Jim Cochran

From: Haga, Roger G -FS [rhaga@fs.fed.us]
Sent: Thursday, April 25, 2013 3:23 PM
To: Jim Cochran
Subject: FW: GUSG Festival After-Action Meeting, April 25, 2013

FYI

From: Haga, Roger G -FS
Sent: Thursday, April 25, 2013 3:00 PM
To: John Messner (JMessner@cityofgunnison-co.gov)
Cc: kmurphy@blm.gov; daveonpine@yahoo.com; Nathan Seward (nathan.seward@state.co.us) (nathan.seward@state.co.us)
Subject: GUSG After-Action Meeting, April 25, 2013

John (and others),

I have to cover our front desk today, so here are my comments to share and/or forward regarding the GUSG Festival.

- Of our 3 festivals to date, this year's was our best in terms of organization and polish
- The event is an interesting combination of 11,000 newspaper inserts (*Times & Shopper*), in-school workshops (3rd and 7th grade) in CB and Gunnison, and a public festival with free food, agency exhibits, live music, a strong kids zone, raptor presentations, and run/walks (5k-10k)
- Agency and exhibitor attendance was up
- We had two banners over Hwy 50 and an LED-sign trailer on Hwy 135
- The live music was excellent but it was only at the very end (*too little too late*)
- We had our first good presence with WSCU students, presumably because Pat Magee invited his class to come hear him speak (*WSCU is a huge and relatively untapped audience; it's an outdoor school and the festival covers an outdoor topic*)
- Public attendance was down, reflecting that in its present form (*and virtually copying the previous year*) it probably can't sustain high interest year after year
- Our two most-involved contributors from the first two years (*Kristi Murphy and Dave Wiens*) did not attend
- This was the last of the 3 festivals that are 'prior to' a threatened or endangered listing (*or a decision to not list*). The next festival, if we produce one, will be 6 months 'after' that decision
- With 3 'pro-county' articles provided to replace existing stories in the newspaper insert at the last minute, the messaging seemed to focus on 'all we've done' rather than 'the festival's namesake' (*the species that is down to 5,000 total birds*). This disconnection between what local agencies and residents feel has been reasonable, and what the USFWS is considering, communicates interagency squabbling – not a strong message to send the public, unless the goal is to create a confused rallying cry (*and a prescription for division*).
- The Gunnison Sage-grouse seems to be a political football and a polarizing subject – not the kind of thing one would normally organize a festival around.
- The Gunnison Times is available to take over production of the newspaper insert; this would eliminate the Shopper insert (*If we gave the Times finished articles they would produce the layout; John would have to pay them as it's not something they would be able to sell ads into*)
- The event feels too long; instead of 9am-3pm it should be 10am-2pm
- Considering the cost of the event (my guess is $12k), and the time commitment, the event is heading in the wrong direction
- This is not a bad thing; it's just where we are

There are several ways to make the event larger, and more relevant, popular, embraceable and promotable:

- IMPROVE THE RUN.

  1. VISION: A Gunnison 10k circumnavigating the city is a big deal but is not promoted outside of our valley. We have a huge opportunity to showcase our strong city-park-and-rec amenities along the route, highlighting these on a nice run map and having aid stations every mile or so. It could even be signed permanently. This run route showcases excellent recreational amenities such as Legion Park, Jorgensen Park, the Ice Rink and Softball Fields, Airport, BLM, Whitewater Park, Twin Bridges, River Park, Gunnison Elementary, Middle & High Schools, Van Tuyl Trails, Mountaineer Bowl, and, possibly, the new WSCU Field House. Western is a top running school and produces outdoor rec majors. With a bit of promotion by the city, county, university and chamber, the run could become something special. And to make it more interesting, by including the 5K out-and-back plus an out-and-back to the base area of Hartman Rocks, there could be a Half-Marathon option. A top running school and a town that is a mecca for outdoor sports could host a nice road run.

  2. DRESS THE EVENT: After 3 years, there still is no start/finish banner, no run photographer, no awards, no marked route (*chalk arrows for grass and dirt, and spray paint for roads*), and no people on 'pace bikes' (or motorcycles) to keep folks on course. As the city adds its planned rec paths, the event can move off of some streets, and only improves.

  3. ADD SOMETHING WILD: Two years ago, prior to our first festival, Kristi referenced what is now the 30th Annual Mt Taylor Winter Quadrathlon, a 4-sport race in New Mexico (*distinct sections for bike, run, x-country ski, snowshoe*) to the top of Mt Taylor. It's a way to celebrate the outdoors in the off season. Could we create a springtime Gunnison-based equivalent that doesn't cross Sage-grouse or avalanche terrain? This is another promotional possibility.

- CONNECT WITH EARTH DAY. If we hold the event one week later we'd coincide with Earth Day and Earth Week and that creates a broader event within which the Gunnison Sage-grouse still fits and around which WSCU and our local governments, water, power and utility companies, and public communities should be able to embrace. It elevates and expands the event from a somewhat negative topic (*the controversial plight of a local bird*) to, at least on the Western Slope, a somewhat positive or at least impossible-to-ignore one (*mother nature*). Such an event could celebrate nature and outdoor recreation, our huge supply of public lands, and promote related topics such as ecosystem management (land agencies), energy and wildlife conservation, green businesses, environmental nonprofits, ORE, recreation projects, sustainability or resiliency projects, habitat restoration efforts, etc. Everybody's got an initiative going and this could tie it all together. We could also create a 'film festival' and/or 'fundraiser dinners' around such an event. This would also improve the possibilities for attracting artists.

- NAIL THE MUSIC. Festivals should be, well, festive. Music should be a mainstay, and budgeted. Especially if the goal is for people to 'come out and feel good.'

SANITY CHECK:
Events such as the many Sand Hill Crane Festivals that are held across America succeed because they celebrate a highly visible species (*you see cranes flying and wading in beautiful waters, hear them, and anticipate their return each year*). Birders and community members can easily embrace such an event; and it marks a season. In the case of the Gunnison Sage-grouse, we have a bird species tied to sage, not water, which you can't easily view, and even where you can people don't want you to, and while our event is held in spring it doesn't really signal spring. So in many ways I struggle with the viability of the concept. It might be good to take a year off of the festival (*intentionally not producing it*), let the political winds evolve as they may around the proposed listing decision, and then explore the subject in another year.

Roger Haga
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