AGENDA ITEM or FINAL CONTRACT REVIEW SUBMITTAL FORM

Agenda Item: STOR Report

Action Requested: Discussion

Parties to the Agreement:

Term Begins: **Term Ends:** **Grant Contract #:**

Summary:

Update on work of STOR Committee and STOR Corps

Fiscal Impact:

Submitted by: Cathie Pagano **Submitter's Email Address:** cpagano@gunnisoncounty.org

Finance Review: ○ Required ◉ Not Required

Comments:

Reviewed by: Discharge Date:

County Attorney Review: ○ Required ◉ Not Required

Comments:

Reveiwed by: Discharge Date: Certificate of Insurance Required

Yes ○ No ○

County Manager Review:

Comments:

Reveiwed by: GUNCOUNTY1\mbirnie Discharge Date: 9/29/2020

○ Consent Agenda ◉ Regular Agenda ○ Worksession Time Allotted: 30

Agenda Date: 10/6/2020

Revised April 2015

Gunnison County STOR Committee 2020 Report

Gunnison County cherishes its sense of community and place. We strive to preserve and promote the well-being of the County's citizens, natural environment and rural character. We will deliver services and set standards that reflect our values and preserve our unique quality of life for present and future generations to enjoy.

The Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee (STOR Committee) is a community coalition, created by the Gunnison County Board of Commissioners to improve and maintain tourism and outdoor recreation in a manner that is sustainable (environmentally, socially and financially) and aligns with our community values.

GUNNISON COUNTY

221 N. Wisconsin St.
Suite D
Gunnison, CO 81230

Phone: 970-641-7985
Email:
cpagano@gunnisoncounty.org

STOR COMMITTEE REPORT

The Gunnison County Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation (STOR) Committee was established by the Board of Commissioners in December 2017. The Committee includes representation of 22 members that represent a wide array of community stakeholders. The Committee has been meeting monthly for the past three years and in that time has accomplished significant goals that will have long term benefits for Gunnison County, our natural resources, and our recreation experience.

The Committee initially set forth four overall goals for their work:

1. Ensure the Valley's tourism sector of the economy is resilient, vibrant, and supports our community values.

2. Foster a resident and visitor culture that demonstrates respect for our community, culture, and environmental stewardship.

3. Support collaboration between federal land agencies, local government, nonprofit and user groups to improve management of recreation and natural resources.

4. Be proactive in management of private and public natural and recreation assets to minimize degradation and enhance quality.

Gunnison Valley

Our community is an increasingly popular destination for visitors and residents to camp, recreate and enjoy our public lands.

For each of these goal areas the Committee identified specific actions, strategies and results to achieve the goals.

STOR Committee Significant Achievements

Gunnison Stewardship Fund. The Gunnison Stewardship Fund was established in 2018, in partnership with the National Forest Foundation. While the National Forest Foundation has long had partnerships with ski resorts for the Ski Conservation Fund, the Gunnison Stewardship Fund is the first of its kind in the country. The fund is based on partnerships with outfitters, guides, and others in Gunnison County. This fund is generated through the voluntary contributions of partner organizations who have either made a specific financial commitment or have included a voluntary donation added to their guest receipts (i.e. $1/receipt). Partners included below pooled funds through Gunnison Fund for our community.

Gunnison Stewardship Fund

Since the partnership began, the Fund has collected approximately **$200,000** in business and local government contributions. Funded Grants: The funding raised by Fund participants was leveraged by NFF matching funds making possible unique work benefiting the Gunnison Ranger District and adjacent public lands, and employing and involving local and regional individuals.

Results of 2018 and 2019 Projects:

- 70.8 Miles of Trail Improved
- 1,498 Pounds of Trash Removed
- 1,450 Volunteer Hours
- 54 Illegal Campsites Obliterated
- 2 Trailhead Toilets Installed

For 2020, just over $104,000 was allocated by the Fund's partners to implement five priority projects:

Crested Butte Conservation Corps, a program of the Crested Butte Mountain Bike Alliance will work alongside the Forest Service, Gunnison Ranger District to provide a robust field presence across Gunnison Ranger District lands from May through October. The Corps will mitigate resource damage, complete regular trail maintenance, educate users, and reduce impacts to Gunnison Valley public lands.

Gunnison Trails' Professional Trail Crew will maintain and increase access to Gunnison basin trails on Bureau of Land Management and National Forest System lands, and will also collect seeds of native shrub and grass species for revegetation and habitat improvement.

Gunnison County will begin construction of Shady Island River Park, a river park and river access area that will include nineteen campsites, a camp host, picnic shelters and tables, restrooms, trails, fishing access, kids nature play areas, and a boat staging area. The facility will serve residents and visitors of the Gunnison Valley.

Gunnison Stewardship Fund

Crested Butte Land Trust will implement the Gunsight to Oh-Be-Joyful Connector Trail- Community Construction Project to connect the Lower Loops to the Oh-Be-Joyful (OBJ) Campground/ Recreation Area by constructing a roughly 0.75-mile non-motorized, natural surface connector trail to link the Land Trust's Gunsight Bridge trailhead with the BLM's OBJ Campground. With the construction of this connector trail, the Raggeds Wilderness, managed by the Forest Service would be accessible via non-motorized natural surface trails from Crested Butte.

The Coal Creek Watershed Coalition will coordinate with the Gunnison Ranger District to install a permanent vault toilet on Forest Service land in Washington Gulch. The toilet was donated by the Town of Crested Butte and will be refurbished and installed with support from the Stewardship Fund.

GOCO Stewardship Impact Grant $350,000

In 2019 Gunnison County and the STOR Committee were awarded a $350,000 Stewardship Impact grant from GOCO—the largest amount awarded to any of the recipients. Matching funds and in-kind work from STOR Committee members include an additional $100,000+ in funding. Since the award of the grant multiple projects and programs have been funded:

- The Stewardship Coordinator position held by Joe Lavorini. The Coordinator position also included funding support from the National Forest Foundation.

- In collaboration with the US Forest Service and Crested Butte Conservation Corps, funds are being utilized to establish designated dispersed campsites in the north valley. This designation will reduce the negative impacts of dispersed camping on the landscape, vegetation, and waterways. Work is expected to be completed by 2022.

- Support of the planning, design, and implementation of trailhead infrastructure in the Slate River and Peanut Lake recreation areas outside of Crested Butte.

- Funding for the STOR Corps which kicked off in July 2020. This crew of ten individuals worked for twelve weeks on stewardship and outreach projects throughout Gunnison County.

Additional projects are expected for 2021 and 2022 as prioritized and recommended by the STOR Committee.

GUNNISON COUNTY

STOR COMMITTEE 2020 REPORT

GOCO Resilient Communities Grant $450,000

In September 2020 Gunnison County was awarded a $450,000 GOCO Resilient Communities grant—the largest award given to any of the recipients this year.

Funding from this grant will be used to support the development of the Shady Island River Park, 2021 STOR Corps, winter access and outreach, Slate River trailhead improvements, and additional bathrooms at busy trailheads.

The STOR Committee came together to present a compelling application demonstrating the impacts of COVID-19 on our community and how the proposed programs and activities.

Total Outside Funding

In less than three years the STOR Committee has brought in over **$1.1 million in outside funds** to be used for on the ground project in Gunnison County!

Additionally, local partners have contributed approximately $400,000 in funds to support stewardship, maintenance, and restoration of our public and conserved lands in the County.

This is an incredible accomplishment in a short amount of time and demonstrates that collaboration, cooperation, and strategic planning yield big results.

STOR Corps

In June 2020 the Board of County Commissioners gave the green light to create the STOR Corps, a conservation corps dedicated to work in Gunnison County promoting stewardship. With the support of the National Forest Foundation, the Tourism and Prosperity Partnership (TAPP), and the GOCO Stewardship Impact Grant the Corps began in July 2020 with ten paid staff members working through the end of September.

As with many mountain communities in Colorado, visitation to the Gunnison Valley is at an all-time high. Land managers observe that they have never seen our public lands as busy as they have been in recent years. While this trend has been established for at least a few years, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a flurry of domestic travel. Residents of Colorado and surrounding states recognize the benefits of the open space, clean air, and endless recreation opportunities that are available in the Gunnison Valley. To prepare for what many anticipated to be the busiest tourist season on record, and to provide employment opportunities for those facing economic hardship due to the pandemic, Gunnison County and the National Forest Foundation (NFF) acted urgently this past spring to launch the Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation (STOR) Corps – aka the STOR Corps. The Corps is a jobs-creation program modeled in-part after the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930's and in-part after the youth corps model that is so successful today.

GUNNISON COUNTY

STOR Corps

Scope of Work

The program was established to mitigate the impacts to the County's natural resources caused by the increased visitation to the area's public lands. The Corps' scope of work fell into two buckets: stewardship and outreach. Stewardship work includes on-the-ground improvements such as trail construction, habitat protection, fencing, trash clean-up, and road decommissioning. Outreach activities included tabling and roving at high-use recreation areas to engage with the public to spread an ethic of responsible and sustainable use of the landscape.

The Corps worked autonomously and alongside project partners to accomplish objectives that were established by land management agency and non-profit partners.

GUNNISON COUNTY

STOR Corps

Stewardship Accomplishments

The following is a list of the stewardship projects and number of workdays the STOR Corps accomplished this season:

Bureau of Land Management Projects
- Construction of the Coyote Den Trail at Hartman Rocks (8 days)
- Distribution of prairie dog vaccinations at various areas (6 days)
- Road decommissioning at Gold Basin (4 days)
- Campsite and fire ring clean-up at Hartman Rocks (3 days)
- Construction of the Coaltrain Trail at Oh-Be-Joyful (3 days)
- Fence construction at Oh-Be-Joyful Campground (1 day)

Crested Butte Land Trust Project
- Ditch repair and fence installation in the Slate River drainage (1 day)

National Park Service Projects
- Fence removal at Dillon Pinnacles (1 days)
- Noxious weed removal at Curecanti National Park (1 day)

U.S. Forest Service Projects
- Lynx habitat monitoring at Wilder timber sale (4 days)
- Goshawk habitat surveys at Spring Creek timber sale (1 day)
- Construction of "houses for grouses" at Flat Top (3 days)
- Water bar construction at Middle Quartz Creek (3 days)
- Timber cruising at Spring Creek (3 days)
- Sign installation at Cottonwood Pass (2 days)
- Tree planting on Slumgullion Pass (2 days)

GUNNISON COUNTY

STOR Corps

Outreach Accomplishments

The primary focus of the STOR Corps this season was to develop outreach strategies to engage with the public out on the landscape. To prepare, the Corps completed Leave No Trace and interpreter training and dedicated countless hours to the development of outreach materials and tactics.

The following is a list of the locations and number of days where outreach activities occurred, and the number of visitor contacts made on those days:

- Brush Creek (2 days & 26 contacts)
- Copper Creek Trail (1 day & 28 contacts)
- Hartman Rocks (1 day & 27 contacts)
- Judd Falls (2 days & 193 contacts)
- Kebler Pass (3 days & 125 contacts)
- Lost Lake (2 days & 108 contacts)
- Oh-Be-Joyful Campground (1 day & 22 contacts)
- Ohio Creek Pass (1 day & 22 contacts)
- Slate River Drainage (1 day & 40 contacts)
- Taylor Park Trading Post (2 days & 24 contacts)
- Washington Gulch (1 day & 27 contacts)

TOTAL: 17 days & 642 contacts

GUNNISON COUNTY

STOR Corps

Partners
The 2020 STOR Corps would not have been possible without the support of the following partners:

Danguole Bockus	National Park Service
Tammy Brand	Taylor Park Trading Post
Ted Brand	Taylor Park Trading Post
Andrew Breibart	Bureau of Land Management
Kathy Brodhead	Bureau of Land Management
Joe Carlson	U.S. Forest Service
Theresa Childers	National Park Service
Jennifer Fenwick	U.S. Forest Service
Art Haines	U.S. Forest Service
Ashley Hom	U.S. Forest Service
Paul Jones	UGRWCD
Tim Kugler	Gunnison Trails
Tim Leishman	U.S. Forest Service
Brian Lieberman	CB Land Trust
Ashley Merkel	U.S. Forest Service
Kristi Murphy	BLM
Dave Ochs	CBMBA
Delaney Rudy	U.S. Forest Service
Nate Seward	CPW
Justin Spitz	NPS
Matt Vasquez	U.S. Forest Service
Sue Wallace	STOR Committee

GUNNISON COUNTY

STOR Corps

2020 STOR Corps Members
The following STOR Corps members contributed a total of 3,205 hours to the program this season:

Marissa Markus, Crew Leader
Hannah Schaeffer-Tibbett, Crew Leader
Raeanna Anglen
Hunter Benkoski
Kylie Hester
Colin McCullough
Jack Morgan
Ty Sanderford
Madelyn Tormasi
Dylan Wood

Recognition
The STOR Corps received media attention with a feature story in the Gunnison Country Times and coverage in the Crested Butte News. The program was highlighted in blog posts on the National Forest Foundation website and via social media channels.

The STOR Corps program was recognized with the Governor's Award for Outstanding Sustainable Tourism Program through the Colorado Tourism Office.

Gunnison County

Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee

Strategic Plan Update 2020

Goal 1: Ensure the Valley's tourism sector of the economy is resilient, vibrant, and supports our community values.	
Strategic Result	**Status**
Support and enhance a sustainable, diverse and adaptable array of tourism and recreation offerings and opportunities.	Ongoing, the Committee has worked collaboratively with TAPP to identify other opportunities to diversify tourism and recreation offerings. Many visitors still come here for core offerings of camping, skiing, biking, hiking, fishing, hunting. The growth of our visitors in 2020 in nearly all areas have given exposure to areas such as Blue Mesa that weren't as well known in previous years.
Goal 2: Foster a resident and visitor culture that demonstrates respect for our community, culture and environmental stewardship.	
Strategic Result	**Status**
The STOR Committee will communicate a consistent sustainability and stewardship message, including elements of Mountain Manners, SHIFT principles, Stay the Trail, and Leave No Trace, as measured by: residents and visitors will be educated about our community stewardship ethic using survey data from Chambers, Crested Butte Conservation Corps, and Mountain Manners	STOR created a Communication subcommittee which has adopted the SHIFT principles and placed ads in local papers, installed new signage at river put-ins. STOR Corps communicated LNT principles in their outreach work.
By July 31, 2018 establish stewardship principles in alignment with State and Federal agencies.	CO SHIFT Principles adopted at October 2019 meeting.
By December 31, 2018 maps, signage, websites, print and digital media will be cohesively branded	RoShamBo completed branding and logo work for the STOR Committee
By August 31, 2018 work with graphic designer to develop branding and develop materials	RoShamBo completed branding and logo work for the STOR Committee.
By July 31, 2018 identify and prioritize locations for new signs/kiosks (similar to TA signs located at Brush Creek, Hartman's	New signage and kiosks have been installed at VanTuyl and McCabe's Lane and are slated to be installed at Almont and Shady Island.

By March 31, 2018 information will be easily accessible for residents and visitors about where and how to do recreation activities. Develop season specific user guides for the Valley. Could be in cooperation with CB News and Gunnison Country Times and could potentially offset the costs with the inclusion of ads. Much of the information is already available in one form or another in different publications that have been done in the past and the guides could incorporate the information developed for the information kiosks. Cost in the range of $10,000 annually. To be developed for winter by the fall and for the summer by April 2019.	Completed and ongoing. The Communications subcommittee has worked to develop materials for local seasonal publications to inform visitors and users of stewardship ethics and best practices in our community.

Goal 3: Support collaboration between federal land agencies, local government, nonprofit and user groups to improve management of recreation and natural resources.

Strategic Result	**Status**
Create a funding plan and budget for STOR Committee projects.	This has been completed and is ongoing annually. With the inception of the Gunnison Stewardship Fund and the award of several grants, the Committee has been able to contribute funding to project implementation.
By October 31, 2018 establish funding partnership with the National Forest Foundation and local partners.	Completed, the Gunnison Stewardship Fund was established in 2018 and has generated more than $234,000 in funds for local stewardship projects since its inception.
By August 31, 2018 determine whether to pursue fee structure implementation on National Forest lands	This is underway, the STOR Committee formed a subcommittee in collaboration with the USFS to determine if a fee structure for some sites would be appropriate. It is expected that the USFS and STOR subcommittee will present a recommendation to the STOR Committee by the end of 2020.
By July 31, 2018 propose priority recreation related projects to Gunnison County Metropolitan District for funding support.	The STOR Committee and County staff have worked collaboratively with the Met Rec District to leverage funding for key projects and programs including the Gunnison Stewardship Fund and the Crested Butte Conservation Corps.
By July 31, 2018 determine how Committee members (and other related groups) will collaborate, support, prioritize and compete for grant opportunities.	Committee members discuss upcoming grant opportunities to determine best approach.
By April 30, 2018 apply for GOCO Statewide Stewardship Initiative grant ($350,000)	Completed and awarded $350,000.
By July 31, 2018 apply for CPW Colorado the Beautiful grant for STOR priority projects	CPW staff advised staff to not apply for this grant as the proposed project did not meet CPW criteria.

STOR Committee members will continue to engage at state and federal level to advocate for our community on related funding and policy decisions.	Ongoing. County Commissioners have been primary advocate for funding and policy issues at the state and federal level.
Goal 4: Be proactive in management of private and public natural and recreation assets to minimize degradation and enhance quality.	
Strategic Result	**Status**
Develop a management, maintenance, and implementation plan for recreation infrastructure to ensure a sustainable and high-quality experience.	This has been an ongoing discussion for the STOR Committee. The Committee has prioritized high-impact projects and is discussing how best to achieve a comprehensive recreation master plan.
By June 30, 2018, ensure that the Crested Butte Conservation Corps is fully funded for 2018 ($65,000) by STOR Committee members and others.	Complete. The CBCC was awarded funding by the Stewardship Fund and through the GOCO Stewardship Impact designated camping work in 2018, 2019, and 2020.
By June 30, 2018 identify if there are additional resources (from STOR Committee members) that can be utilized by CB Conservation Corps including but not limited to: volunteers, equipment, staff, etc. Identify timeline for providing any of these resources.	Ongoing, STOR Committee continues to collaborate with CBCC and other stakeholders.
By June 30, 2018 develop coordinated effort to support volunteer days/weekends. By June 30, 2018, engage volunteer corps through Mountain Manners and other stewardship programs and direct to strategic locations for outreach and education of public.	Ongoing. It was intended that the Stewardship Coordinator that was hired in 2020 would facilitate this goal but the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged larger volunteer efforts. This will be revisited for the 2021 field season.
By December 31, 2018 Management program in Slate River and Peanut Lake area.	In progress. A subcommittee was formed and the Crested Butte Land Trust has been leading a community engagement process to develop a management and infrastructure plan. STOR has also supported the effort with funding.
Install signage at Lower Loop parking areas and signage for Woods Walk. Parking management to encourage parking close to CB for lower loop. Signage for winter use at Slate River.	Completed in 2019. CBLT, Gunnison County Public Works worked collaboratively to install signage and adjust parking to encourage parking closer to the Town of Crested Butte.
By August 30, 2018 prioritize areas of maintenance for STOR Committee members to leverage efforts (additional grant opportunities, volunteers, CBCC)	Completed, the STOR Committee prioritized the above projects for implementation.
Miscellaneous Activities	
CB to CB South Recreation Path Subcommittee	A subcommittee has been meeting since 2019 to identify possible alignments of a rec path. There are challenges associated with crossing private land and working within the CDOT Right-of-way.

	County staff continues to work through these options. There may be an opportunity to apply for a large scale planning grant with GOCO in 2022 that would support this work.
E-bikes Subcommittee	A subcommittee to discuss creating a pilot program to allow e-bikes on several specific USFS trails was created in 2020. The STOR Committee has reviewed the issue and deferred on making a recommendation at this time. The USFS is currently accepting comments on changing the classification of e-bikes of USFS lands.
Gothic Corridor Subcommittee	A subcommittee was formed to work on the issues in the Gothic corridor related to transit, crowding, RMBL research sites, and recreation infrastructure. This work is ongoing and staff has committed to dedicating additional capacity to it in order to support efficient progress.