

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL TRAILS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 2023, AT 2:00 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION OFFICES LOCATED AT 41 NORTH RIO GRANDE STREET, SUITE 102, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.**

**Present:**  John Knoblock, Chair

 Sarah Bennett, Vice-Chair

 Barbara Cameron

 Dennis Goreham

 Patrick Shea

**Staff:** Blake Perez, CWC Executive Director of Administration

 Lindsey Nielsen, CWC Executive Director of Policy

**OPENING**

1. **Chair John Knoblock will Open the Public Meeting as Chair of the Trails Committee of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council.**

Chair John Knoblock called the meeting to order at 2:12 p.m. He welcomed those present. There was discussion regarding the anchor location. CWC Executive Director of Administration, Blake Perez was at the CWC Offices located at 41 North Rio Grande Street, Suite 102, in Salt Lake City. CWC Executive Director of Policy, Lindsey Nielsen explained that Trails Committee Members were welcome to join the meeting online or at the anchor location. The agenda items were reviewed.

1. **Review and Approval of the Minutes from the December 8, 2022 Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Dennis Goreham moved to APPROVE the Meeting Minutes from December 8, 2022. There was no second. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

**DISCUSSION**

1. **Visitor Use Study Draft Trails Section.**
	1. **Discuss Information From the CWC Board Meeting Presentation in Preparation for the Consultant to Report to the Committee in February.**

Chair Knoblock reported that Dr. Jordan Smith shared trail-related updates from the Visitor Use Study with the CWC Board at the last CWC Board Meeting. One of the sections of the Visitor Use Study pertained to trails and based on the results so far, there was a variety of use, spatially, and temporally. This meant that users were spread out. Some areas received significantly more use than others and some timeframes received more use than others. The conclusion was that it was possible to achieve serenity and a sense of wilderness in the Central Wasatch, assuming the visitor went at the right time or to the right place. There was ample opportunity for solitude. Chair Knoblock noted that the Visitor Use Study results also found that certain areas received a high amount of use, specifically around the high-elevation lakes.

The recommendation was not to disperse use to all of the different trails. Instead, the suggestion was to leave the trails that provided opportunities for wilderness experiences alone. The trails that received the largest amount of use could be hardened and proper trailhead infrastructure could be added. This would prevent environmental degradation at the existing heavily-used trails.

Patrick Shea thought it would be best to concentrate visitation around the ski resorts because those areas are already disturbed and there was both a commercial and educational interest. There could be a permitting system to visit the currently overused trails, which could lessen the density of the traffic rather than the frequency. Mr. Shea noted that the U.S. Forest Service seemed to be planning to build parking lots first and decide what would be done for transportation later. However, it would be more efficient to determine the forms of transportation that would be allowed in the canyons and then build the infrastructure to fit the specific modalities.

Chair Knoblock reported that early discussions in the Recreation Group associated with the Mountain Accord process had to do with determining recreation nodes, such as the ski resorts and a few other areas like Cardiff Trailhead and White Pine Trailhead. Improving trails at ski resorts sounded like a good idea. Based on the information shared by Dr. Smith, it seemed that there was a desire to improve the trails that were already heavily used to prevent environmental degradation.

Mr. Perez noted that the Visitor Use Study report was available on the CWC website under the Visitor Use Study project tab. He believed Chair Knoblock had reviewed the main takeaways included in the Executive Report portion. Mr. Perez was excited for the Trails Committee to further discuss the results of the data. He shared a timeline with those present. Dr. Smith would be at the next Trails Committee Meeting in February 2023. Additionally, he believed that Zinnia Wilson and Chelsea Phillippe from the U.S. Forest Service would be at that meeting. He hoped the Trails Committee could look into some trail-related action items that would then be brought forward to the Stakeholders Council and the full CWC Board for consideration.

Ms. Nielsen reported that there would be a media release early next week for the trails portion of the Visitor Use Study. Partner organizations would also be sent e-kits that could be easily shared on their communication platforms and social media sites. Those present at the Trails Committee Meeting could be added to the e-kit distribution list if desired. Chair Knoblock asked that Committee Members brainstorm questions and comments for Dr. Smith ahead of the next meeting.

1. **USFS Trails Master Plan.**
	1. **Compare the Master Plan Website Map with the Previous Mountain Accord Trails Plan Map (https://www.tricanyontrails.org/engage.html).**

Chair Knoblock reported that the Trails Committee had been working closely with the Forest Service on the Trails Master Plan. The Committee had advocated that the Forest Service begin that work for a number of years. As a result, Committee Members were very engaged in the Tri-Canyons Trails Master Plan that the Forest Service was currently focused on. Chair Knoblock noted that the interactive Master Plan Website Map was one of the main ways that input was being received about the trails system. This had been discussed briefly at the last Trails Committee Meeting. There were sections related to new trails and rerouted trails as well as dialogue boxes where comments could be added. In addition, there were areas to discuss ecosystem concerns. It looked like there was a lot more input on the map than when it was last reviewed by the Committee.

The ideas submitted suggestions would be utilized by the Forest Service to better understand what should be done in the canyons. Chair Knoblock shared information about user-created trails. He explained that those trails showed user demand, but user-created trails were not necessarily built properly or located in the right areas. Based on the information gathered, the Forest Service may consider adding trails in areas where there were a lot of user-created trails. That type of trail would be properly designed and maintained as opposed to those improper user-created trails.

Chair Knoblock reported that the Forest Service has been working with the Visitor Use Study team to look at the high-alpine lakes. For example, there was an existing trail that came up to Lake Blanche, but there was no designed and maintained route trail around the lake. The result was a spiderweb of user-created trails. Some of the lakes would have riparian areas around them if not for the user-created trails. It may be possible to create one well-designed trail that looped around in order to reestablish riparian areas that were closer to the lakeshore. The use could become more focused on the hardened and well-designed trail areas instead of on user-created areas. Discussions were had about trails that were and were not considered Forest Service trails.

Chair Knoblock reviewed the items he added to the interactive map. He added items from the previous Mountain Accord Trails Plan Map. For instance, the area that went from the campground at Solitude to the Fire Station. There was an existing old road there. The suggestion was to turn the existing old road into a trail that paralleled the road. One of the Mountain Accord tail concepts was to make parallel trails wherever possible in order to connect communities. Another item that had been added related to a parallel trail in lower Big Cottonwood Canyon. There was an old pipeline route that could connect to the eventual Bonneville Shoreline Trail. In Little Cottonwood Canyon, a suggestion had been added to the interactive map to suggest that a trail be created all the way up the canyon, from the Quarry Trail to Alta.

Mr. Shea asked if the trails were rated by level of difficulty. This was denied. Chair Knoblock explained that the Forest Service did not grade their trails. Co-Chair Sarah Bennett noted that a lot of trail apps that people used had a grading system built into them. For hiking, it generally took into account the trail length and elevation gain. Different elements were considered when it came to grading the level of difficulty. Ms. Nielsen pointed out that user-graded trails were highly subjective. It was noted that the Wasatch Mountain Club had a rating system for most of the trails in the Central Wasatch on their website.

Chair Knoblock referenced the Mountain Accord Trails Plan Map. That information was available on the CWC website under the Mountain Accord tab. This made it possible to see what was discussed and agreed to at a Mountain Accord level. One of the ideas that came out of that process was the continuation of the Crest Trail all the way up to Parley’s Summit. Chair Knoblock added that suggestion to the interactive Forest Service map. He noted that it was not an easy suggestion, because it went across various land ownerships, but it was still an idea to consider.

The Trails Committee continued to review the interactive map suggestions. Chair Knoblock believed that most of the Mountain Accord Trails Plan Map ideas were incorporated into the interactive map. The Forest Service would review the suggestions and data. There would be additional engagement sessions throughout 2023 and a final plan would be released in 2024. Chair Knoblock reported that the first in-person listening session had taken place in Midvale the night before. The next one was scheduled for January 26, 2023, and another would take place at the Millcreek Library at the beginning of February 2023. The Forest Service hoped to receive a lot of input during those listening sessions. For example, what trails to fix, what trails to eliminate, where additional maintenance efforts were needed, and so on. He believed there was a good start.

1. **Bonneville Shoreline Trail Legislation Discussion.**
	1. **https://www.imba.com/press-release/bstaa-becoming-law.**

Chair Knoblock shared information about the Bonneville Shoreline Trail Advancement Act (“BSTAA”). He believed that the next step in the BSTAA process was for the Forest Service to produce the final maps. The Forest Service had done a lot of work already and it was just a matter of finalizing information. Mr. Shea suggested that there be some sort of celebration for the Forest Service planned on behalf of the CWC. This would allow the organization to thank them for their hard work. It would be a goodwill gesture and would also enhance public awareness.

Co-Chair Bennett liked the suggestion from Mr. Shea. She noted that the passage of the legislation began with the Mountain Accord efforts. It was all contained within the larger Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act (“CWNCRA”) bill. Some people felt that the passage of the bill undermined the other wilderness and land exchange pieces, but she felt it was the opposite. All of the pieces contained in the original bill were being chipped away at. She was grateful to see this particular piece move forward. Dennis Goreham suggested that the Trails Committee share a recommendation with the Stakeholders Council to endorse the passage of the CWNCRA and all of the other components now that the BSTAA had passed. It was noted that some groups were upset about the piecemeal approach being taken. Co-Chair Bennett reported that the Wilderness Society and Save Our Canyons were in opposition to the approach.

Ms. Nielsen explained that the passage of the BSTAA was significant. It was true that this took out a substantial piece of the CWNCRA. With the passage of the bill, every provision where there was a mention of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail needed to be removed from the most recent version of the CWNCRA. There was some work for the CWC associated with this change. However, the CWNCRA was still an important and impactful bill. The main components of the CWNCRA remained and there would still be an 80,000-acre Federal Designation and limits on the permit boundaries of the three ski resorts. That being said, the passage of the BSTAA set a precedent. The 1964 Wilderness Act had never had any rewrites done to it. Based on the BSTAA, the Wilderness Act could be adjusted for present-day conditions. That would have been part of the CWNCRA if the Bonneville Shoreline Trail portion had remained. Additional discussions were had about changes to wilderness boundaries and the BSTAA.

1. **Other Trail Planning Updates.**

Chair Knoblock reported that he and Co-Chair Bennett participated in the Salt Lake City foothills revisions. He explained that the Trails Master Plan for the Salt Lake City foothills was currently under review. There had been discussions about the previous planning and implementation process. Salt Lake City would revisit that in the summer and hoped to make adjustments to the plan in the fall. Concurrently, over the summer, Salt Lake City would build four new trailheads for the Salt Lake City foothills for a cost of $2.6 million. In 2024, Salt Lake City would resume building and rerouting additional trails. Chair Knoblock also reported that the Butterfield Trail System would be completed next summer. He noted that some of the pressure on the Central Wasatch would lessen as other trail systems improved.

**ADJOURN**

1. **Chair John Knoblock will Close the Public Meeting as Chair of the Trails Committee of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council.**

**MOTION:** Dennis Goreham moved to ADJOURN the Trails Committee Meeting. Sarah Bennett seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

The Central Wasatch Commission Trails Committee Meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Trails Committee Meeting held Thursday, January 12, 2023.***

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes

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Minutes Secretary

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