

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL TRAILS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD, THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 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

 Kirk Nichols

 Pat Shea

 Dennis Goreham

 Will McCarvill

**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 approximately 2:00 p.m. He welcomed those present to the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Stakeholders Council Trails Committee.

1. **Review and Approval of the Minutes from the February 9, 2023, Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Barbara Cameron moved to APPROVE the CWC Stakeholders Council Trails Committee Meeting Minutes from February 9, 2023. Sarah Bennett seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

**DISCUSSION**

1. **Update on the Watershed Management Plan**

Chair Knoblock reported that he had not received any responses recently from Patrick Nelson. Zinnia Wilson from the U.S. Forest Service informed him that she had not received any updates either. Chair Knoblock believed that back in February Mr. Nelson stated that there would be another round of public engagement on the draft plan in the spring. Vice-Chair Sarah Bennett wondered whether it would be appropriate for the Trails Committee to write a formal letter requesting an update. It might not make a difference but it would show that the Committee is committed to learning more about the process. Chair Knoblock had tried to seek information and had not received any.

Dennis Goreham thought a formal letter was a good idea. He wondered if the Trails Committee would need approval from the CWC Board in order to send that. CWC Executive Director of Policy, Lindsey Nielsen, confirmed that it would need to go through the full review process. Chair Knoblock was not sure it was worth going through the Stakeholders Council and CWC Board. He assumed that Mr. Nelson had been very busy addressing the heavy spring runoff and flood control. It made sense that they might be behind schedule on the plan. Patrick Shea stated that he would phone Mr. Nelson and remind him to respond to the emails.

Ms. Nielsen reiterated that any formal letter coming out of a Stakeholders Council subcommittee needed to be sent to the Stakeholders Council for review. There was a Special Stakeholders Council Meeting scheduled for June 21, 2023. If there was a desire to forward a letter to the Stakeholders Council, there would not be a long wait to have it approved. From there, pending any amendments that the Stakeholders Council requested, it would move to the full CWC Board. Chair Knoblock suggested that Mr. Shea reach out to Mr. Nelson and remind him that the Trails Committee was looking for an update on the Watershed Management Plan instead.

Additional discussions were had about a formal letter. Barbara Cameron believed that the reason the Committee had not heard back from Mr. Nelson was because of the flooding concerns. There was a heavy workload at the current time. Now that the risks were subsiding, she believed the focus would move back to the plan. She would rather not send a formal letter at this time and thanked Mr. Shea for offering to reach out to Mr. Nelson. Others offered to reach out as well.

1. **Update on Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan.**

Chair Knoblock reported that he received an email from Ms. Wilson about the Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan. He read the Forest Service update email. The Consultant working on the plan was now drafting the final Executive Summary and Report on the engagement sessions that had taken place. The report would include information about the survey results as well as key takeaways from comments received at the meetings and open houses. That information would be added to the website and sent in an email to partners. There was internal work to identify all of the major concepts and to develop and refine a conceptual draft trails plan. That would be released by the end of the summer. Once the draft plan is released, there would be more public outreach.

As for trail signage, Ms. Wilson stated that there was a desire for that to fit in with the Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan. It would need to identify the primary problems as well as the purpose and need. For example, improving resource protection, improving visibility, communicating with non-English speakers, or improving trail etiquette. It was important to clearly state what the problem was and what the sign would address. Some examples would be useful along with pictures of existing signage. Chair Knoblock recently sent out an email with the Forest Service sign standards.

Ms. Cameron reported that she reviewed the sign standards document from the Forest Service and was impressed by the photos that were included. It was a good look and she wanted to see that type of branding continue. She noted that the Wasatch Mountain Club has a beautiful sign. It would be nice to focus on that kind of style. Mr. Goreham agreed that it was a good but lengthy document. There were a lot of sign examples included. He believed there were some excellent starting points and it would be possible to share suggestions over the summer.

1. **Collaborate and Brainstorm Ideas for Improved Trail Signage.**

The Committee continued to discuss improved trail signage. Chair Knoblock reported that he often takes photos of trail signs when he is out. For instance, he took some photographs of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail signage recently. It is always nice to see what other signs look like. He wondered if there were specific themes that the Committee wanted to see included in future trail signage. Mr. Goreham explained that there had been some discussion during the Stakeholders Council Mini Retreat about that. He felt there needed to be a focus on signs related to etiquette and ethics as there were a lot of trail issues related to those topics.

Vice-Chair Bennett believed etiquette and ethics could be broken down further. In terms of ethics, something that she often sees is trampled flowers. She loves the watershed sign that says, “Don’t Shred the Shed.” It is a sign that captures attention and makes the intentions clear. A sign that asks people to be aware of staying on trails would be useful. Mr. Goreham was supportive of that concept. Vice-Chair Bennett thought a sign about when trails were appropriate to use would also be worthwhile. Generally, the thought was that if you are sinking more than one-quarter inch into the surface of a trail, it is too wet to use. She suggested, “Wet Ground, Turn Around.”

Chair Knoblock referenced the Mormon Pioneer Trail. There were posts on each side and a chain that goes across to close the trail. When trails are too muddy to use, the chain would be pulled across and the trail would be closed. However, that assumes there are employees to do that. Mr. Goreham wondered if the Forest Service was able to close trails temporarily. Mr. Shea confirmed that they could but he did not believe they would as there are always worries about litigation. In Austria, France, and Italy, there are youth groups trained to monitor the trails. Something similar could be done in Utah. This would encourage youth to participate in the protection of the environment and increase the monitoring of the trails on a regular basis. There are a few foundations that might be willing to sponsor that type of group. Ms. Cameron thought the suggestion was good and believed it would make sense to speak to the Forest Service. Mr. Shea offered to speak to Dave Whittekiend about the youth group suggestion.

Vice-Chair Bennett discussed apps that direct people to trails, such as AllTrails. People are learning quickly that some of the heat-sourced mapping is causing difficulties for land managers. When people hike in places that they shouldn’t those alignments are showing up on the apps and people are seeking those alignments out for their hikes. AllTrails is trying to develop a way for land managers to review the back end of the app and make corrections to the information that is coming in. Eventually, it will be possible for those land managers to share construction and weather-related updates as well. She felt that development was promising. Recently, she met with a company out of the State of Washington called Tread Maps. They have public land managers updating the information and that has been beneficial.

Chair Knoblock believed the Salt Lake Ranger District previously reached out to AllTrails because of the problems with the user-created trails. A lot of user-created trails in the Central Wasatch were shown on the AllTrails map, which exacerbated the problem. When people see a trail on AllTrails, there is an assumption that it is an official trail but that is not always the case. Vice-Chair Bennett noted that a lot of the apps work against hikers because it is not possible to determine whether the trails are official, user-created, or on private property. Chair Knoblock asked Vice-Chair Bennett to see if the Salt Lake Ranger District can remove user-created trails from the AllTrails app. She confirmed that she would reach out.

William McCarvill felt that pushing the responsibility of dealing with user-created trails onto the agencies was unfair. The various apps are creating the problem. He felt that the trails apps were irresponsible for making unvetted trail information accessible to all. The root of the problem lies in the apps that are using unvetted data but then expect land managers to solve the problem they have created. Vice-Chair Bennett did not think user-created data will decrease and stated that it is likely to increase over time. The creators of the apps understand the issues and are trying to deal with them. However, she agreed that the apps have created a lot of unanticipated issues.

Chair Knoblock believed that when Chelsea Phillippe from the Forest Service was initially trying to map the user-created trails, she looked at the AllTrails app to identify some of the unofficial trails that were being used by visitors. He agreed that the app technology has caused some issues. Vice-Chair Bennett explained that she would report back to the Committee with any additional findings. She was eager to help the land managers and find a way to address trail-related problems. Chair Knoblock noted that the Trails Committee might be able to help with the removal of the user-created trails listed on AllTrails if the Forest Service is understaffed and unable to do that. Kirk Nichols noted that on Google Maps there is a place for comments where information could be added. A notice would state, “This may not be a viable route,” once submissions were made. Mr. McCarvill reiterated that the responsibility should be on the app creators rather than the users.

Chair Knoblock pointed out that this is not a Central Wasatch-specific problem but a problem across the country. There was an organization called American Trails. He wondered if someone would volunteer to contact American Trails and determine whether there were discussions about this matter taking place on a broader scale. Mr. McCarvill offered to reach out and ask about the trails app-related issues. There was a lot of information out there that was not vetted and it was fostering illegal trail generation and use. He believed that needed to end.

Vice-Chair Bennett reported that she has spoken to three different trails app companies. All of the app companies understand that they have a role and responsibility. However, the most current information that could be provided needs to come from the land managers. That was one of the issues. There was a desire to have the best and most current information available but the app creators felt that the land managers were the best ones to do that. She offered to follow up with relevant parties and bring back information to the Trails Committee for further discussion.

Mr. Shea wondered what the Trails Committee thought about the Forest Service using drones to fly over areas in order to assess the adequacy of the trails. Chair Knoblock felt there might be privacy concerns with that type of approach. Mr. Goreham noted that privacy, serenity, and solitude would be impacted. He did not believe trail users would appreciate drones flying over trails. Mr. Shea pointed out that drones are fairly quiet when flown above 100 feet. Chair Knoblock explained that he does not like it when deer hunters fly drones over the mountains to do animal scoping. The drones are loud and intrusive to the outdoor experience.

Chair Knoblock asked that additional discussions about signage take place. He reported that the Forest Service needs to go through a National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”) process to designate an area as a “no off-trail travel area.” Generally, in wilderness and forest areas, visitors are not restricted to trail use. There are certain areas where that designation has been approved, such as special botanical areas. In Albion Basin, there is signage stating that visitors need to stay on trails. However, that would not be done for most of the forest. Mr. Goreham believed there could still be signs related to the consequences of going off trail, such as trampling flowers or causing harm to the habitat. Those kinds of signs would be reminders for visitors.

Another general theme for signage could be mountain bicycle etiquette. Chair Knoblock suggested that it be specific to uphill travel having the right-of-way. Mr. Goreham explained that uphill travel always has the right-of-way but he did not know how many people are actually aware of that. It would be useful to have those kinds of educational signs posted. Chair Knoblock wondered if any other general categories for trail signage would be useful. Mr. Goreham noted that directional signage is needed. He acknowledged that there was a need for better directional signage at intersections but that was less of an urgent concern than ethics and etiquette signs. There was discussion about current signage. Chair Knoblock reported that at the top of Rattlesnake Trail, there are wooden signs that are laser engraved with the names of trail connections and distances. The Forest Service was working on those kinds of signs.

Vice-Chair Bennett believed that trail signage needs to be engaging, informative, and immediate. The brown and cream Forest Service signs fall short in terms of attracting attention and communicating vital information. Ms. Wilson asked that the Forest Service guide be studied. This was something Trails Committee Members could do ahead of the next meeting. It would be worthwhile to brainstorm creative messaging and signing that would fit within those parameters but might achieve better success. Chair Knoblock noted that if the Trails Committee eventually wants to send something to the Forest Service, it would need to be forwarded to the Stakeholders Council for approval and then move ahead to the CWC Board for approval. Since that was a long process, he felt that individual Committee Member action was best. It was important to share information with Ms. Wilson and Ms. Phillippe sooner rather than later.

Mr. Goreham noted that he saw a lot of people walk by the existing signage at trailheads. If there was more engaging signage, that would be beneficial. He explained that he was at White Pine recently and there was a “No Dogs” sign at the intersection of White Pine and Red Pine. It was a metal sign but it had been bent in half. The sign materials were important to consider as well. Chair Knoblock confirmed that it was difficult to get visitors to read and respect signage. Mr. McCarvill wondered if the Forest Service had considered how people obtain information. For instance, it might be possible to have an electronic Forest Service sign on an app. Chair Knoblock suggested that he share that suggestion with American Trails to see if that had been considered. Mr. Goreham thought there would need to be both electronic and physical signs.

1. **Trailhead Toilet Cleaning Contract Status.**

CWC Executive Director of Administration, Blake Perez, reported that a few months ago, the Forest Service and Cottonwood Canyons Foundation approached the CWC about consolidating a Restroom Cleaning and Maintenance contract. There would be one umbrella contract and the CWC would be the Project Manager. The CWC wants to be as helpful as possible, so with the Forest Service and the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation, a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) was created as well as a scope of work. That was posted and proposals were received. Those were reviewed and a site tour was conducted. At the last CWC Board Meeting, the CWC Board approved a contract with EcoBrite that would begin on July 1, 2023. Most of the restrooms in the tri-canyons would be under a cleaning contract with EcoBrite, managed by the CWC, and funded through the Forest Service, Town of Brighton, and Public Utilities. There would also likely be CWC funding.

Chair Knoblock asked how much money Salt Lake County had dedicated to this effort. Mr. Perez reported that there were not currently any funds coming from the County. Ms. Nielsen reported that Salt Lake County was approached to find out if there was any interest in contributing, but they had not heard back from the County. She clarified that she reached out to Jim Bradley, who was a former CWC Board Member. Chair Knoblock reported that he would attend a Salt Lake County Council Meeting and share a comment during the public comment period.

Ms. Nielsen reported that the CWC plans to be the Project Manager for as long as the partner agencies want the organization to provide the management of the umbrella contract. It reduces inefficiencies for everyone. The CWC was ready and willing to take on that role. Chair Knoblock wondered if the CWC had reached out to Catherine Kanter. This was denied.

1. **Summer Trailhead Transit NEPA Needs and Action.**

Chair Knoblock reported that according to Bekee Hotze, anything that deals with summer transit in Millcreek Canyon would need to go through a NEPA process to make sure overcrowding, Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”) facilities, and proper restrooms at transit stops were considered. CWC Staff was currently writing a proposal to the Forest Service about the NEPA process for a shuttle. The decision had been made for CWC Staff to write the proposal because of timing. The deadline that the Forest Service provided was July 31, 2023. CWC Staff had an internal meeting scheduled with the Forest Service to check in with the proposal. That would take place next week and the first draft of the proposal would be presented for their review. After that, the Millcreek Canyon Committee would be involved as well as the Transportation Committee and other interested parties.

Chair Knoblock believed Ms. Hotze expressed the same opinion with respect to summer transit in Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon. The 2003 Forest Plan specifically stated that the Forest Service would support summer transit in the tri-canyon area. He wondered if CWC Staff could ask whether the service could be extended to the tri-canyon area. Alternatively, there could be a separate process for summer transit NEPA in Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon. Ms. Nielsen stated that she would discuss this during the meeting with the Forest Service. She clarified that the reason the proposal was being written for Millcreek Canyon shuttle work was because of the Federal Lands Access Program (“FLAP”) grant. FLAP construction would close the upper portion of the canyon to traffic when construction started in the summer of 2025. A shuttle could provide access to the upper canyon during construction. Discussions were had about reducing vehicles and reducing roadside parking in the canyon.

Ms. Cameron referenced the City of Holladay and the Wasatch Front Regional Council (“WFRC”) Feasibility Study for a shared-use pathway along 215, between Highland Drive and Holladay Boulevard. The path would connect Knudsen Park to the existing trail network. The study would start with three meetings, with the first taking place in mid-June. It was not directly in the canyon area, but Knudsen Park was where Big Cottonwood Creek started. Chair Knoblock asked her to share links to relevant information with the Trails Committee Members for review.

1. **Update on 2023 Trails Projects.**

Chair Knoblock shared information from the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation. Due to the Adopt-A-Trail program and other funding sources, a second trail crew had been added for the season. In the past, the Forest Service had one trail crew and the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation had one trail crew. However, this summer the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation would have two full-time trail crews. The Cottonwood Canyons Foundation also had a four-person weed crew that worked in the tri-canyon area. That crew specifically went around to identify and remove invasive weeds. On their schedule, there were 20 trails identified where major maintenance work would be done over the summer. There would also be annual maintenance done on many of the other trails.

Chair Knoblock shared a Forest Service update. He reported that the Silver Lake Boardwalk project was expected to be completed this summer. Trails Utah was working with the Forest Service on doing the natural surface trail section of the Silver Lake Loop. That work was slightly delayed because of the significant snowfall. There was still a foot of snow or more on the ground around Silver Lake. There could not be an on-site bid meeting there until all of the snow had cleared. He reported that Salt Lake County was finishing the Cardiff Meadows Bridge and Boardwalk that would connect to Donut Falls. That work would take place over the summer.

In Davis County, a lot of Bonneville Shoreline Trail had been put in last year. Four more miles would be added this year for a total of 16 miles of new Bonneville Shoreline Trail. In lower Big Cottonwood Canyon, the Climbers Alliance had an initiative to address access and resource concerns between Storm Mountain and S-Curves. That was being analyzed to determine how to remove some of the user-created trails and instead have a durable accessible trail. The Forest Service crews would do heavy maintenance in Days Fork, Mill B North, and the Desolation Trail in the lower section of Millcreek Canyon. There would also be a lot of work done that was related to water damage from the heavy snowfall and melt. Fallen trees would be a bigger issue this year than in past years. Additional details about the Bonneville Shoreline were reviewed. The trail in Ferguson Canyon would be completed so the Ferguson Trailhead south of Big Cottonwood would connect to the Dogwood Picnic Area in Big Cottonwood Canyon. There was a bridge, paid parking, and a restroom there already. That was the reason it had been chosen to connect to.

Chair Knoblock reported that Trails Utah was working with the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation to do some more weed pulling on the new Rattlesnake Trail. Another Trails Utah Project involved work with the Forest Service. There were approximately 20 short spots on the Big Water Trail that went from the Big Water Trailhead at the top of Millcreek Canyon up to Dog Lake. The trail would be widened a bit and some stumps would be removed so that others could utilize the trail. It was becoming more common for ADA access to be available on natural surface trails.

**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. Barbara Cameron seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

The Central Wasatch Commission Trails Committee Meeting adjourned at 3:30 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, June 8, 2023.***

Teri Forbes

Teri Forbes

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Minutes Secretary

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