



CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION

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CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (CWC)
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THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION RELEASES THE FINAL VISITOR-USE STUDY

SALT LAKE CITY, UT – Thursday, October 12, 2023, After two years of study and multiple phase reports, the Central Wasatch Commission released the final phase report associated with its Visitor-Use Study. The data collected through the study have been integrated into the Central Wasatch Commission’s [Environmental Dashboard](#), serving as the foundation for a sixth, “human” element, providing insight to any impact that human recreation in the Central Wasatch Mountains may have on the environment. The human element incorporates data that reflect the temporal and spatial dynamics of outdoor recreation use within Little Cottonwood Canyon, Big Cottonwood Canyon, and Millcreek Canyon.

The outdoor recreation opportunities offered in the canyons of the Central Wasatch are some of the most iconic in all of Utah. The final Visitor-Use Study report details the findings of a survey effort designed to better understand the visitors and visitor experiences offered within the Central Wasatch Mountains. The data and findings serve as a base of information that can be used to inform the decisions of both the USDA Forest Service as well as the many entities represented on the Central Wasatch Commission.

The design and administration of the survey follows the USDA Forest Service’s National Visitor Use Monitoring program. As such, the survey provides data that are scientifically defensible and grounded in the agency’s best-practices for quantifying and characterizing outdoor recreation use. The survey provides a variety of insights regarding outdoor recreation use of the canyons that, to date, have not been quantified in a systematic way. Specifically, the survey effort provides:



- The total recreational visits by canyon.
- The total recreational visits to different types of sites within the canyons.
- The proportion of visits involving different outdoor recreation activities.
- The total time visitors to the canyons spend participating in different activities.
- The average number of times visitors recreate in the canyons each year.
- Characterize the variation in use across individual trails within the region.
- Visitors' perceptions of crowding in the canyon.
- Visitors' overall satisfaction with their visits to the canyons.
- The importance and satisfaction with site-specific attributes of recreation settings.
- The distance traveled to recreate in the canyons.
- The sociodemographic characteristics of visitors to each of the canyons.

“Good decisions about the Central Wasatch Mountains begin with data that may inform those decisions. We are pleased to release the culminating Visitor-Use Study report and announce the integration of the associated data into the CWC’s Environmental Dashboard.” Central Wasatch Commission Chair, and Summit County Councilmember Christopher F. Robinson remarked, “It is our hope that agencies and stakeholders, as well as everyday recreationists utilize the Visitor-Use Study to help preserve the quality experiences available in the Central Wasatch.”

A team led by Dr. Jordan Smith, Director of the [Institute of Outdoor Recreation & Tourism](#), and Professor in the Department of Environment and Society at Utah State University conducted the multi-year data collection and analysis for the CWC’s Visitor-Use Study. Dr. Smith worked collaboratively with Dr. Phoebe McNeally and her team at [the DIGIT Lab](#), an auxiliary facility of the University of Utah Department of Geography that provides geographic information analysis and application development to integrate the Visitor-Use Study data into the Environmental Dashboard.

Originally released to the public in 2022, the Environmental Dashboard is a tool for the public, land managers, policy makers and technical users to learn about the historic and current environmental conditions of the Central Wasatch. The Dashboard contains five environmental elements: air quality and climate, geology and soil, vegetation communities, water, and wildlife, and existing data for each element has been gathered and presented for public access. The incorporation of the Visitor-Use Study data provides the foundation for the sixth Environmental Dashboard element, the “human element.”

You may read the Final Visitor-Use Study Report, the Trail-Use Report, and the Visitor-Use Study Phase 1 and Phase 2 Reports, as well as access the Environmental Dashboard on the Central Wasatch Commission website: cwc.utah.gov.



ABOUT THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION

The Central Wasatch Commission is an inter-governmental entity with jurisdictions in the Town of Alta, the Town of Brighton, Cottonwood Heights, Millcreek City, Park City, Salt Lake City, Sandy City, and Summit County, with the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest, Utah Transit Authority, and Metropolitan District of Salt Lake and Sandy as ex-officio members. Building on the work of Mountain Accord, the Commission seeks to engage the public, build consensus, and coordinate action in the Central Wasatch Mountains. Learn more at cwc.utah.gov.

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