

**MINUTES
OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS BOARD
REGULAR SESSION
March 6, 2024
530 East Main St. Aspen, CO 81611
Zoom Video Conference**

OSTB Present:

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

Others Present: Stephane De Baets, Glen Horn

Graeme Means called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Michael Kinsley motioned for the OSTB to approve the 02/01/2024 OSTB Regular and Executive Session Draft Minutes. Wayne Ives seconded. Motion passed (4-0).

Filoha Meadows Management Plan Final Adoption

Carly O'Connell explained that on January 4, 2024, the OSTB reviewed and approved the Filoha Meadows draft management plan to release for public comment. She noted that the public survey was conducted in both Spanish and English. Public outreach included advertisements that were placed on various platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, two posts were made in the monthly OST newsletter, and advertisements were published in both the Sopris Sun and the Crystal Echo newspapers.

O'Connell noted that during the public comment period, a total of 51 unique clicks from the two newsletter posts were recorded, while 111 clicks were recorded from the social media posts, which reached about 9,800 people. The survey received 20 responses, with more than 80% of the respondents supporting or strongly supporting the management actions drafted for the Nature Preserve, and about 60% supporting or strongly supporting the management actions drafted for the Administrative Unit.

O'Connell provided updates to the draft management plan since releasing it for public comment:

- The management actions have been translated and provided in Spanish
- Additional supporting graphics have been created. These graphics will be used to support educational programming at Filoha Meadows
- Additional information on the bighorn sheep herd is provided

- Public feedback on the draft plan has been summarized
- Minor text edits for clarity have been made to the management actions based on feedback from partners and ecological consultants

O'Connell noted that today's meeting is to add any additional comments from the Board and to recommend adoption of the Management Plan.

Michael Kinsley asked about public engagement with the management plans, specifically with the history of the property. Liza Mitchell explained that the management plans all include existing conditions which help document current conditions, as well as the long and short term history of the properties. All our ecological consultants and other partners such as Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Forest Service review the plans to provide accurate information and different expertise, she said. O'Connell added that the management plan process is being reviewed to determine ways to engage the public and get the information out.

Board action below.

Land Use Referral – Redstone Castle

Paul Holsinger explained that the Redstone Castle owners have submitted an application to develop the property into a wellness center with additional guest accommodations and employee housing. The owners are also proposing to encumber all the land, on all three parcels, above an elevation of 7,400' with a conservation easement.

Holsinger stated that OST staff were referred the application with time to request three priority assets for the public as has been requested in the past from the OSTB on the prior Redstone Castle owner's applications. The requests and comments include:

- Winter Recreational Trail Access to the Redstone Pillar (November 15-April 15)
 - The landowner was fine with a new easement but wanted to be contacted or have the climbers "register" prior to climbing
 - Planning and Zoning (P&Z) supported ice climbing access and included it as a condition of approval in their resolution
- Public Access Recreational Trail Easement
 - The landowner said a trail easement along Lover's Lane would not work for their business and that privacy is extremely important to their operation
 - P&Z did not include the trail access as a condition of approval in their resolution.
- Conservation Easement: The offering of encumbering all land above 7,400' with a conservation easement is supported by the OSTB. There is additional land that could be included without affecting the development plan, this includes all the land not included in the historic easement of Parcel A and Parcel B. The addition of the land south of the Redstone Castle will result in continuous protection from the Crystal River to the USFS land to the west.
 - P&Z agreed to advance the resolution to the BOCC with a recommendation to study the area and allow for continued negotiations between OST and the owner

Glen Horn, the applicant's representative, commented that the Redstone Castle proposed use includes the following:

- Wellness and longevity resort
- Retreat for guest staying on-site
- No day use of wellness
- Rakza to be operator

Horn explained that the Redstone Castle land use plan includes:

- Castle and carriage house – wellness treatment
- 4 guest cabins and cottages
- 16 two-bedroom employee units
 - Amending the land use code to accommodate affordable housing in rural areas.
- A greenhouse
- Historic tours
- 88-acre wildlife conservation easement
- 21-acre historic conservation easement

Horn noted that the proposed use of the property advantages include; quiet use, less traffic, financially feasible, and not dependent on weekly special events.

Stephane De Baets, Redstone Castle owner and applicant, commented that the proposed use of the Castle would be non-invasive as a high-end targeted tourism and wellness destination. He noted that the max occupancy is 40 people, with it typically serving 20-30 people.

De Baets stated that the access to Lovers Lane does not fit with the proposed use of the property due to safety and privacy issues. He recommended a viewing area of the property on the other side of the Crystal River along the proposed Redstone to McClure Trail.

Holsinger clarified that the OSTB needs to provide comment on Lovers Lane access and the conservation easement designations.

Michael Kinsley asked if the topography along Lovers Lane provides privacy screening for the Redstone Castle cottages. De Baets stated that there are privacy and security concerns with allowing viewing of the Castle along Lovers Lane. De Baets noted that he was not opposed to allowing public access for specific events once or twice a year.

Amy Barrow commented that Lovers Lane would provide better viewing access than a potential trail on the other side of the river. Wayne Ives disagreed due to privacy concerns and stated that a potential viewing overlook on the Redstone to McClure Trail would work; Kinsley agreed. Graeme Means commented that Lovers Lane access would provide a good community asset. The OSTB was split 2-2 for including the trail easement along Lovers Lane, therefore it would not be included in the referral comments.

De Baets noted concern with including the additional conservation easement section being that they would be giving up developable land. Means commented that the section being asked to include in the conservation easement is an important wildlife corridor, providing access to the river through Powerhouse Conservation Easement.

Board action below

BOARD AND STAFF COMMENTS

Kinsley referenced the recent article in The Snowmass Sun “Snowmass Town Council backs Pitkin County in transferring Snowmass Falls Ranch to USFS”. He noted concern with the accuracy of Dale Will’s quote “We’re essentially giving the Forest Service right of first refusal if they want it”, stating that the OSTB has not made a decision on that. Tennenbaum clarified that it is not a first right of approval, the Forest Service needs to determine what they want to acquire and offer to the County which the OSTB will then discuss.

BOARD ACTION

Filoha Meadows Management Plan Final Adoption

Graeme Means motioned to adopt the Filoha Meadows Management Plan. Wayne Ives seconded. Motion passed (4-0).

Land Use Referral – Redstone Castle

Graeme Means motioned to recommend that the Board of County Commissioners accept the Recreational Trail Access to the ice climbing area, the Conservation Easement encumbering all land above 7,400 ft., and to include a connection of the Conservation Easement with Powerhouse Conservation Easement for wildlife purposes. Wayne Ives seconded. Motion passed (4-0)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Amy Barrow motioned for the Open Space and Trails Board to enter into executive session with the Board of County Commissioners in accordance with Property Interest Acquisitions CRS 246402(4)(a); Negotiations CRS 246402 (4)(e); and Legal Advice CRS 246402 (4)(b) for the purpose of providing instruction to negotiators and discussing property interest acquisition at 10:20 a.m. Wayne Ives seconded. Motion passed (4-0).

JOINT OSTB – BOCC WORK SESSION

Commissioners Meeting Room; 530 E. Main St., Aspen

OSTB Trustees Present: Graeme Means, Chair, Michael Kinsley, Amy Barrow, Wayne Ives

BOCC Present: Greg Poschman (Chair), Patti Clapper, Gr Francie Jacober, Kelly McNicholas Kury, Steve Child

Staff Present: Gary Tennenbaum, Kim Arensdorf, Paul Holsinger, Drew Walters, Liza Mitchell, Jessie Young, Carly O’Connell, Dale Will, Janet Urquhart, Richard Neiley, John Peacock, Rich Englehart

City of Aspen Staff Present: Matt Kuhn, John Spiess

Others Present: Julia Kintsch, Cecily DeAngelo, Kathleen Wanatowicz

Greg Poschman called the joint work session to order at 12:00 p.m.

The entire joint work session meeting video is available from this link by selecting the meeting date: <https://pitkincounty.ompnetwork.org/embed/sessions/286568>

Roaring Fork Safe Passages (RFSP)

Tennenbaum explained that OST has funding over \$200k for the Watershed Biodiversity Initiative (WBI). The study found that there are some wildlife connectivity issues, specifically along Highway 82. Tennenbaum stated that staff has prepared a budget supplemental request to assist RFSP with funding for their study.

Cecily DeAngelo, RFSP Director, explained that this project requires partner participation with Pitkin County, City of Aspen, CPW, CDOT and private stakeholders. RFSP has worked with WBI to determine how to reduce wildlife conflicts. From 2012-2021 in the Roaring Fork Valley wildlife-vehicle collisions were the leading cause of crashes reported to law enforcement, accounting for 30% of all crashes. The estimated cost of these collisions is \$5.2m each year. Additionally, as many as 2-3 more collisions with wildlife are never recorded. The estimated cost of these collisions is \$5.2 million each year.

Julia Kintsch provided details on RFSP accomplishments thus far including:

- Fiscally Sponsored by the Watershed Biodiversity Initiative
- \$30k Spent so far on a Prioritization Study (and small startup costs)
- Two-time recipient of the Ski Co Environment Foundation Grant
- Awarded Thrift Shop Grant
- Large newsletter and social media following
- 2025 Grant Applications - Giving Network, New Lands Foundation, Healthy Community Fund, Ski Co Environment Foundation & the Thrift Shop Grant.

Kintsch stated that local advocacy and funding are important in order to have successful wildlife crossings. Additionally, when a local community initiates at an early stage, State and Federal funds becomes more accessible.

Kintsch provided the prioritization study goals:

- Conduct a systematic analysis to identify the highest priority highway segments for mitigation investments that:
 - Reduce wildlife-vehicle conflict and improve permeability across highways
- Engage key partners and stakeholders

Kintsch noted that RFSP is focusing on high priority areas along Highway 82. She stated that potential mitigation strategies include wildlife crossing structure and diversion fencing. Additionally, wildlife crossing priorities can coordinate with land protection efforts.

Kintsch stated that the Airport to Woody Creek area along Highway 82 is considered a high priority area due to the conflicts in this segment. Approximately 5.2 wildlife-vehicle collisions are reported per mile, per year. However, the actual number of collisions may be ~10-20 per mile, per years, she said.

Kintsch explained that RFSP is looking into connecting with existing wildlife infrastructure including wildlife fencing north of the airport, and box culvert at milepost 36.2. Mitigation planning next steps include:

- State 1: Mitigation Strategy Development (April – Dec. 2024)
 - Site assessment, partner and stakeholder engagement, evaluation of mitigation alternatives
 - Outcome: Milepost-specific mitigation strategy and recommendations
 - Wildlife crossings and fencings
 - Other mitigation strategies
- Stage 2: Mitigation Concept Development (September – December 2024)
 - Drone photogrammetry, high precision 3D terrain modeling and renderings
 - Outcome: Site-specific, accurate models and visualizations of proposed mitigation features at key locations.
 - Resulting 3D models feed directly into future engineering design work
- Stage 3: Outreach and Communication Materials (Winter 2024/2025)
 - May include video, brochure, and ArcGIS online StoryMap
 - Outcome: Targeted outreach materials for engaging with stakeholders, the public and potential funders

Kintsch provided the Airport to Woody Creek mitigation planning budget which totals \$110,704. The mitigation planning and implementation steps include:

1. Wildlife mitigation prioritization study
2. Develop and evaluate mitigation alternatives
3. Partner stakeholder and public engagement
4. Mitigation plan development
5. Engineering: design development (30%)
6. Engineering final design (95%)
7. Pursue funding
8. Complete design and construction

DeAngelo explained that RFSP is working on grants and has already acquired local and private funding. She noted that in 2022-2023 RFSP raised \$130k and \$25k in 2024.

Tennenbaum stated that this \$26k budget supplemental is for the first phases of the project. Staff will come back to the Boards with updates and any additional funding asks in the future, he said.

Michael Kinsley asked about the structure of management for the RFSP program. Kintsch explained that she is a consultant for RFSP. DeAngelo stated that to-date her position as Director has been volunteer, however it will be moving to a paid position. Other members of the community including Tom Cardamone with WBI are involved in the program, she said.

Means noted that the OST was a large contributor of the WBI study and are very committed to this project. He emphasized the importance of getting funding partners.

Francie Jacober asked about CDOT's participation for this project. Kintsch explained that CDOT has been a part of the process thus far. Local support and having a feasibility study for this project helps facilitate government agency engagement. There are other state agency funding sources and grants that RFSP are looking into, she said.

Board action below.

Brush Creek Park and Ride to Aspen Airport Business Center Trail (BCPR to AABC)

Tennenbaum explained that today's meeting is to review community engagement and data analysis study, discuss next steps of further study points and staff recommendations for the BCPR to AABC Trail. The overview of the project is to connect the BCPR and AABC through a trail. Taking into consideration environmental impacts, engineering feasibility, costs and user experience, the results from the feasibility analysis recommended a twin bridge alignment, Tennenbaum said.

Kathleen Wanatowicz commented that through community engagement and analysis it was determined that this trail would provide desired community connections. The public commented that the AABC bridge location needs to be closer to the AABC. Additionally, to look at year-round opportunities, specifically Nordic use. Tennenbaum stated that through the county wide survey the majority of the public determined that this connection is considered important.

Wanatowicz stated that over the entire engagement process there was large-scale support for this project. Greater than 70% of survey participants supported the Twin Bridges Alignment as the preferred option. She noted that some concerns reflected in the engagement process included costs, environment and use. The four-month focused engagement process created a project interest group and public outreach which included:

- Small group presentations
- Pop-up outreach
- Neighborhood meetings
- Local media coverage
- Direct advertising
- Community survey
- Newsletters and social media

Wanatowicz noted that provided community engagement themes:

- Safety
- Connection
- Improved commuting and multi-mobility options
- Environment: location, reduction in greenhouse gases
- Proactive leadership
- Recreational opportunities

Tennenbaum explained that the public commented that the current trail structure does not have accessibility for everyone. He stated that within the one-mile travelshed of the new trail alignment 1,800 people would be able to access the trail within a one-mile walk. Approximately 3,200 people would be able to access the trail within a two-mile bike ride. Lastly, approximately 12,500 people could access within five miles of the proposed trail.

Tennenbaum provided the cost benefit analysis with comparable bridge projects and what has been done recently by OST to connect communities, examples include:

- 2002 Tiehack Bridge: ~ \$2.4m
- 2017 Lazy Glen: ~\$770,000
- 2023 Maroon Creek, Trail: ~\$7.9m
- 2024 Aspen Village Bridge: budgeted cost ~\$1.5m
- 2025 Twin Bridge Investment: estimated cost \$25m

Tennenbaum stated that staff, and the County/City Open Space and Trails Boards recommend to proceed with contracting for design and engineering for Brush Creek Bridge. Additionally, evaluate if alternative locations are viable for the AABC Bridge.

Amy Barrow commented that this trail connection provides a safer and more accessible means to connect communities such as Snowmass Village and the AABC. She noted that the OSTB and City of Aspen are in support of moving this project forward.

Means stated that the Rio Grande Trail is missing important links to communities in the upper valley and this trail connection would provide a very important link.

Steve Child stated that there are already alternative trails that can be used for recreational use. He suggested that buses provide bike racks as a commuting option for bikers.

Patty Clapper noted concern for environmental impacts with a bridge going over the Roaring Fork Gorge and the high cost of the project.

Kelly McNicholas Kury stated that the BOCC would be remiss to not move forward with this connection as construction costs will most likely go up in the future. Additionally, she noted that it would be negligent to ignore the public outreach results that the BOCC asked for.

The BOCC requested more time to review the project and continue the conversation. Tennenbaum urged the board to make their next meeting on the project a public hearing so supporters and opponents can weigh in. That would be consistent with policy on open space's proposed projects, he said. The BOCC agreed to welcome public comment at a meeting on a date to be determined.

BOARD ACTION

Roaring Fork Safe Passages

Wayne Ives motioned to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners to approve the Roaring Fork Safe Passages budget supplemental. Michael Kinsley seconded. Motion passed (4-0).

ADJOURN

The OSTB and Joint OSTB-BOCC meetings of March 6, 2024 adjourned at 2:12 p.m.

Approved:



Graeme Means, Chair
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails Board

Attest:



Kimberly Arensdorf
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails
Administrative Specialist

