

**Slate River Working Group: Meeting 2**  
**Meeting Minutes**

June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Crested Butte Town Hall

**Stakeholders Present:** Illene Roggensack (Facilitator), Michael Yerman (Town of CB), Mel Yemma (Town of CB), Hedda Peterson (CB Land Trust), Mike Billingsley (Skyland), Ryan Martens (Landowner), Wynn Martens (Landowner), Randi Stroh (Landowner), Tony Stroh (Landowner), Tim Tszurgot (Landowner), Julie Nania (HCCA), Travis Tucker (Irwin Guides), Zach Vaughter (CCWC), Wayne Meredith (Landowner), Courtney Burton (CB SUP), Braden Burton (CB SUP), Kristi Murphy (BLM), Rachel Sabbato (Gunnison County), Chris Parmeter (CPW), Bruce Allen (Landowner/Rancher), Rosemary Carroll (UGRWCD).

**Welcome and Introductions**

- Stakeholders briefly introduced themselves and who they are representing in this process.

**Review of meeting minutes and proposed future meeting process**

- Hedda explained that a landing page on the Land Trust website has been made that shares information about the Working Group ([www.cblandtrust.org/project/slate-river-working-group/](http://www.cblandtrust.org/project/slate-river-working-group/)) She noted that approved meeting minutes will also be posted there, making them accessible to the public. She asked for any comments or suggested changes to the May 16<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes.
- Hedda asked that at the end of the meeting the group summarizes key points from the meeting for the press release.
- Illene reviewed the Working Group agreements set at the first meeting and noted that an e-mail had been set up for public comment/concern about the Working Group to go to ([slateriverworkinggroup@cblandtrust.org](mailto:slateriverworkinggroup@cblandtrust.org)).
- Illene reviewed the meeting flow chart with the group. She explained that its intention is to better define the group timeline moving forward. Hedda provided detail around meetings #3 and #4 and explained that conveners are looking for feedback on the overall approach proposed in the flowchart. Michael clarified why a Town Council work session was proposed for the public comment component of this process; to keep the process formal and moderated by the Mayor. He clarified that written comments will also be accepted via the e-mail.
  - Kristi mentioned that the BLM already has a management plan for the Oh-Be-Joyful Campground and that the Working Group's management plan may not be compatible with their already established plans. Hedda acknowledged this and noted that there are parameters for what the Land Trust will also be able to implement based on their conservation easements and land management plans.

- Rosemary asked if there is a way to evaluate the success of the short-term management approaches that can be wrapped into the long-term planning process. Evaluation mechanisms will be discussed at the meeting tonight.
- Toni asked what the management plan will specifically address. Hedda clarified that it is specifically for river use issues (natural resource, recreational, and educational) from Oh-Be-Joyful to Skyland. Hedda clarified that the goal would be to make something that can be replicated or adapted elsewhere with a larger geographic reach.

### **Parameters for floating**

- **Proposed methods for developing and setting short-term flow standards**
  - Hedda clarified that these parameters are meant to be voluntary recommendations that can be accepted/upheld through outreach and education. Hedda compared this effort to the trail culture that CBMBA has helped develop; the community has learned (mostly) to respect trail closures and stay off muddy trails. Hopefully, she added, a similar etiquette and culture can be established for river-use on the Slate River.
  - Hedda asked for suggestions on how to establish when flows are too low to float the upper and lower stretches of the Slate River to prevent trespassing on private property and enhanced disturbance to wildlife. Hedda added that community members have shared observations with the Land Trust suggesting that the upper stretch is already too low to float without touching bottom. She added that what makes this difficult is that advanced floaters may be able to navigate low flows better than beginner floaters.
  - Wayne asked how deep the water needs to be for a paddleboard to float without touching bottom. Braden estimated 5-6 inches deep. Braden said that last year they floated the lower Slate until it reached 75 CFS. He gave a ballpark estimate for a lower limit that included 100 CFS on the lower slate and 150 CFS on the upper Slate.
  - Kristi clarified that access can't be restricted by flow on public land.
  - Julie suggested that since we don't have much data for this year, this group could come up with a temporary way to figure out when it's "too low to flow" for this season. For the long-term, Julie brought up how the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District is currently working on flow surveys and other methods for determining recreational flows. She said that they would like to work more with commercial users to collect data. She clarified that it's a new process, but they've received good feedback and that it will overall have an adaptive approach. She said that it

would be hard to come up with a target number this year and then change it next year.

- Wayne clarified that we need a clear solution in regards to private property and trespassing.
- Braden asked if Irwin was collecting any data on this subject. Travis said that they haven't been collecting data, but mentioned how commercial companies can be good stewards for messaging when the river isn't appropriate to float.
- Tim shared observations from Wildbird. He said about 30% are not paddleboards (duckies, rafts, kayaks) and that it is mostly locals floating. On Friday he saw 22 trespassers (7 of which were unintentional-they fell off).
- Travis said that it would be hard for him to deal with a "go" or "no go" situation, since it's a different situation for experienced river users vs. novices. Tim said he hasn't seen any problems with guided trips.
- Courtney expressed the importance of educating locals about the issue.
- Michael asked Julie and Rosemary if they know where all of the gages on the river are. Rosemary recommended utilizing the gages but tagging them with stage indicators.
- Hedda clarified that the Land Trust can't deny or "close" use on their lands, but that they have attempted, with signage, to inform users of what lies downstream (i.e private property, low flows).
- Kristi suggested how there could be a sign indicating "if you touch bottom here at oh-be-joyful, you would need to take out at this point before trespassing downstream".
- Illene wrapped up this agenda item saying that we're trying to come up with a consensus for ways to educate the community on when it's appropriate to float while collecting data this year.
- Hedda suggested creating a sub-committee to discuss the topic in more detail and bring a recommendation back to the group. The subcommittee will consist of: Hedda, Tim, Julie, Travis/Billy, Courtney, Braden, Mike, and Mel.

○ **Wildlife impact considerations**

- Hedda gave an overview of the Blue Heron Study that is taking place this spring through the fall. It is being conducted by Western State Colorado University. The idea of the study is to collect baseline data on the Great Blue Heron behavior. This study could hopefully contribute to management decisions. Hedda asked the group if they would consider wildlife closures in regards to river parameters. Hedda emphasized that Pat Magee will give an overview of their current findings at the June 27<sup>th</sup> meeting.

- Julie asked about other management techniques instead of a full closure. She said it would be great to have a range of options for this group before going right to a full closure.
  - Travis said he preferred regulated use over a full closure.
  - Wayne asked if we were only focusing on Blue Herons or also on other wildlife. He emphasized elk calving season. Hedda clarified that this rookery study is the first step, but that the group should keep in mind all wildlife and not to only base management decisions on the herons.
  - Braden said he doesn't know of any data that indicates herons are being affected by disturbance from river users, and that he's seen many herons in other drainages around Town. Tim said that he's read studies where blue herons are affected by human disturbance. Hedda clarified that this study is not solely focused on human disturbance to the rookery, but also includes heron behavior characteristics: when do they arrive, when do they leave, baseline data for whether the population is increasing or decreasing. Chris mentioned that the birds that Braden has been seeing are adult birds who are flying throughout the basin, but the Slate River rookery is the only rookery in the basin.
  - Kristi clarified again that the BLM could not close the river, and she's confused by the scope of this conversation. Hedda clarified that she is looking for solutions from the group for addressing human disturbance impacts to the rookery.
  - Rosemary said that etiquette can go a long way in regards to wildlife impacts, such as quiet floating zones.
- **Proposed river rules and etiquette**
- Hedda asked that we walk out of this room tonight with agreed upon language for river etiquette that can be used for signage and education/outreach for this year. The conveners have provided a sample of what some of these rules and a map could look like. They would like the group to use this as a baseline to come up with agreed upon language.
  - Wayne asked to clearly identify private property on the map. Mike asked to clarify private property, access points, parking areas on the map.
  - Michael committed to bringing a new map to the next meeting that shows private property, access points, parking, etc.
  - Travis asked for signs that indicate when you're back on public land after being on private land. Courtney asked for a clear sign indicating when the heron rookery ends.
  - Kristi asked to clarify that river information is for floating the full Slate River, rather than someone swimming in the water at Oh-Be-Joyful Campground (OBJ).
  - Wynn thought the rules and etiquette should be more prominent and should be less polite. Kristi emphasized that people get negative vibes when signs include too much "no, no, no". Ryan suggested there be a different sign for OBJ.

- The biggest trespassing issue is people using the bathroom. Chris suggested posting bathrooms on the map. Ryan asked about sponsoring toilets through this process. Hedda noted that the potential for toilets and their locations can be discussed in more detail at the next meeting when the group discusses access points and infrastructure.
  - Braden asked whether the current signs at GSB are having an impact. Hedda has received positive feedback that folks are at least respecting the quiet float zone.
  - Courtney thought that group size is going to be hard to control and proposed not addressing it for the near term.
  - Wayne would like to see nicer and more uniform “no trespassing” signs for private property. Zach suggested that private property information should be more prominent.
  - The group discussed language around dogs. Wayne said that dogs running along the banks are a big issue.
  - Julie asked about consistent signage down the whole river (including private property, no trespassing). Michael clarified that this an overall goal of the process, but for signage this year the signs will need to be made quickly.
- **River access points**
    - Michael reviewed the five current legal access points: Oh-Be-Joyful, Gunsight Bridge, Rec Path Bridge (easement through Verzuh Open Space), Skyland (and Aperture in the future). Regarding Aperture, Michael said once the bridge goes in and the land is annexed to the Town, there will be a permanent easement for river access (it’s still being negotiated).
    - The point of discussing access points is to determine signage needs at each location. There’s potential funding through the TA for kiosk at one of these access points. A new kiosk is definitely going in at Oh-Be-Joyful this fall.
    - Travis asked if there was potential for access point signs to be sponsored by organizations/businesses. Hedda confirmed that the Land Trust is open to discussing that.
    - Illene asked about ways to mitigate people making their own river access points this year. Courtney asked about putting up a sign saying “take out here” at the Skyland Bridge. The group briefly discussed parking at the Skyland take-out. Mike mentioned that long-term, there’s a potential for a RTA stop that could alleviate that issue. Infrastructure will be discussed more at meetings 3 and 4.
    - Julie suggested adding “please put in and take out at designated access points” on the signs. Braden asked for access information that could be posted on CB SUP’s website. Courtney suggested providing etiquette information for [travelcrestedbutte.com](http://travelcrestedbutte.com). Kristi mentioned that her Oh-Be-Joyful campground host can pass out information to floaters coming through the campground.

## **Formulate action plan for short-term solutions for this season**

### **○ Signage and Outreach**

- Hedda asked the group if they would provide feedback on draft signage for the access points via e-mail following the meeting.
- Michael asked about the possibility of private property owners contributing funding to ordering the signs. He also mentioned the idea of sponsorships for signs. Michael clarified that this year's signs will be smaller aluminum signs and then next year they will be uniform full panel signs.
- Braden asked about creating a pamphlet for rules and etiquette. The conveners will create etiquette language that can be used for online outreach in the near term and consider funding a pamphlet in the future.
- Wayne asked about river fencing. He mentioned that the Town needs to fence the cattle out. Michael and Wayne will talk about this in more detail. Braden mentioned that there needs to be a river fence on the lower slate across Bill Lacy's property. Travis asked about maintenance of the current fences. Travis offered volunteer help from Irwin guides to maintain the fences.
- Wynn suggested contacting short-term rental owners with river etiquette information.
- Julie suggested posting rules and etiquette on KBUT. Illene mentioned including this in the next press release as well. Kristi suggested the tourism association website.
- Wynn asked about a short term solution for toilets this year. Michael said that this can be a side conversation between the Town, Land Trust, and Skyland. Kristi said she could make a sign pointing out the last toilet before private property at BLM's River Flats campground.

### **Evaluation of session& Information to be shared with media/others**

- Zach mentioned that the word closure should not be mentioned in the press release. Kristi would need the word "rules" to be taken out.
- Hedda and Mel will draft signs and a map for each access point, as well as private property, that will be emailed to the group by the weekend for approval. They will also include a file with information to be shared online.

### **Confirmation of next meeting dates**

- Meetings 3 and 4 will have one agenda and continuous minutes. The meetings are on June 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> from 5-7pm at the Depot.

The meeting adjourned at 7:08 pm.