Recreation Working Group
Meeting Notes – Draft
July 12, 2021

Present: Bob Prosser, DeAnna Bindley, Becki Ross, Tim Holt, Ellen Parish, Lisa Bolton, Stephen Williams, David Wessel, Stephanie Teskey, Heather Green, Amber Morin, Jordan Smith, Carol Harder, George Gumerman, Nick Mustoe, Spencer Prosser, John O'Brien, Gerrit Boeck, Cynthia Nemeth, Matt McGrath

Ellen opened the meeting at 11:00 with a welcome to the participants. The first presenter was Jordan Smith from the Institute of Recreation and Tourism in Utah (Utah State University). He talked about the methods and models the Institute uses to analyze recreation trends and demands across multiple jurisdictions in Utah. The Institute also provides the legislature with reliable data regarding increasing recreation in the state; with visitor use monitoring (visitor origins and activities); as well as information for gateway communities that experience a number of issues commensurate with the increase in recreation. The Institute also works across the Intermountain West.

The Institute works with State Parks nationwide. As an example, Jordan showed trend data for AZ State Parks and Trails noting that demand and use started to increase in 2012-2013. Jordan explained that recreation monitoring can help management agencies and others to understand recreation demand and preferences so they can prepare for mitigation, potential conflicts, and environmental impacts. Action triggers or checkpoints can be developed to trigger different actions depending on resource decline. In his example, one checkpoint would trigger actions to prevent decline, another checkpoint would trigger action to reverse the decline, and a third would trigger actions to immediately stop the decline.

Jordan then discussed methods to gather data. Traditional methods include interviews, in person interactions, or the use of data from agency permitting systems. Newer methods include social media, google trends or gathering information from mobile devices. Social media is especially helpful for learning where people go because it is location-based. Other social media advantages: large volume of data that is scalable, relatively inexpensive, and there is an accurate geographic location of the post. iPhone contain not only the photos but other metadata including latitude/longitude of the post (collected by satellite). This metadata can be purchased from the internet provider. The Institute has run statistics on this metadata (not using personal data or the photo) and found the data reasonably accurate. Application: data can be aggregated to see trends, recreation hotspots and the adjoining areas, visitation density, and spatial clusters. This information can help managers plan for increasing impacts in areas proximal to the hotspots.

The Institute has used Flickr, Twitter, and Panoramio but has found information from these sources represents a small segment of the population. Although more heavily used, Instagram and Facebook do not have public access so these two social media platforms are not used. Mobile device data however has a large volume and is scalable even though it is more expensive and can provide data on a trip rather than individual posts. Jordan provided an example from San Juan County Utah using data from various public land units and municipalities. Major entrance points were identified and the Institute's interactive dashboard has a variety of features including ways to view average monthly non-local traffic over time and the origins of visitors. This example can be viewed at gnarsanjuan.com

The next speaker was Amber Morin from the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Partnership. Sentinel Landscapes are a federal designation (USDA, USDI, Department of Defense) for natural and working landscapes that are well suited to protect defense facilities from land uses that are

incompatible with military missions. Fort Huachuca was selected because it has a pristine electromagnetic area. This designation is beneficial to local communities because it:

- empowers local landowners (via grant opportunities),
- strengthens military readiness,
- supports agricultural productivity,
- preserves natural resources and
- ensures access to recreation.

The Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape covers 1.65 million acres and about 32 million dollars has been spent on landscape projects including using the Joint Chiefs Program (NRCS/USFS) for fuels reduction projects across multiple jurisdictions. There will be 10 Sentinel Landscapes identified nationwide by the end of the year. For more information see www.sentinellandscapes.org

The meeting concluded with an update from Lisa and Ellen on Diablo Trust activities in August. The Recreation Summit will be held from 9-12:30 on August 12 at the Elk's Lodge in Flagstaff. The annual meeting will be held at Ashurst Run on August 13 followed by the annual campout. There will be opportunities for small group and more informal discussions at the annual meeting. Invitations and the agenda will be coming out soon. Please share this information with colleagues and bring a friend.

Reminder that the next Recreation Working Group zoom meeting will be Monday July 19 from 12-1. We will be joining an Arizona Trail Association meeting with some speakers.