

MINUTES
OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS BOARD
REGULAR SESSION
October 3, 2024
530 East Main Street
Aspen, CO 81611

OSTB Present:

Graeme Means Dist. 1	Howie Mallory Dist. 2, Chair	Amy Barrow Dist. 3	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, Paul Holsinger, Drew Walters, Ted O'Brien, Dale Will, Jeff Werner, Ryan Quinn, Rich Englehart, Richard Neiley

Others Present: Jeff Bier, Regan Mertz, Chris Petersen

Howie Mallory called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jeff Bier, President Redstone Historical Society, requested that OST help with funding to convert the cottage next to the Redstone Inn into a museum for public use. We are working with Suzanna Reid to list the property on the national register for historical preservation, he said. The Redstone Historical Society is working to acquire \$450k in funding to augment a grant. Howie Mallory suggested that staff acquire additional details. Gary Tennenbaum stated that staff will look into it.

Amy Barrow and Michael Kinsley entered at 9:10 a.m.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Wayne Ives motioned for the OSTB to approve the 09/03/2024 OSTB & BOCC Regular and Executive Session Draft Minutes. Graeme Means seconded. Motion passed (5-0).

Open Space and Trails 2025 Budget

Gary Tennenbaum stated that the purpose for today's meeting is for the OSTB to set priorities for the 2025 budget and make a recommendation to the BOCC. He provided the property chart showing the growth of the program, noting a large increase in 2024 due to the purchase of Snowmass Falls Ranch. As the OST portfolio increases so does the need for stewardship, therefore additional staffing is being requested, he said. The positions being requested are a full-time ranger and seasonal maintenance technician. Tennenbaum noted that staff is planning housing renovation projects that can aid in the growing need to house OST agricultural lessees, as well as provide long-term housing solutions for full-time and seasonal OST staff members. Michael Kinsley asked about OST housing retention and maintenance costs. Tennenbaum explained that the program reserves the right to sell any housing properties. There are costs for

ongoing house maintenance, however rent collected from the tenants helps with those costs, he said.

Ryan Quinn stated that the rangers have faced increasingly high visitation levels throughout our system. There has been a 20% increase in medical incidents compared to 2022 and 36% higher enforcement contacts compared to pre-pandemic (2019). Increased Ranger staffing needs at North Star Nature Preserve (NSNP), as well as coverage for remote properties stretch Rangers out in the system and create gaps. This causes scheduling and coverage issues which affects the Rangers ability to take time off, he said.

Quinn explained that a new full-time position provides the best opportunity for OST to dramatically increase retention of employee knowledge from year-to-year and reduce training costs over time. Additionally, having more Lead rangers allows for increased schedule flexibility and coverage.

Howie Mallory asked what the cost is for a full-time ranger. Quinn stated that the salary ranges from \$51k to \$89k plus benefits.

Liza Mitchell stated that the agriculture and natural resource divisions are requesting a new shared seasonal position that will focus on the intersection of working lands and natural habitats. This position will support OST in responsibly caring for the land by assisting in agricultural property maintenance and improvement projects. Additionally, they will help improve ecological and habitat value of working lands and adjacent interfaces (weed control and pollinator/wildlife habitat improvements).

Mitchell stated that it is the intention of this position to help steward portions of land that are under active agricultural use and portions that are not and are outside lease area boundaries.

Mitchell explained that OST has acquired and/or planned several large properties that require more staff involvement due to the size and mixed agriculture/natural habitat layout of the properties including; Snowmass Falls, Coke Ovens, TD Ranch Preserve, Glassier Open Space, Thompson Creek Open Space, Deer Creek Open Space, and Lazy Glen.

Mitchell noted that policy changes (Stewardship Policy #14) classified all our properties into management categories. Now several OST properties are listed as Working Lands, and allows for more active management to steward and activate production, but this will inevitably require more staff time.

Mitchell stated that the work plan shows specific examples of where this position would get plugged in to projects as soon as next year. Also, there are action items already identified in several plans that this position can help accomplish indefinitely into the future. Maintaining the integrity of the land, especially working lands, is an ongoing effort.

Drew Walters commented that there are large agriculture projects in the work plan that a shared position can help with and provide staff flexibility, including:

- Glassier irrigation improvements

- Weed treatments and reseeded
- Coke Ovens Open Space
 - Restoration on disturbed land
- Wapiti Meadows
 - A new water/irrigation system is needed to work within the water rights

Kinsley commented that deferred maintenance and human impact on the land creates a demand for practical management.

Carly O'Connell stated that the 2025 NSNP Management Plan update will require more efforts due to the adjacent land owners and the commercial aspect. She explained that OST will pay a neutral 3rd party consultant for a visitor study and to review ecological monitoring efforts. This will provide expert recommendations that will be reviewed in a public meeting.

O'Connell explained that the Roaring Fork Outdoor Council will mostly be funded by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Regional Grant. Data collected by the Watershed Biodiversity Study and Utah State University Studies will support the RFOC by creating a digital dashboard for 50 land management sites.

Jessie Young presented the Management Plan timeline, noting that Thompson Divide Ranch Plan creation and Grace Shehi Plan update are scheduled for 2026.

Young provided the additional 2025 planning projects:

- Brush Creek Park and Ride to AABC Trail Connection engineering design (\$500k with a \$250k contribution from the City of Aspen)
- Wildwood Land Exchange (\$50k)
 - Goal of submitting the proposal to the Forest Service by early 2025
- Redstone to the top McClure Trail final engineering (152k)
- Rio Grande Trail Node Plan and Trailhead Improvements - Final Planning/Permitting (\$40k)
 - Installation will take place in 2026.
- Glassier Farmstead Housing Improvements and Barn Stabilization - Seeking state historic grant funding (250k) for exterior repairs/renovation to the Glassier House as Phase 1 of restoration work (\$1,565,668 with a \$300k for Eagle County contribution).
 - House rehabilitation will maximize square footage

Ted O'Brien provided the 2025 resource management projects:

- Rio Grande Trail Capital Improvement Project - Deer Creek to Gerbaz (\$1.7m)
 - Repair Trail platform where undermined, repave, and replace safety fence. Repairs will consist of adding redi-block wall to narrow platform sections to improve platform integrity and add width.
- Mill, Pave, and Rebuild Retaining Walls – as needed (\$1,857,794)
 - Crystal Trail and North River Road will be a full mill and repave
 - Basaltmass Trail will need to rebuild retaining walls
- Filoha Administrative Houses Renovations (\$2,585,000)

- Complete Renovation of both houses (unit a = 2,828 sq ft, and unit b = 2,142 sq ft), septic improvements, land grading, tree removals, hardscaping, and landscaping
 - Housing to be presented to the OSTB and the BOCC at a future meeting for recommendations/approval
- Redstone to McClure Trail and Trailhead (\$288k)
 - Convert old road to trail, build new singletrack sections, and a trailhead parking area

Mitchell stated that the Thompson Creek Riparian Enhancements (\$40k) budget item will require a full baseline report, field work and data analysis for the 2026 Management Plan.

Tennenbaum stated that the Wildlife Connectivity (\$40k) budget item will support Roaring Fork Safe Passages to complete Mitigation Plans for three additional priority crossing locations within Pitkin County. This includes Emma, Snowmass Canyon, and Crystal River North Wildlife Corridors.

Walters provided additional 2025 agriculture projects:

- Snowmass Falls Ranch (\$15k)
 - Repair and improvement of the headgates for structural support
- Coke Ovens Open Space (\$185k)
 - Beaman Ditch piping / reinforcement along Coal Creek and in areas that are difficult for maintenance

Mallory asked if there would be a partnership with Healthy Rivers and Streams (HRS) for the Coke Ovens project. Tennenbaum stated that staff checks in with HRS with all OST projects, however their fund is being utilized in many areas of the watershed including Redstone. Wayne Ives requested staff provide HRS a list of water improvement projects.

Chris Petersen provided the Nordic Operations budget. He noted that the snowmaking feasibility study should be complete by the end of 2024. Mallory asked what happens to any unused Nordic budget. Petersen stated that Pitkin County is only billed for what is used and anything left over goes back into the fund. Tennenbaum stated that there are no significant changes to the Nordic budget.

Tennenbaum provided the Five-Year budget projections with a full mill levy. He noted that the large 2025 capital improvements include the Glassier and Filoha House renovations. The projections also include the \$10m GOCO free interest loan for 2024-2026, which will help fund large projects. The 2025 available fund balance that can be used on acquisition is projected to be approx. \$25m.

Kinsley noted aversion to the Brush Creek Park and Ride to AABC Trail Connection budget item. Tennenbaum explained that the budget was already approved, however discussion of the project will come back to the Board at a future meeting.

Ives provided support for the housing capital improvements and the overall budget.

Board action below

BOARD AND STAFF COMMENTS

Graeme Means asked about the Maroon Creek Trail revegetation efforts. Mitchell explained that staff is working with the City of Aspen to revegetated with more native grasses and shrubs in order to help stabilize the side of the Trail.

Young commented that the Aspen Village Bridge is estimated to start installation October 23rd.

BOARD ACTION

Open Space and Trails 2025 Budget

Graeme Means motioned to recommend the Pitkin County Board of County Commissioners approve the Open Space and Trails 2025 Budget. Wayne Ives seconded. Motion passed (5-0).

ADJOURN

The OSTB meeting of October 3, 2024 adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

Approved:



Howie Mallory, Chair
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails Board

Attest:



Kim Arensdorf
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails
Administrative Specialist

