

### ***Roll Call***

Jeff Cospolich called the February 16, 2015 BOSAC meeting to order at 5:36 pm. Other BOSAC members present included Elisabeth Lawrence, Jeffrey Bergeron, Jeff Carlson, Craig Campbell and Elizabeth Miller. Chris Tennial was absent. Staff members present were Peter Grosshuesch, Scott Reid, Mark Truckey and Chris Kulick. Jeff Zimmerman from the Breckenridge Ski Resort, Travis Beck from SE Group, Eric White and Shelly Grail from the U.S. Forest Service, and Dr. Christy Carello were also in attendance.

### ***Approval of Minutes***

The minutes were approved as presented.

### ***Approval of Agenda***

The agenda was approved as presented.

### ***Public Comments***

There were no public comments.

### **Staff Summary**

#### **Breckenridge Ski Area 2015 Summer Work Proposal Update**

Attached to the BOSAC packet is a copy of the Town's letter submitted to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) regarding Breckenridge Ski Resort's (BSR's) 2015 summer work proposal. As discussed by BOSAC in January, BSR's proposal focused on grading a portion of the Monte Cristo ski run and adding snowmaking infrastructure to serve the lower portions of the Peak 6 ski runs. The attached comment letter was sent by the January 30<sup>th</sup> submittal deadline.

#### **Pump Track Relocation Update**

The relocation of the Town pump track to the Stillson Placer is scheduled to occur this spring, in time for a July 1<sup>st</sup> opening. Staff recently released a [request for bid](#) to several potential pump track design and construction companies with a bid submittal deadline of March 13<sup>th</sup>. Staff will keep BOSAC informed of any progress on this project.

#### **McCain Master Plan Update**

Staff continues to work with a consultant to draft a master plan for the 120-acre McCain property. Town Council is scheduled to review several concepts at their 3/10 meeting and provide general direction to staff and the consultant for moving ahead. Currently, all options include the preservation of the restored Blue River corridor as open space. Various other programming options are also shown (e.g. municipal water plant, ski area parking, solar garden addition, trails, snow storage, etc.) and Council intends to provide policy direction to narrow the focus of the uses on the property. Following that, the consultant will draft another design to be presented to BOSAC at its 4/20 meeting and then Town Council on 4/28. Staff will update BOSAC on this planning process as needed. Please feel free to attend the 3/10 Town Council discussion on the site programming if you are interested.

### **Open Space**

#### **2014 Cucumber Gulch Preserve Research**

Staff presented two reports from the Town's consultants for Cucumber Gulch Preserve. The first document, submitted by Dr. Christy Carello of Emerald Planet, outlines the research pertaining to wildlife, habitat values and trail use in Cucumber Gulch. The second document, submitted by Mark Beardsley and Jessica Doran of EcoMetrics and Brad Johnson of Johnson Environmental Consulting (JEC), summarizes the results of the wetland monitoring program, as required by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The following are the summary points of the two reports:

Dr. Carello:

- In general, most management indicators in Cucumber Gulch are trending in a positive direction based on 2014 research.
- In particular, sightings of mammalian species increased this year, most notably deer, moose and beaver. A beaver den survey indicated increased beaver activity Preserve-wide, and in the restored upper Cucumber Gulch in particular.
- Two boreal toads were sighted during 2014. These sightings were the first since 2005.
- Although improving based on fortified seasonal closures and the presence of docents, there are still management challenges from off trail travel, trail use during closures, and dogs. Additional signage and docent scheduling are recommended.
- Avian abundance, species richness and diversity declined in mixed conifer and shrubland habitat in 2014. Additional monitoring in 2015 and beyond should help clarify whether this is an aberration or a concerning trend.
- Vegetation sampling indicated the growing presence of non-native and invasive plant species in the interior of the Preserve. Additional weed eradication efforts are recommended.
- Additional research, docent presence, public education, signage, weed eradication and management efforts are the primary recommendations for 2015.

EcoMetrics/JEC:

- Water source, distribution and chemical environment variables are generally improving, particularly in upper Cucumber Gulch, the site of the recent wetland and stream restoration efforts. The resultant improvement and expansion of the wetlands indicate that the restoration efforts have been successful.
- The presence of an active beaver population in upper Cucumber Gulch is especially promising.
- Additional monitoring and maintenance of the lateral spreader channel that diverts water from Boreas Creek below the 60" culvert will ensure sediment does not block this channel and prevent water flow to the northern portion of the wetland area.
- Dredging of the spreader pond in 2015 to remove thirty-three cubic yards of deposited sediment is recommended.
- Continued weed eradication efforts are strongly encouraged.
- Additional (and timelier) data is needed to determine whether algal blooms in upper Cucumber Gulch are related to elevated nutrient levels from external sources.

Mr. Bergeron – Are there still any concerns over violet-green swallows nesting in the gondola? (Dr. Carello – I believe they are still exploring in the gondola but overall their population numbers are strong. My concern is that it is a violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. I believe that individual

swallows are still exploring or even building nests in the bottom-side gondola cavities, only to have the gondola cars move.)

Ms. Miller – How important is the docent program? (Dr. Carello – The docent program has proven to be effective in reducing trail use during closures. Docents, combined with the excellent signage really worked in reducing use during the seasonal closure in 2014. It would be prudent to expand the program to include all weekends from June through August. During the closure, it has already proven effective. When the trails are open, I think we would get less off-trail use, fewer dogs, and a better educated public. Also it is really important to reach the lodges at Peaks 7 and 8. The docent could be a bridge to the concierges and other programs to ensure the Cucumber regulations are clear. The gondola cut seems to be the problem area right now. We also get lots of foot traffic under the Ski Hill Road bridge/wildlife underpass.)

Mr. Cospolich – Where are the people coming from? (Dr. Carello – I think some of them are local because we see them repeatedly. Others I think come from the lodges, which are now booked year round now. White Wolf and Gold Camp are other sources of folks who continue to use the trails during closures or ignore the no dogs signs.)

Ms. Lawrence – Where does the funding come from for the docent program? (Mr. Reid – The open space program pays for it; we spent \$1,600 in 2014.)

Ms. Lawrence – Can we require native seeds in adjacent landscaping? (Mr. Reid – We require native landscaping within the Preventative Management Area and Overlay protection district. Dr. Carello – Weeds are the biggest issues not necessarily ornamental flowers like pansies.)

Mr. Bergeron – Any thoughts if we should require docents for weddings at the Nordic Center? (Dr. Carello – I'm not sure if we need to require docents. There may be some concern over noise disturbance. Sunset is a very critical time for wildlife. Mr. Carlson – I would be in favor of having docents during weddings paid for by the wedding party.)

Mr. Cospolich – Regarding the vegetation decline, should we be concerned? (Dr. Carello - I'm not really concerned quite yet. Some of our vegetation plots were heavily disturbed by the wetland repair work at the 60" pipe outflow. Obviously, that will be a great measure to see if we can reestablish native vegetation throughout the area. My other concern was finding noxious weeds in the interior portions of the Gulch by the Reset Pond. I'm encouraged to hear of the Town's efforts with the contractor and Eagle Scout project, but we need make sure we stop the spread of noxious weeds throughout Cucumber.)

Mr. Cospolich – You have shown an increasing use trend every year for the last several, except for one year, right? (Dr. Carello – That is true. The massive increase in trail use is likely due to the construction in the Peak 7 and 8 base-area lodging. There are just more people up there now, which is why we need to educate the concierges on the rules, seasonal closures, etc. 2013 was the one year that we saw a decrease in use and, if you remember, that was also a very wet summer that started late with a large snowpack.)

BOSAC recommended continuing with the Cucumber monitoring program elements and directed staff to draft a 2015 budget with increases in weed eradication, docent program coverage, and water quality measures (e.g. algal blooms). Staff was directed to return with a draft Cucumber monitoring budget at the 3/16 BOSAC meeting.

### **Breckenridge Ski Resort On-Mountain Amenities Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

As previously discussed by BOSAC, Breckenridge Ski Resort (BSR) has proposed the addition of multiple on-mountain amenities (i.e. zip lines, canopy tours, trails, etc.) to be considered by the U.S. Forest Service under their NEPA process. Following an initial scoping period in 2014, the USFS reviewed public input and then recently released the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The DEIS outlines two action alternatives (in addition to the requisite “no action” alternative), evaluates their potential impacts to the National Forest, and seeks public input on the proposed alternatives.

The full copy of the DEIS can be found on the USFS website. The executive summary at the beginning of the document succinctly outlines the primary DEIS analysis points.

Staff also presented a draft response letter from the Town to the USFS for BOSAC to consider. The draft content is based on the Town’s previous comment letter and staff analysis of the DEIS document. The draft letter generally supports Alternative 3, which is a slightly toned-down version of BSR’s original proposal (Alternative 2), and reflects changes based on previous public input including the Town’s original scoping letter.

Mr. Cospolich – How has this process compared with the recent Vail Ski Resort on-mountain amenity approval?

Mr. Zimmerman – That process was similar and the community was very supportive of the amenities.

Ms. Grail – In the Vail decision, there was also no preferred alternative as well and the decision was a hybrid of Alternatives 2 and 3. Basically, a wedding platform was removed and a coaster was relocated. In contrast, we had hundreds of comments during the scoping period for the Breckenridge proposal. In general, the Breckenridge comments yielded some pretty strong opposition to the high alpine elements of the proposal and questioned the wildlife impacts.

Mr. Bergeron – Do you have any ideas on pricing? (Mr. Zimmerman – The current zip line is \$18 per tour but the prices have not been set yet for the proposal. It will likely vary by amenity though because some will require a guide and others won’t. The ticketing will be a challenge and it already is to us, with over forty pass options in the summer. I would expect the costs to be in line with what we currently charge.)

Ms. Miller – Are there any comparable Counties in-terms of public engagement over a ski area proposal? (Mr. Beck – Eldora Resort in Boulder County is one statewide example where the community has been engaged in the decision making process.) Were there any comments about the proposal being too “Disney-esque”? (Ms. Grail – There were some comments to that effect, yes.)

(Mr. Reid – This proposal also meets the standards under the ski area recreational opportunity legislation.)

Mr. Bergeron – Council should consider the effect of this proposal on local businesses. It will pull commerce away from Main Street and keep more people on the ski area spending money rather than local merchants.

Mr. Zimmerman – Provided several comments on the details of the draft letter. Specifically, the Project Design Criteria (PDCs) established and overseen by the USFS sets a high standard for wetland protection and sediment control. Our revegetation efforts are top notch and we are focusing as a company on learning from other Vail Resorts ski areas on how best to protect water quality and address our deficiencies where they exist. Overall, our desired outcome is Alternative 2. Our customer base is primarily urban and has limited experience in the backcountry and we can use our existing infrastructure as a bridge to get this customer base into outdoor activity. Also, the Nature Conservancy involvement will ensure that the environmental education and messaging is strong. This proposal desires to spread people out and not have them as concentrated as the current fun park. We respectfully disagree with the letter that contends there is enough diversity in programming in Alternative 3. We need a critical mass of infrastructure to effectively market, attract and retain those visitors. The programming has been designed very thoughtfully; it will be an eco tour as much as a thrill ride. It is an environmental education with shots of adrenaline.

Mr. Bergeron – I think my concern is some of Alternative 2's proposals are in areas that have very little human visitation outside of the ski season. Above timberline, Sawmill and Ore Bucket are examples. Also, I think if visitors spend 5 or 6 hours on the ski area instead of 2-3 hours, it will also impact in-town businesses.

Ms. Grail – Mr. Fitzwilliams does not have a preferred alternative at this time. Typically, we do in a draft EIS. He wants to receive more input before making his decision.

Mr. Grosshuesch – Are the revegetation standards designed to improve conditions from the status quo? (Ms. Grail – Yes.) Did the scoping look at what is contributing to the sediment loading in Cucumber Gulch? Are there any creative ways to address soil compaction on the ski area?

Ms. Grail – We were unaware of the 33 cubic yards of sediment issue until now. We can certainly pay attention to that issue more and evaluate ways to lessen soil compaction on the ski runs and service roads.

Mr. Beck – The ski area is operating under a 2009 drainage plan. They are correcting problems that started 30 years ago on Peaks 8 & 9. (Mr. Bergeron – I think the impact has been more recent in the last decade.) (Mr. Grosshuesch – I think we are in a much better position than we were three years ago due to our partnership and I would like that improvement to continue.)

Ms. Grail – It might be helpful to compare Peak 7 to Peak 8 with regard to revegetation. Peak 8 was cleared many years ago when the practices were pretty rough. With Peak 7, the ski area stockpiled the topsoil and put it back following the clearing. You can see how well the area regenerated from that treatment.

Mr. Carlson – I have some concerns about the analysis. There is limited data on how wildlife will be impacted by the zip lines and canopy tours, both of which require significant fences to protect people from the guy wires. I believe these installations will affect wildlife habitat in the area. I don't want to see us strangle goose that laid the golden egg. We should try to start conservatively here and expand as needed. I would hope that we would have some restraint and foresight and compromise by agreeing to Alternative 3. (Ms. Grail – We acknowledge that there are a lot of unknowns such as the effect of zip lines noise on wildlife 400 feet below.)

Mr. Campbell – There is also an incremental impact of all the changes wrought in this area, including Ophir Mountain clear cuts, Peak 6, Peak 7 etc. (Ms. Grail – We actually do quantify cumulative impacts in Summit County.)

Mr. Cospolich – One more comment on the sediment: I believe the ski resort should be accountable for the maintenance of the dredge pond. The ski resort should pay to remove the 33 cubic yards of sediment that came from the ski area and was deposited in Cucumber. Also, I have concerns on visual impact based on the existing zip line terminal at the base of Peak 8. It very large and obtrusive. I hope the rest of the towers needed to execute the plan are better looking and less visible. (Mr. Zimmerman – For the most part, we would only need 10' – 15' foot towers because of the topography of the area. The towers will mostly stay below the canopy height to reduce visibility.)

Ms. Lawrence – I believe Alternative 2 and 3 both meet the land management goals. (Mr. Beck – Alternative 3 certainly has less of an environmental impact, but there is a commerce trade off.) I have concerns with the first bullet point in the draft letter: what sorts of resource protection mandates apply to the USFS? Also, why does this letter contain a bullet about non-federal land? (Mr. Reid – Regarding the USFS mandates, they are required to consider impacts to the National Forest in every decision. They are in charge of managing the natural resource values of the forest lands. Regarding the base area/Town planning point, we want to ensure that the plans mesh well across jurisdictions.)

Mr. Bergeron – I support the draft letter as it is. I think Alternative 3 is a nice compromise between resource protection and encouraging commerce.

Ms. Miller – I agree with Jeffery's comments and support the letter.

Mr. Cospolich – I also believe that the ski area is missing an opportunity with the proposed mountain bike trail design for beginners. By targeting only families and beginner riders, there is no opportunity for progression. It would be good for the ski area to offer a wider range to difficulty in the proposed trails. There are a lot of potential customers and riders that would be categorized between families/beginners and the full-faced downhill crowd.

BOSAC generally supported the draft letter and looked forward to Town Council's review of the topic.

**Pro Forma Revisions**

Staff presented a memo sent to Town Council for its 2/10 meeting and a revised open space pro forma, reflecting BOSAC and Town Council's priorities for the open space program. Town Council approved the revised pro forma, which allocates additional funds as outlined in the memo.

BOSAC appreciated Town Council's support of the program priorities and the approval of the revised pro forma.

**Next Meeting**

The next regularly scheduled meeting is on Monday, March 16, 2015, at the Breckenridge Town Hall, 150 Ski Hill Road.

Mr. Bergeron motioned to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Cospolich.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

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Jeff Cospolich, Chair