



Meeting Minutes

Friday, June 19, 2020
Via Zoom Virtual Meeting

Members Present: Christian Meyer, Jill Ozarski, Bill Koerner, Jerry Abboud, Janelle Kukuk, Dustin Wilkinson

CPW Staff Present: Fletcher Jacobs, Tom Metsa, Pam O'Malley, Megan Sims, Jeannie MacMurtrie, Felicia Lohnes, Ben Plankis, Randy Engle, Luke Svare, Josh Stoudt, Joe O'Brien, Garrett Wilson

Others in Attendance: Ex-Officio Jack Placchi (BLM), Chad Schneckenberger (USFS)

Guests: Steve Bonowski, Chris Yuan-Farrell, Heather Hormell, Craig Grother, Gerrit Slatter, Nancy Working, Lindsay Merz

Call to Order: Vice-chair Christian Meyer called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m., opening with a roll call.

Agenda Amendments: None presented

Approval of Meeting Minutes from June 5, 2020 – No changes presented

Motion to approve minutes – Janelle Kukuk

Motion seconded – Jerry Abboud

Motion passed unanimously

Public Comment:

Steve Bonowski, Colorado Mountain Club. CMC filed a petition to address the SWA new access requirements. An outfitter at the Loma boat launch received a copy, as the launch is located in the Horsethief Canyon SWA. Boaters will need to have a fishing or hunting license to launch. Janelle thanked Steve and CMC for the follow-up. Jerry asked about the process for sharing comments on the petition. Fletcher said they are shared directly with the Parks and Wildlife Commission. Interested parties can send comments to Fletcher and he will make sure they get to the right person. Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition (COHVCO) is mapping the trails in these areas and this info will be added to COTREX and shared with the Commission.



Director's Update – Fletcher Jacobs for Heather Dugan

Fletcher discussed the ongoing agency response to COVID-19. Regional Managers shared that visitation is up by 30% across the state. Parks are reaching capacity. Certain parks are seeing wait times up to 5 hours. Group picnic and camping areas are now open to a maximum of 25 people. Showers are open and Visitor Centers are allowing retail shopping.

Budget – the wildlife position is strong. Parks is down due to COVID-19, but they are beginning to see growth. Pass purchases are up from last year and parks cash will be stronger by the end of the season.

CPW is now in a partnership with 'Leave No Trace' and Colorado Tourism, increasing awareness to recreate responsibly. Messaging from Washington State is being adopted by CPW and we will start pushing this information out to the public. There is still an opportunity to do more.

Jerry asked about current agency field presence. Chad said USFS staff is in the field now, and has been for weeks. They are working through a series of phases with most staff still working from home. Rangers and some office staff are going into the offices. Jack said BLM process is similar.

Commission meeting – the commissioners discussed the Strategic Plan and an Operational Plan for a 2-year cycle. The big goal is to connect people with the outdoors for both Coloradans and visitors.

Sub-goal: Improve trail recreation opportunities while protecting wildlife, habitat and natural resources. Analyze grant applications and timelines to ensure projects meet the demand for trail opportunities. Increase grant funds that go toward maintaining existing trails by 10% by June 2022. Non-motorized is in the 2nd year of a pilot where construction and maintenance grants are in separate categories. This will help measure and analyze these projects.

Sub-goal: Plan advance sustainable design and management for trail recreation development and maintenance with consideration to wildlife conservation management. The Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind handbook will be the metric for this sub-goal.

Christian asked if we have the data for maintenance on the non-moto side as we do for motorized. Fletcher says we will focus on maintenance and should see an increase in those projects. A 10% increase is a reasonable goal.

Trails Program Update – Fletcher Jacobs

Tom Metsa gave an update on the OHV crew. Rangers are monitoring vandalism and have a phone app to track and report data. There is a statewide crew out of the Sulphur Ranger District. Crews contacted over 600 vehicles. 100 were from out of state and 50 needed assistance. Many people are using COTREX. Extra work was done on the Parks District with downed trees. Crews are still having some issues getting into areas due to COVID-19 closures.

Fletcher stated that we will continue to talk with partners and grantees to work through issues and restrictions. Crews are out doing good things. The biggest difference is the restrictions on volunteer and youth corps crews (limited to 10-person crews). Hopeful that this will get better this summer.

State Trails Committee Vacancy – The review panel recommended Heather Hormell from Durango to fill the upcoming vacancy for District 3. The recommendation will be given to the CPW Leadership Team and will then be forwarded to the Commission in July. Heather will also serve as the OHV Subcommittee Chair. She has a very diverse, trail user background. Jill thanked the panel for their participation and thorough review of the applicants. She asked about the next set of vacancies. Fletcher reported that District 2 (Christian Meyer) and District 5 (Bill Koerner) will be the next two vacancies in 2021. First terms for Wally Piccone (District 7) and Jill Ozarski (District 1) will be up in 2021 and can be renewed for another 4-year term. Jill suggested thinking about outreach in advance to bring a broader point of view to the committee. Fletcher agreed that we should plan on starting the process early for next year.

Tom thanked Dustin Wilkinson for 8 years of service on the State Trails Committee and as the OHV Subcommittee Chair. Dustin gave many hours of volunteer and travel time. Dustin said he would miss everyone and the meetings and hopes to see folks on the trails. Christian said he learned a lot about the motorized side from Dustin and appreciated getting updates on conditions across the state. Janelle thanked him for his time and said he taught her more about motorized recreation.

Action Item – Scope Change Request – Boulder Regional Trail Grant – Fletcher Jacobs

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and budget losses, the grantee has asked to change their Scope of Work and budget for the Boulder Connector Trail, funded through FHWA (RTP). They are proposing a phased approach. Phase 1 goes from Andrus Rd. to 61st St. Phase 2 will start next year when budget constraints ease up. By doing this they can get work done now and stay within RTP guidance on keeping the grant active. They lost approximately \$500,000 in match funds from the city due to COVID-19. Their application scored well at 82.18, which was the 2nd highest score for that year.

Christian feels the change is a good plan. Janelle said the issue is out of their control and there is no reason why it shouldn't be changed. Jill is onboard with the change.

Motion to approve Scope Change Request Boulder Regional Trail – Janelle Kukuk

Motion seconded – Dustin Wilkinson

Motion passed unanimously

Christian asked if there is any indication that will be more requests on the horizon. Fletcher said it's possible, especially on the motorized side. Staff reached out to current grantees asking for updates/issues related to the pandemic. We may need to review timeline extensions for some grantees.

Regional Trail Coordinator Updates – Luke Svare, Ben Plankis, Josh Stoudt, Randy Engle

Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind Update – Fletcher Jacobs

The task force continues to work on revising the 22-year old brochure 'Handbook for Trail Planners'. It was widely distributed in the past and is still asked for today. There is an increase in recreation due to population and COVID-19 'get outdoors' recommendations. One goal is to give guidance and have principles in place to use prior to meetings so planners can be informed before beginning the process. They are working with CPW staff, federal and local land managers, grant applicants, recreational trail users and conservation partners.

The plan was to have a draft outline ready for review by June 30, 2020. COVID-19 restrictions have caused some delays. The draft will be shared with the Task Force, and they will continue to engage in the process. A public draft should be available in July-August. A final version should be ready in 2021, adopting SHIFT (Principles for Advancing Outdoor Recreation and Conservation).

A facilitator was hired and groups were formed: Online Engagement, Land Manager Task Force, User Group, Advisory Group, CPW Technical Oversight Team and Case Studies and Stories.

Jerry asked about the RTP program and the FAST Act. It expires September 2020, but FHWA is going to request an extension. Tom Metsa said that there are three outcomes:

1. It could go away
2. There could be an increase for the program by 175%
3. It could remain the same

Jerry thinks that 2021 will be problematic with the federal deficit and is concerned about parks cash. He hopes the staff has an idea of what may be affected before the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) meeting in the fall. There is a TABOR Emergency Tax Increase option, but it can only be enacted during the Governor's Emergency Order. All of this plays into what we can spend on trails next year.

Christian suggested that we come up with best and worst case scenarios.

Round Table

Jill thanked Fletcher for the update. Mentioned the recent vote in the Senate for the Great American Outdoors Act. This bill establishes the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund to support deferred maintenance projects on federal lands. Additionally, the bill makes funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) permanent.

Bill would like an update on ways to find additional funding on the next meeting agenda.

Janelle reported very dry and smoky conditions in her area. Advised everyone to be careful when you are there.

Dustin signed off with a comment about how he has enjoyed his time on the committee.

Fletcher stated that the next STC meeting will be September 18th in Denver at CPW's 6060 Broadway office due to budget/travel restrictions and possible COVID-19 restrictions.

Officer elections and subcommittee chair appointments are on the agenda. Another ZOOM meeting later this summer could be called if needed.

Christian suggested that Fletcher poll committee members in July to see if another online update meeting is needed.

Public Comment

Craig Grother, Norwood Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. Craig appreciated the opportunity to be a part of the advisory group for Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind and other planning groups. He would like to be involved early on. The OHV report had interesting information and he wonders if something similar could be done on the non-motorized side.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:05 a.m. by Vice-Chair, Christian Meyer