

MINUTES
OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS BOARD
REGULAR SESSION
February 3, 2022
Zoom Video Conference

OSTB Present:

Graeme Means Dist. 1	Howie Mallory Dist. 2	Amy Barrow Dist. 3 Not Present	Michael Kinsley Dist. 4, Chair	Wayne Ives Dist. 5
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Staff Present: Gary Tennenbaum, Jessie Young, Liza Mitchell, Carly Klein Janet Urquhart, Paul Holsinger, Kim Arensdorf, Janet Urquhart, Ted O'Brien, Dale Will

Others Present: Linda Waag, Marty Schlumberger

Media Present: Scott Condon, The Aspen Times

Michael Kinsley called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Graeme Means moved for the OSTB to approve the 1/6/2022 OSTB Regular and Executive Draft Minutes and 1/26/2022 OSTB Site Visit Draft Minutes. Howie Mallory seconded. Motion passed (5-0).

Deer Creek Management Plan Update

Gary Tennenbaum stated that the 2016 purchase of Deer Creek Open Space fulfilled a number of elements in OST's mission, including protecting an important wildlife corridor and connectivity, recreational access, preserving the rural view plane, working agricultural lands and water rights. He explained that the OSTB adopted an interim management plan which accommodated an intergovernmental agreement with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), allowing the agency to restore an existing house on the parcel for use by the local CPW wildlife officer. Additionally, the CPW wildlife officer has been able to monitor the property, he said.

Tennenbaum stated that the newly drafted full management plan for Deer Creek OS incorporates data collected from an OST wildlife camera placed in Arbaney Gulch over the last 5 years. The quantity and diversity of species found in the gulch verifies Deer Creek OS as a key contributor to wildlife protection and habitat conservation.

Carly Klein explained the location and existing conditions of Deer Creek OS which is situated in Snowmass Canyon. The parcel spans from Williams Hill, a CPW property, across Highway 82, the Roaring Fork River and the Rio Grande Trail to the boundary of national forest lands at the mouth of Arbaney Gulch. She explained that public access through the Riparian Zone to the

Roaring Fork River is provided from the Rio Grande Trail. The Upland Zone, including the residential and pasture areas and access to Arbaney Gulch through the Open Space is closed to the public. There is Forest Service land access along the ridge above Arbaney Gulch, however the steep topography deters public access into the Gulch, she said.

Klein stated that the existing structures when purchased had been vacant for years and were uninhabitable. CPW, as a part of its lease agreement, invested in improving the infrastructure, replacing the septic for the main house, and restoring the structure. The structures on the property include a single-family home, a caretaker dwelling unit, and a small garage.

Liza Mitchell explained that the 5 year interim plan closure provided habitat monitoring which showed the importance of wildlife connectivity through the Upland Zone, between neighboring public lands and the Roaring Fork River. CPW agreed that this closure vastly benefits wildlife habitat, she explained.

Mitchell provided additional natural resources, agriculture and stewardship management action items:

- Evaluate further wildlife corridor enhancement opportunities to facilitate movement from Arbaney Gulch through the property to the river/riparian zone
- Evaluate riparian areas and aquatic resources to identify potential improvements and monitoring needs
- Pollinator habitat improvements
- Explore opportunities to improve pasture vegetation diversity and soil health
- Evaluate fencing on the property, amend as appropriate for rotational grazing that benefits land/soil health and to minimize impacts to wildlife movement.
- Explore opportunities for carbon sequestration
- Manage ponds for the benefit of wildlife while also supporting agricultural activities and upkeep of property infrastructure
- Noxious weed mitigation
- Provide necessary maintenance of all open space signage in and around the property

Klein explained that staff proposes to redefine the residential lease boundaries and long-term agricultural lease area, and renew leases with CPW. Additionally, evaluate the second residential caretaker unit potential for additional housing, which is currently uninhabitable. Ted O'Brian explained that the structure is in good condition so it would just be a remodel project. Kinsley asked about potential occupants of the second residential housing. Klein clarified that the Plan intends to utilize all of the housing for land stewards.

Klein provided the management plan's updated recreation action items:

- Formalize an access route for anglers from the Rio Grande Trail to the Roaring Fork River
- Monitor recreation activity on adjacent protected lands

Mallory asked about wildlife underpass areas around the Deer Creek OS corridor. Mitchell explained that observations show that wildlife travels through the William Hills property through the river over to Deer Creek OS. Paul Holsinger noted that there is a large underpass by Phillips

Curve river access. Kinsley requested additional monitoring and opportunities of wildlife connectivity between Highway 82 crossings and Deer Creek. Mitchell explained that the Watershed Biodiversity Initiative (WBI) study determined that the Deer Creek OS is an important conservation area due to ecological pinch points, winter range, ungulate movement corridor, and anthropogenic pinch points. Tennenbaum noted that an action item can be added for staff to work with land management partners to analyze at the bigger picture of wildlife connectivity.

Mallory asked about potential development in adjacent properties to Deer Creek OS. Mitchell explained that the Forest Service expressed their desire to keep the wildlife corridor connecting to public lands protected and closed. Holsinger stated that staff is working with the owners of an adjacent parcel to create a conservation easement on the field north west of Deer Creek OS, and acquire a river access easement.

Ives asked for clarification on the 20 ft. wide access easement across the northern property line. Klein explained that the easement provides access for the adjacent property owner for agricultural purposes, however the Attorney's office will be evaluating whether the easement still stands.

Means asked if there is a future potential to eliminate horses and re-wilding agriculture areas in order to further increase wildlife connectivity. Tennenbaum explained that the management plan will be reviewed every 5-8 years and there is potential to discuss potential rewilding in the future.

Marty Schlumberger, adjacent property owner, commended the Plan specifically for the housing and wildlife corridor protection action items. Schlumberger stated that the water rights need to be addressed as there is concern over the current use of the water rights. Additionally, he recommended that a ditch company be incorporated to manage the water rights. Holsinger stated that staff has worked with Last Chance Ditch and Eli Cerise Ditch administrators, and proposed to exercise the water rights to their fullest potential. Stumberger stated that there are liability issues with the water rights as they currently stand. Tennenbaum stated that staff will continue to work on the management plan and work with the Attorney's office to look into any additional water rights improvements.

Linda Waag commended OST's efforts at Deer Creek Open Space.

The OSTB recommended to release the Deer Creek Draft Management Plan for public comment.

Jessie Young stated that the management plan will go out for public comment on March 7.

Linda Waag and Marty Schlumberger left at 10:45 a.m.

Open Space and Trails Board Retreat Summary

Tennenbaum stated that the goal of the Board Retreat was to create a collaboration between multi-jurisdictional agencies to review recreation management. He noted that the conversation first needs to look at recreation issues specifically in Pitkin County.

Mallory commented that OST can take experiences with recreation management issues, such as North Star Parking and Prince Creek, in order to help with collaborative efforts.

Means recommended defining limits to carrying capacity before making specific changes. Tennenbaum noted that staff is proposing to explore data and the social conditions/impacts in Phase 1 of the retreat summary. Kinsley asked what key indicators are needed to identify ecological thresholds of carrying capacity. Mitchell explained that first desired conditions need to be identified, then carrying capacity can be determined with the community of resource managers. Tennenbaum stated that the federal system looks at the limits of acceptable change which determines the carrying capacity piece.

Tennenbaum stated that staff will add carrying capacity and identifying key indicators comments to the retreat summary. He noted that staff will share the document and suggested phases with the agency partners, and the BOCC will be able to review the document in a work session.

Castle Creek Master Plan Update

Jessie Young provided the plan changes reflecting board comments at the January 6 OSTB meeting:

- Working to connect gaps between existing easements within the valley that could be connected in the future.
- The Ashcroft Ski Touring Area should be acknowledged in the Open Space/Trails/Recreation/Tourism section.
- The growth of e-bike use on county roads, a trend that has greatly increased since the plan was last adopted.
- Under the list of existing plans that should be considered, the forthcoming Watershed Biodiversity Initiative study could be added.
- OST would ensure that water impoundments such as ponds that are created through natural ecological processes and wildlife behaviors such as beaver activity are not at risk due to the prohibition proposed in this section.
- Discouraging the use of harmful chemicals in lawn/landscape maintenance in addition to the other applications listed.
- ATVs snowmobiles and other motorized uses be added to the multi-jurisdictional effort to address recreational use within the Castle Creek Valley.
- Non-residential Development and Special Events – The OSTB supports the Caucus' desire to limit commercial use within the planning area to what is existing.

Young explained that the next step for the draft plan is to be reviewed by Planning and Zoning.

The OSTB supported the proposed changes to the Castle Creek Master Plan update.

Land Use Referral – 2 Mile Ranch

Holsinger explained that after purchasing what is now called 2 Mile Ranch, the landowner reinitiated the process of affirming the properties entitlements (vested rights) and received feedback from the Pitkin County BOCC to make a more significant offer of conserved land and to work with the OST department. Holsinger noted that the western irrigated meadow, additional areas along the south edge of Woody Creek, and wildlife habitat adjacent to federally protected land conservation easements are offered to protect significant conservation values. OST staff support Pitkin County accepting conservation easements on the four parcels and will work with the applicant to ensure the conservation values are preserved, he said.

Mallory asked what wildlife protection would be included in the pasture area of the parcel. Holsinger explained that building envelopes are already established in that area. He noted that staff has worked to conserve all areas that are not already vested.

Board action below.

BOARD AND STAFF COMMENTS

Tennenbaum noted that staff submitted the updated Board site visit comments for the Highland Bavarian Lodge and Ranch Land Use Referral. Dale Will commented that the barn location concerns were discussed with Community Development and reviewed with P&Z. A decision is pending P&Z's site visit, he said. Holsinger stated the staff will be present for the BOCC review on March 9. The OSTB agreed that the suggested barn location issue should be readdressed.

Tennenbaum reminded the Board of the joint meeting with the City of Aspen on February 24. The AABC to Brush Creek Park and Ride trail feasibility will be the main discussion, however all potential multi-jurisdictional trails and ebikes will be discussed as well, he said.

Ives noted that the Forest Service is holding a public meeting regarding the Redstone to McClure trail.

BOARD ACTION

Land Use Referral – 2 Mile Ranch

Graeme Means motioned for the Open Space and Trails Board to accept staff recommendation for the 2 Mile Ranch Land Use Referral. Wayne Ives seconded. Motion Passed (4-0).

Second recording from exec

Wayne Ives motioned to recommend the Board of County Commissioners approve expenditure of \$57,500 for the acquisition of the Vaughn property. Graeme Means seconded. Motion Passed (5-0).

ADJOURN

The OSTB meeting of February 3, 2022 adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Approved:

Michael Kinsley

Michael Kinsley, Chair
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails Board

Attest:

Kim Arensdorf

Kimberly Arensdorf
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails
Administrative Specialist

2022.02.03 OSTB Regular Minutes_Aproved

Final Audit Report

2022-03-14

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