

**MINUTES
OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS BOARD
REGULAR SESSION
May 16, 2024
530 East Main Street
Aspen, CO 81611**

OSTB Present:

Graeme Means Dist. 1	Howie Mallory Dist. 2, Chair	Amy Barrow Dist. 3, Vice- Chair	Michael Kinsley Dist. 4	Wayne Ives Dist. 5
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Staff Present: Gary Tennenbaum, Kim Arensdorf, Jessie Young, Carly O'Connell, Liza Mitchell, Ted O'Brien, Paul Holsinger, Drew Walters, Janet Urquhart

Others Present: Jessica Bruck, Chris Monz, Noah Creany, Toni Kronberg

Amy Barrow called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Toni Kronberg thanked OST for the work on Maroon Creek Trail. Kronberg stated that she is running for a Pitkin County Board of County Commissioners seat. She noted that her main objectives are to improve safety and efficiency of Highway 82. Graeme Means clarified that the City of Aspen manages the Maroon Creek Trail, however Pitkin County is providing funding support.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Graeme Means motioned for the OSTB to approve the 04/04/2024 OSTB Regular and Executive Session Draft Minutes. Wayne Ives seconded. Motion passed (5-0).

Roaring Fork Outdoor Coalition (RFOC) Visitor Use and Experience Report

Gary Tennenbaum explained that the RFOC stemmed from the OSTB Retreat discussion in 2021 to address population and tourism growth in the Roaring Fork Valley, and the resulting increased pressure on outdoor spaces and recreational facilities. The RFOC is analyzing capacity and overcrowding to determine how agencies and partners can work together on recreation/land management and biodiversity. The RFOC has created project priorities that can be accomplished in the short and long-term, he said.

Chris Monz explained that the study overview provides a conceptual model, survey areas, and site types. The conceptual model describes visitor use and spatial behavior based on the following:

- Visit characteristics: Activity type, length of visit, technology used, and previous visits
- Visitor characteristic: Group size, demographics, motivations, and place attachment
- Setting characteristics: Info/updates and transportation

Monz stated that the characteristics are then evaluated based on resource conditions and perceptions of conflict/crowding.

Noah Creany provided the organizational framework which categorizes study sites according to their setting characteristics and recreation opportunities along a continuum of site development ranging from primitive to developed. This approach was modeled after the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum; a planning and zoning framework developed for the United States Forest Service (USFS) that encourages a diversity of recreation opportunities by linking setting characteristics with desired recreation experiences.

Creany explained that the survey areas consisted of visitor intercept survey at 14 sites in July of 2022 and 2023. The survey collected hourly counts of visitors and vehicle/parking. He noted that there was a 94% response rate among trail users.

Jessica Bruck provided results from Capitol Creek Trail (primitive) and the Ute Trail (urban proximate). The data compared use, demographics, activity type and transportation differences:

- Capitol Creek Trail
 - Users are highly motivated by risk/adventure and nature/tranquility
 - Vehicle use exceeds trail use throughout day
 - 58% of users are returning visitors
 - 60% of users are not primary residents
 - Visitors infrequently report experiencing conflict or unsafe conditions
 - Visitors frequently indicate engaging in behaviors to avoid crowds
- Ute Trail
 - Users highly motivated by socialization and exercise/fitness
 - Trail users highest in midmorning, vehicle use steady throughout day
 - 87% of visitors are returning users
 - 45% of users are primary residents; 55% of users are not primary residents
 - Visitors infrequently report experiencing conflict or unsafe conditions
 - Visitors infrequently alter the time or day of their visit to avoid crowds

Creany provided the motivation constructs that were measured in the survey that helps identify trends. The six motivation constructs that come from analysis include:

- Spiritual/introspection
- Family/Friends
- Nature/Tranquility
- Exercise/fitness
- Socialization
- Risk/Adventure

Creany explained the following summary of motivations by site type suggests different benefit outcomes for each location:

- Primitive Sites: risk/adventure and nature/tranquility
- Semi-Primitive sites: nature/tranquility and spiritual/introspection
- Concentrated Sites: socialization and exercise/fitness
- Urban Proximate and Developed Sites: family/friends, exercise/fitness, and socialization

Jessica Bruck stated that the crowding assessments specifically at Ute Trail (urban proximate) depicted positive evaluations including signage and facilities, however negative evaluations noted parking issues. Snowmass Lake (primitive) positive evaluations include signage, parking and facilities. Visitors reported a low level of perceived crowding across all site types; however, slightly higher levels of crowding were reported at urban proximate and developed sites. This indicates that, from a visitors' perspective, crowding may be more of an issue at the sites in close proximity to communities.

Bruck explained that visitors to more remote sites reported engaging in coping behaviors that shift the location, time and season of their recreation activity to avoid crowds, indicating a heightened sensitivity to crowding in these locations compared to urban proximate and developed sites. This suggests that visitors at more developed recreation areas may be less sensitive to crowding. Visitors to primitive, semi primitive, and concentrated sites indicate avoiding areas with reservations and areas where parking is difficult slightly more than visitors at urban proximate and developed sites.

Creany commented that there is variation in the spatial patterns of use shown from visitors across all sites, particularly the attributes of length of visit and overall distance travelled. Visitors to semi-primitive sites demonstrate the highest total time and distance traveled, followed by primitive sites.. Whereas concentrated, urban proximate, and developed sites exhibiting the least.

Monz provided the study's key takeaways:

- Understanding visitation at the site level informs managing recreation at the landscape level
- Evaluations of crowding are more closely related to site facilities rather than negative interactions with other visitors
- Reported conflict is not prevalent across sites or at any one particular site
- A substantial number of visitors report some coping behaviors which is a common response

Monz explained that the future work will include mobile device strategies to analyze large scale recreation use monitoring, including assessment at approx. 50 sites and multi-seasons.

Means commented that the study seems human centric, he asked how we balance the recreation with wildlife and environment attributes. Carly O'Connell explained that data is being collected separately from the Visitor Use Study and the Watershed Biodiversity Initiative (WBI) Study and will be reviewed together by the RFOC in order to come up with recreation and biodiversity management strategies. Monz explained that visitor use aspects determine the impacts to wildlife, habitat and biodiversity. There is an opportunity to examine the issues and move forward with sustainable management strategies, he said. Tennenbaum added that the goal is to come up with priority projects and manage the land utilizing the WBI data. Monz noted that all of the survey work and questions are based on federal agency requirements and then reviewed by Utah State University Recreation Lab.

Wayne Ives asked if staff was surprised that crowding was not listed as a higher issue with recreation. O'Connell explained that within the RFOC's listening sessions and the symposium the community overall commented on increasing visitation pressure. However, the report shows that when users are on the trail and having a good experience, they are not reporting crowding issues. Monz stated that visitors now accept certain levels of visitor use that perhaps they didn't accept 30 years ago. Amy Barrow asked if it is possible that users with crowding issues may have already started altering their habits and therefore are not being captured by the study during the peak use times. Tennenbaum noted that those concerns are being captured by the partners who are involved in the RFOC. Monz stated that the current study specifically looks at trailhead arrivals, visitors and different uses at the 14 locations. To continue with the study this coming summer the Streetlight Mobile data will be used as a monitoring strategy as we move forward, he said.

Howie Mallory asked for additional information regarding capacity issues as it relates to biodiversity within the study. Monz explained that the spatial use and density data can be used as a layer in the biodiversity and wildlife review of specific sites. Monz stated that capacity wasn't specifically listed in this study, however the key indicators within the study that define a recreation experience and determining thresholds can be integrated into a capacity process.

Jessica Bruck, Chris Monz and Noah Creany left at 10:45 a.m.

Coke Ovens Seasonal Worker Housing

Drew Walters explained that OST received a proposal for seasonal farm worker housing that was submitted by Pair A Dice Outfitters. The proposal was reviewed by OST staff for compliance with the OST policy and the Redstone Parks and Open Space Management Plan. Staff has also communicated with Pitkin County Community Development regarding the compliance of this proposed land use within the context of the Pitkin County Land Use Code and will work with the Lessee to submit a Seasonal Farm Worker Housing Permit for their review. Walters stated that OST staff recommends the Coke Ovens Lease Seasonal Farm Worker Housing proposal by Pair A Dice Outfitters to be approved by the OSTB.

The OSTB provided support to approve the proposal.

Board action below.

BOARD AND STAFF COMMENTS

Means commended the Snowmass Caucus's effort for darker skies advocacy and recommended OST's full support. O'Connell explained that Community Development is updating the County lighting code, which will cover all OST property types.

Barrow applauded the Maroon Creek Trail work connecting the bridge to the Aspen Recreation Center.

Barrow commented that with the Pitkin Outside mobile app no longer being offered, a great alternative is the COTREX app.

BOARD ACTION

Coke Ovens Seasonal Worker Housing

Michael Kinsley motioned to accept the proposal for Coke Ovens Seasonal Farm Worker Housing submitted by Pair A Dice Outfitters. Wayne Ives second. Motion passed (5-0).

Outstanding Waters Letter of Support

Wayne Ives motioned to authorize the Open Space and Trails Board to sign the Outstanding Waters Letter of Support. Graeme Means seconded. Motion passed (5-0).

Yank Creek Ranch Conservation Easement

Michael Kinsley motioned to recommend the Board of County Commissioners accept the Yank Creek Ranch LLC Conservation Easement donation. Wayne Ives seconded. Motion passed (4-0)

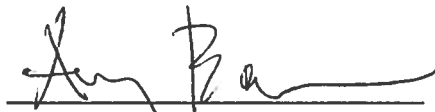
Dexter Load Mining Claim Donation

Michael Kinsley motioned to recommend the Board of County Commissioners accept the Dexter Load Mining Claim donation. Graeme Means seconded. Motion passed (4-0).

ADJOURN

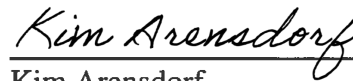
The OSTB meeting of May 16, 2024 adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Approved:



Amy Barrow, Vice Chair
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails Board

Attest:



Kim Arensdorf
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails
Administrative Specialist