1,000).

The next Stakeholders Council Meeting was scheduled to take place on July 20, 2022, at 3:00 p.m.

**Open Comments**

No additional comments were shared.

**Adjourn Meeting.**

1. **William McCarvill will Adjourn the Meeting as Chair of the Stakeholders Council.**

**MOTION:** Paul Diegel moved to ADJOURN the Stakeholders Council Meeting. Pat Shea seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Council.

The Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council Meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Special Hybrid Stakeholders Council Meeting held Wednesday, May 18, 2022.***

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes

T Forbes Group

Minutes Secretary

Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_