

Making Tourism & Outdoor Recreation a Sustainable Part of Your Community



by Cathie Pagano, AICP CEP - Gunnison County Community and Economic Development

In 2017, the Gunnison County Commissioners convened the Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee as a direct outcome of the One Valley Prosperity Project. The One Valley Prosperity Project (OVPP) is a community-driven effort focused on achieving a more prosperous and successful future for the residents of Gunnison County. OVPP was a year-long public process that reached out to community members throughout the Gunnison Valley, representing a variety of individuals from second homeowners to youth to immigrants. The OVPP was awarded a 2017 Honor Award for General Planning Project by the Colorado chapter of APA.

In 2016, the OVPP convened a working group on sustainable tourism and outdoor recreation. That working group developed a strategic plan for sustainable tourism and outdoor recreation and determined that a long-term committee

be established to implement the strategic plan; the STOR Committee is the result of this planning effort.



The STOR Committee is composed of thirteen representatives from land management agencies, governments, local nonprofit groups and eight “at-large” stakeholder groups. Its mission is to address the challenges and impacts from Gunnison County’s growing recreational tourism economy. This community coalition works to “improve and sustain tourism and outdoor recreation in a manner that is sustainable (environmentally, socially and financially) and aligns with our community values.” The STOR Committee is a unique collaborative in the State because of its diverse representation and innovative approach to management, maintenance, enhancement and development of our natural resources and recreation assets in Gunnison County.

Over the last year the STOR Committee has proved an effective model of collaborative decision-making. This model provides a platform for collaboration that identifies priorities and challenges and helps us to leverage our resources together more effectively.

The population of the State of Colorado is growing every year and with that growth we have seen a significant increase in the numbers of visitors to our public lands and recreation areas. There have been numerous articles about the negative impacts of heavy use of our public lands and natural resources. Gunnison County is no exception. This trend, paired with the reality of decreased federal funding for federal lands, and increased annual visitation numbers calls for a new and collaborative stewardship model.

As a result, we believe that it is up to us to develop a structure, program, and collaborative effort that addresses our stewardship needs locally. The Gunnison County STOR Committee is this program. The STOR Committee focuses on enhancing stewardship in three main areas: outreach and education; restoration and maintenance; and recreation infrastructure.

The STOR Committee has created a strategic plan, established a funding mechanism and developed a project prioritization list. These developments have enabled our community to leverage greater resources through collaborative funding, partnerships and cooperation.