



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Colorado's Recreational Trails Committee

Established January 1, 1985

1313 Sherman Street, Room #618 • Denver, CO 80201

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Meeting Minutes

Friday, December 4, 2020

Via Zoom Virtual Meeting

Members Present: Scott Jones, Bill Koerner, Jill Ozarski, Christian Meyer, Heather Hormell, Jerry Abboud, Janelle Kukuk, Pam Denahy

CPW Staff Present: Heather Dugan, Justin Rutter, Fletcher Jacobs, Tom Metsa, Pam O'Malley, Megan Sims, Jeannie MacMurtrie, Gabby Smiley, Felicia Lohnes, Brad Henley, Ben Plankis, Randy Engle, Luke Svare, Josh Stoudt, Mark Leslie

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

Guests: Craig Grother, Robyn Cascade, Rosalind McClellan, Sallie Thoreson, Thomas Jones, Megan Walter, Chris Yuan-Farrell

Call to Order: Chair Christian Meyer called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m., opening with a roll call.

Agenda Amendments: None presented

Approval of Meeting Minutes from September 18, 2020 – No changes presented

Motion to approve minutes – Scott Jones

Motion seconded – Janelle Kukuk

Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment:

Robyn Cascade, Great Old Broads for Wilderness – Commented on habitat fragmentation and the cumulative impacts to wildlife. Recommended that the committee review trail development and dedicate funding to maintenance projects only.

Director's Update – Heather Dugan

- Heather reported on the soft opening of Fishers Peak State Park on October 30, 2020. Governor Polis attended and signed an executive order creating the Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnership Initiative (CO-OP). DNR and CPW will work with the CO-OP to establish a statewide vision for conservation and recreation for our public and private lands and waters.
- CPW is seeking public nominations for our next state park location. Our state parks, along with other public lands in Colorado, continue to see record visitation during the pandemic. Overall park visitation for 2020 is up 30 percent. Additional details and nomination instructions can be found on CPW's Future State Parks webpage.



- Committee discussion on funding issues for state parks. Justin Rutter spoke about using more capital resources and funds from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO).
- Proposition 114, a ballot initiative directing the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission to develop a plan to introduce gray wolves onto the Western Slope of Colorado, passed on November 3, 2020. The proposition directs the PWC to:
 - Develop a plan to reintroduce and manage gray wolves in Colorado by December 31, 2023, on designated lands west of the Continental Divide.
 - Hold statewide hearings about scientific, economic, and social considerations.
 - Periodically obtain public input to update the plan.
 - Use state funds to assist livestock owners in preventing conflicts with gray wolves and pay fair compensation for livestock losses.
- Committee discussion on the reintroduction efforts and process.

Trails Program Update - Fletcher Jacobs and Justin Rutter

- Fletcher introduced CFO, Justin Rutter for an update on the Governor's budget request. It was delivered to the Legislature on November 1, 2020. OHV cash is \$600,000, with \$300,000 from registrations and \$300,000 overhead, based on total program size. The Joint Budget Committee will have a hearing in January.
- Committee discussion on the need to address unallocated OHV funds. The excess cash should be used to achieve goals of natural resource protection. The committee will generate a letter to the JBC, asking for full funding of the OHV program, spelling out why the funds are essential to the program and how they will be used to address impacts such as fire mitigation. Scott and Jerry will draft a letter and will distribute to the committee for comments.
 - *Motion to prepare letter to the JBC - Christian Meyer*
Seconded by Janelle Kukuk
Motion passed unanimously

Colorado the Beautiful grant, Great Western Trail – Fletcher Jacobs

Fletcher and Great Western Authority Chair Thomas Jones reported on this project. Grantee prepared their initial bid in 2019. A property owner disputed the ownership of a small segment (1.5 miles), saying he owned it. The GWTA and the Town of Windsor have been unsuccessful to date in mitigating the issue. They put the undisputed 5.5 miles of trail out to bid, and the project was completed in September 2020. At this point, the grantee is eligible to receive 79% of the grant funds, but they are asking for full reimbursement (\$250,000) to close the project, stating that the dispute and completion of the trail should be resolved by summer 2021.

- Committee discussion on available options. Concerns about funding the entire project when the approved scope of work is not complete, as well as the unknown of the outcome with the property owner. The committee does not want to discount the work that has been done but is not comfortable fully funding a partial project.
 - *Motion to recommend partial funding and extend the grant deadline to June 2022 – Scott Jones*
Seconded by Janelle Kukuk
Motion passed unanimously

Colorado Youth Corps Association OHV Projects RFP for the 2021 field season – Tom Metsa

Tom reported on the excess funds that are returned to the OHV program when grantees do not spend all of their awarded funds. The reasons are varied, from weather conditions to contracting and staff problems, or other annual anomalies such as this season's COVID issues. It is not uncommon for as much as \$500,000 to go unspent. Because of the uncertainty of the season with COVID issue and restrictions, staff decided to add an additional OHV grant program that could utilize an existing agreement between CPW and CYCA. Staff has suggested funding this CYCA OHV Project RFP at approximately \$250,000. Applications were received for 14 projects. They will be reviewed by regional wildlife staff and will be evaluated and ranked by a subcommittee.

- Committee members are in favor of the program and believe it is an excellent use of funds. Fletcher thanked USFS, BLM and CYCA personnel for their efforts putting this together. It also lines up with one of DNR's Wildly Important Goals (WIGs) – increasing hours of crews on the ground.

Non-Motorized 2021 Grant Application Update – Fletcher Jacobs

Fletcher reported that the pilot program of realigning the grant categories continued this year – Construction, Maintenance, Planning/Support, as well as LWCF as a separate application. The Trails Program is highlighting maintenance projects this year. There is a \$2.5M ask in construction, and \$2.3M for LWCF. The maintenance ask is \$2.7M, and Planning/Support is \$620K. Fletcher thanked STC members Jill Ozarski, Scott Jones and Wally Piccone for agreeing to chair the grant review subcommittees. Wildlife review summaries and public comment letters are due December 10, 2020. The first subcommittee review meetings begin on December 13th. We received 52 applications, including 4 for LWCF, for a total ask of over \$8M. Last year we received 26 applications, and the largest before this year was 42. There is \$1.9M available for funding for GOCO/RTP grants and \$2M+ for LWCF. Percentages will be adjusted to accommodate the desire to fund more maintenance.

- Committee discussion on the disparity between the ask and available funding. Fletcher stated that there are ongoing discussions with the mountain bike community on possible pay to play scenarios, and DNR is actively exploring an increase in funding for outdoor recreation. For the short-term, we won't have any additional funding this year.

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

Public Comment:

Sally Thoreson, Black Canyon Audubon Society – commented on multi-use trails and how she feels grantees should be held accountable for planning and maintenance on these trails for all types of users.

Craig Grother, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers – BHA submitted public comment letters for specific non-motorized grant applications. He also commented on planning projects that are focused on more and more trails, ignoring cumulative impacts on wildlife and habitat. Disappointed in CPW rollout (negligence) and is hoping that development of regional partnerships will lead to broader participation. The Trails Program should pause all new planning/support projects and focus solely on maintenance.

Round Table:

Janelle stated that it is imperative for the program to promote how much work we do (cutting down trees, avoiding habitat fragmentation, etc.). Mitigation happens with our efforts. Component of recreation is sustainability, and can't afford to do that without funding.

Jerry wanted to address the negligence comment from Mr. Grother, which opened a general discussion among members, including receiving information from CPW professionals (biologists, etc.), educating the public on what the committee actually does, landscape level projects and trails systems and how we don't have jurisdiction over federal lands. Also discussed was taking a leadership role and that legislation needs to be proposed. The population is exploding and recreational opportunities are taxed and overused. Fletcher will add this topic to the January agenda for further discussion.

New member Pam Denahy appreciates being part of the dialog.

Christian will work with Fletcher on the possibility of a working session.

Meeting Adjourned by Christian Meyer at 12:15 p.m.