

## **THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMPACT**

February 11, 2022 (DRAFT)

The Central Wasatch mountain range is beloved by those of us who live along both sides of its ridgeline. We hike, we bike, we ski, we discover wildlife, we ramble and amble and find solitude amid one of the world's most spectacular backyards. And even as these mountains are a source of peace and spiritual renewal, they are also our source for water and, literally, the reason life is possible in Utah's arid climate.

Amid threats from population growth and related increases in summer and winter use of the canyons, climate change, development pressures, and piecemeal decision-making, we know that we need to take action now to ensure we have clean water, a thriving economy, and an exemplary quality of life — not only for current generations but for those that come after us. The time has come to truly consider the future of this precious landscape.

As signers of the Central Wasatch Compact, we hereby state the values and principles that we hold as foundational to any actions affecting the Central Wasatch Mountain range. We are committed to promoting transparent decision-making processes with robust public engagement that result in consensus-based solutions to the challenges facing our canyons.

We urge public and private entities to heed these principles as they contemplate policies or actions within or directly affecting lands within the Central Wasatch.

### **RECITALS**

WHEREAS, the Mountain Accord Charter, developed through an extensive two-year public engagement and consensus-building process and signed in August 2015 by the Mountain Accord Executive Board and over 150 stakeholders, represents a consensus position of the signers of the values and principles to guide decisions relating to the Central Wasatch mountains and also stated specific negotiated interrelated actions stakeholders committed to pursuing in order to resolve specific challenges and still maintain the delicate balance of priorities for the Central Wasatch mountain range;

WHEREAS, the Central Wasatch Commission is a governing body created pursuant to the Mountain Accord charter and charged with implementing the negotiated outcomes of the Mountain Accord charter and whereas the Central Wasatch Commission created the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council to receive frequent and ongoing input with the numerous non-governmental stakeholders of the Central Wasatch mountain range;

WHEREAS, the Central Wasatch Commission seeks to renew and restate its commitment to the values and principles memorialized in the 2015 Mountain Accord Charter as it works in coordination with other governmental and non-governmental partners to take desired actions and implement solutions consistent with the principles and values of the Mountain Accord Charter that maintain the delicate balance of priorities for the Central Wasatch mountain range;

WHEREAS, the Central Wasatch Mountains are a treasured natural resource and we, the signers of this Compact, place a high value on the natural environment, wilderness qualities,

watershed health, and aesthetics of these mountains;

WHEREAS, the Central Wasatch Mountains are the primary source of drinking water for Utah's growing urban populations and are the reason the region flourishes in Utah's arid climate;

WHEREAS, the Central Wasatch Mountains are a vital ecological unit and policies governing the unit should work together in harmony, not diverge from one another, in the interest of improving the health of the land and our watersheds;

WHEREAS, the mountain environment offers diverse recreational experiences that promote active lifestyles and enhances the quality of life in the region;

WHEREAS, the Central Wasatch Mountains are an invaluable asset to the local and state economies, a beloved amenity for residents and companies that choose to locate in the region, and a key component of Utah's tourism industry;

WHEREAS, population growth and related increases in summer and winter use of the canyons, climate change, recreation use, traffic congestion, economic development pressures, land-use conflicts, and piecemeal and fragmented decision-making processes threaten the future health and viability of the mountains;

WHEREAS, the Central Wasatch Commission was created by interlocal agreement as a consensus-based body comprised of elected representatives from government and non-elected representatives of governmental entities with responsibilities in the Central Wasatch Mountains to engage with federal agencies, businesses, landowners, environmental, and recreation interests in and adjacent to both sides of the Mountains;

WHEREAS, this Central Wasatch Compact and the Central Wasatch Commission places a high value on public engagement, transparency, and the participation of all stakeholders;

WHEREAS, the Central Wasatch Commission has engaged commercial interests and private property owners as willing participants;

WHEREAS, the Central Wasatch Commission has brought together stakeholders and experts to consider future trends, visions, and goals for the Central Wasatch Mountains;

WHEREAS, the Central Wasatch Commission includes a Stakeholders Council and other processes for public comment and to collect feedback;

WHEREAS, public feedback reflects a desire to protect the integrity of this iconic landscape for its ecological values and outstanding opportunities for dispersed and commercial recreation; and,

WHEREAS, the Central Wasatch Commission received and incorporated public comment into

this Central Wasatch Compact.

Now, therefore, the undersigned signers of this Central Wasatch Compact agree as follows:

This Compact represents the consensus positions of the Central Wasatch Commission and undersigned parties ('the signers of the Compact'). It serves as a formal recommendation and documented reference for current and future decision-makers at the private, local, state, and federal levels.

The intent of the Compact is to benefit current and future generations by establishing an integrated, comprehensive, landscape-scale framework for the future of the Central Wasatch Mountains that provides for the long-term protection of the region's water, lands, environment, recreational opportunities, and economic prosperity. The signers of the Compact support a transportation system that serves these values.

The signers of the Compact agree to pursue federal, state, local, and private action for land designations, land exchanges, conservation easements, and transit/transportation solutions where agreement is reached among stakeholders to support such actions which are consistent with the values and principles of this Compact. The signers of the Compact recognize that action on transit/transportation solutions would likely require corresponding action developed through a public consensus-building process relating to land designations, land exchanges, or conservation easements in order to maintain the delicate balance of principles and values sought by the public and to protect the future health and viability of the mountains.

It is recognized by all signers of this Compact that while certain actions may be pursued, there are related conditions that have been outlined previously in the Mountain Accord or may be subsequently developed that must occur in conjunction with any contemplated federal, state, local, or private action as a condition for support for such action, in order to maintain the delicate balance of principles and values sought by the public and to protect the future health and viability of the mountains.

The signers agree to support the Compact and to work diligently and in good faith to adhere to the values and principles in the Compact – both as a whole and within their respective jurisdictions.

Specifically, the signers of the Compact restate these principles to guide decisions relating to the Central Wasatch:

- i. A natural ecosystem that is conserved, protected, and restored such that it is healthy, functional, and resilient for current and future generations.
- ii. A recreation system that provides a range of settings and accommodates current and increasing demand by encouraging high levels of use at thoughtfully designed locations (nodes) with convenient access, while protecting solitude, nature, and other backcountry values.
- iii. A sustainable, safe, efficient, multi-modal transportation system that provides year-round choices to residents, visitors, and employees; connects to the overall regional network; serves a diversity of commercial and dispersed recreation uses; is integrated within the fabric of community values and lifestyle choices;

supports land-use objectives, and is compatible with the unique environmental characteristics of the Central Wasatch.

- iv. Broadly shared economic prosperity that enhances the quality of life and preserves natural and scenic resources and infrastructure that is attractive, sustainable, and provides an opportunity for visitors and residents.

The signers of this Compact seek the following outcomes:

- i. To protect watersheds and ensure existing and future culinary water resources are reliable and of high quality. To preserve lands that provide critical terrestrial and aquatic habitats, corridors for wildlife, natural and scenic values, recreational opportunities and to restore degraded lands.
- ii. To designate certain U.S. Forest Service lands in the study area for additional federal protections. . To bind ski resort boundaries on public land within the federal designation.
- iii. To reduce the patchwork nature of public and private land ownership so that the U.S. Forest Service is managing undeveloped rather than developed lands. To consolidate U.S. Forest Service lands, to obtain inholdings, and to transfer privately held upper watershed lands with environmental and recreation values into public ownership.
- iv. To encourage development patterns that reduce sprawl and preserve open space, sensitive environments, community character, and quality of life in the mountains.
- v. To focus future development in urban areas near transit corridors.
- vi. To limit additional mountain development in the Cottonwood Canyons to clustered nodes within existing disturbed areas at the bases of the existing ski areas.
- vii. To recognize the rights of private property owners to develop their property as prescribed by existing local laws and ordinances.
- viii. To the extent mountain property is developed, the signers of the Compact agree to promote development with the following characteristics:
  - 1. thoughtfully designed to complement the natural setting and maintain open spaces,
  - 2. compatible with the communities as defined in local land-use plans and ordinances, and
  - 3. focused around transit stations to encourage walking, biking, and transit use, and to reduce single-occupancy automobile use.
- v. To seek plans, ordinances, and policies that support the land-use intentions and intended outcomes outlined in this section for the Cottonwood Canyons through cooperation with local land-use authorities, environmental organizations, property owners, businesses, and other interested parties.
- vi. To design a balanced recreation system with a wide variety of recreational opportunities for residents and visitors that will reduce the degradation of natural resources caused by such uses. To address the increasing visitor uses, and their impacts on the environment and respect competitor users in limited terrain. To focus recreation infrastructure at strategically located and designed nodes, to provide convenient access at these nodes, and to accommodate and manage growth in recreation uses. To integrate trail access with transit solutions.
- vii. To create transportation connections between the economic and population centers in the urban areas and the recreation destinations in the Central Wasatch Mountains

that support the environmental, recreation, and economic goals of the Compact and serve residents, businesses, and visitors. Such transportation connections should increase transit use, walking, and biking and decrease single-occupancy vehicle use. To focus transit improvements in locations that are compatible with the unique environmental character of the Central Wasatch Mountains.

- viii. To plan and implement transportation solutions in the canyons with the goal of reducing risks associated with avalanches, winter weather, rockslides, incidents, and other hazards and to improve emergency response capabilities and evacuation routes.

To achieve the outcomes described above, the signers of this Compact agree to pursue a comprehensive and interdependent package of actions including land exchanges, land designations, transportation improvements, environmental monitoring, visitor use management, and other actions. Because actions relating to the Central Wasatch are often interdependent, the signers recognize that any proposed individual actions may warrant negotiation, consensus-building, and other associated actions to maintain the balance of priorities desired for the Central Wasatch.

The signers of this Compact agree to continue to build upon public engagement efforts, to maintain public transparency, and to implement a disclosure procedure for conflicts of interest for future efforts.