

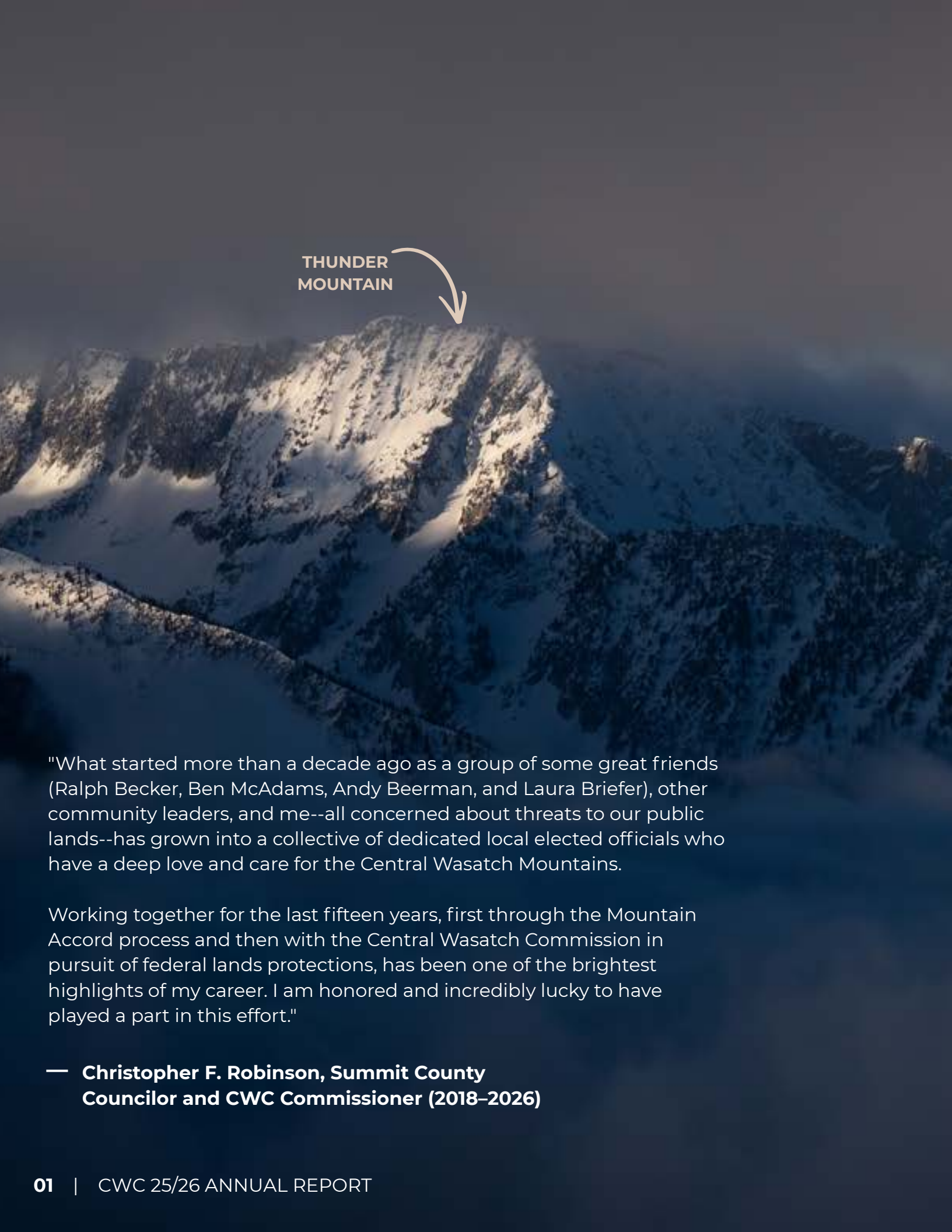


CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION

25/26 ANNUAL REPORT



CENTRAL
WASATCH
COMMISSION



THUNDER
MOUNTAIN

"What started more than a decade ago as a group of some great friends (Ralph Becker, Ben McAdams, Andy Beerman, and Laura Briefer), other community leaders, and me--all concerned about threats to our public lands--has grown into a collective of dedicated local elected officials who have a deep love and care for the Central Wasatch Mountains.

Working together for the last fifteen years, first through the Mountain Accord process and then with the Central Wasatch Commission in pursuit of federal lands protections, has been one of the brightest highlights of my career. I am honored and incredibly lucky to have played a part in this effort."

— **Christopher F. Robinson, Summit County
Councilor and CWC Commissioner (2018–2026)**



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Dear Central Wasatch Community,

This year someone asked me, “Is this worth it?” I had to laugh. The “this,” they were referring to was the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act, and the “it” was the slow, arduous process that is moving Congressional legislation that is bi-partisan, consensus-based, and community-driven, like the CWNCRRA.

We live in a time increasingly defined by efficiency and instant gratification. Concepts like “zero trust” and optimization have cemented in the cultural zeitgeist while artificial intelligence has become an almost inescapable feature of daily life. We are politically polarized and sometimes resort to base anger in our interactions with each other. “Third spaces” are disappearing and we are becoming more isolated and individually focused.

What do we do about this?

I personally go into nature to make these big problems feel small. I recently told the story of the first time my friends took me rock climbing outside. It was 2005, we climbed Draper’s Red Rock crag, and I was wholly mesmerized. There was just me, my breath, my hands and feet, and the mountain. The dilemmas vexing 16-year-old-Lindsey, whatever they were, fell away for the moment as rock climbing, like so many mountain sports, demands a degree of mental and physical presence that leaves little room for anything else. It’s a spiritual practice in that way.

And at the Central Wasatch Commission, we provide spaces for the profoundly human work of civil discourse. Through the CWC’s Board of Commissioners that collectively represents over 500,000 residents of the Central Wasatch Front and Back, the CWC’s Stakeholders and Youth Councils, as well as events like the Central Wasatch Symposium, we listen to understand, disagree when we must, negotiate, and more often than not, we find commonalities in issues that we once thought were impossible quagmires.

These community spaces mirror the very foundation of the CWNCRRA: separate and individual interests rejecting the “winner take all” approach to conflict and, through slow collaborative effort, coming to understand that these mountains are an interdependent web of interests and uses, and that none of us can fully achieve what matters to us without also considering what matters to someone else. This model of circular interdependence is exemplified by natural systems in the Central Wasatch Mountain range itself. A fallen tree becomes habitat for wildlife and eventually becomes soil. Water moves from the peak of Mount Superior to Little Cottonwood Creek to the Salt Lake Valley and the Great Salt Lake, and back again. The vitality and the sustainability of the whole depend on countless parts operating individually while remaining supportive of and connected to one another.

This is the beauty and genius of a broad piece of legislation that aims to achieve many things at once, like the CWNCRRA. Compromise becomes less about losing and more about creating something durable in which the needs of one part of the system support the needs of another.

Similarly, the theme of the CWC's 2025/2026 fiscal year was durability. Eight years have passed since the CWC was formed and first attempted to reintroduce the CWNCRRA to Congress, and over these eight years, and especially in FY 2025/2026, the CWC focused on solidifying and preparing its coalition of support for the legislation, so that when the opportunity to reintroduce to Congress arrives, the CWNCRRA is ready and reflective of the current landscape of needs in the Central Wasatch. Adding to the coalition of partners and support in 2025, both the City of Holladay and High Valley Transit, the new Wasatch Back transit agency that provides a transit connection between the Wasatch Back and the Wasatch Front, joined the CWC as enthusiastic members. Staff also asked member jurisdictions to increase membership contributions to offset inflation. Almost every single member jurisdiction did increase their contribution to the CWC, as a show of commitment to the work the CWC does and a continued belief in the CWNCRRA.

We also witnessed some changes to long-held federal land stewardship ideals and protections in 2025, including Congressional attempts to force the sale of public lands, and the proposed rescission of the Roadless Rule. These types of potential future threats to public lands were foreseen by the original architects of the Mountain Accord process and the CWNCRRA. People like Ralph Becker (then Salt Lake City Mayor), Laura Briefer (Salt Lake City Public Utilities Director), Andy Beerman (then Park City Mayor), Christopher F. Robinson (Summit County Council), and Ben McAdams (then Salt Lake County Mayor) saw the real potential of what could happen to the Central Wasatch without lasting and permanent protections ten years before what we weathered in 2025.

A new Congressional district was drawn onto Utah's map in 2025, and at the time of writing, Ben McAdams won the primary election and has the potential to return to Congress as a Federal Representative of the State of Utah in 2027. Ben has continued to express interest in and enthusiasm for the balance and protection the CWNCRRA would bring to the Central Wasatch, and could be a strong congressional champion for the legislation, should he win the general election in November.

This past year, like many of the past eight years, has been host to stretches of twelve-hour days for Sam, Will, and me, utter frustration when stakeholders walked away from the process, and moments when people seemed determined to misunderstand one another and the work itself. This all is part of the process, too, though. It is slower and more complicated than forging ahead with a singular plan for the Central Wasatch. But as we've seen acutely over the last year, the need for the kind of work the CWC does and the balance that the CWNCRRA would codify for the Central Wasatch is even more necessary today than in 2016 when Rep. Chaffetz first introduced the CWNCRRA to Congress.

So, after all of this, the answer to "is this worth it?"

Unequivocally, durably, and with patience, yes.

Onward—

Lindsey Nielsen

LINDSEY NIELSEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



THE COMMISSION

The Central Wasatch Commission's Board of Commissioners consists of mayors and council members within the CWC's jurisdictional boundary.

MAYOR ERIN MENDENHALL



Salt Lake City
Commission Chair

MAYOR ROGER BOURKE



Town of Alta
Commission Co-Chair

COUNCILOR CHRISTOPHER F. ROBINSON



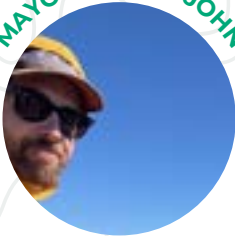
Summit County
Commission Treasurer & Secretary

MAYOR MONICA ZOLTANSKI



Sandy City
Commissioner

MAYOR SCOTTY JOHN



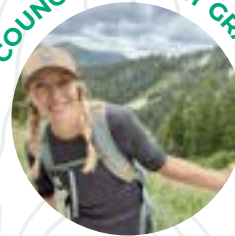
Town of Brighton
Commissioner

MAYOR GAY LYNN BENNION



Cottonwood Heights
Commissioner

COUNCILOR EMILY GRAY



City of Holladay
Commissioner

COUNCILOR BILL CIRACO



Park City
Commissioner

COUNCILOR BEV UIPI



Millcreek
Commissioner

CARLTON CHRISTENSEN



Utah Transit Authority
Ex-Officio Commissioner

ANNALEE MUNSEY



Metro. Water of Salt Lake & Sandy
Ex-Officio Commissioner

CAROLINE RODRIGUEZ



High Valley Transit
Ex-Officio Commissioner

AMBER BROADAWAY



Solitude Mountain Resort
Special Advisor

JACK STAUSS



Save Our Canyons
Special Advisor

JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARY & OUR MEMBERS



Central Wasatch Commission Jurisdictional Boundary

LINDSEY NIELSEN



Executive Director

Newly
hired!

SAM KILPACK



Director of
Operations

WILL MCKAY



Director of
Public Affairs

ANETTE GARCIA FUENTES



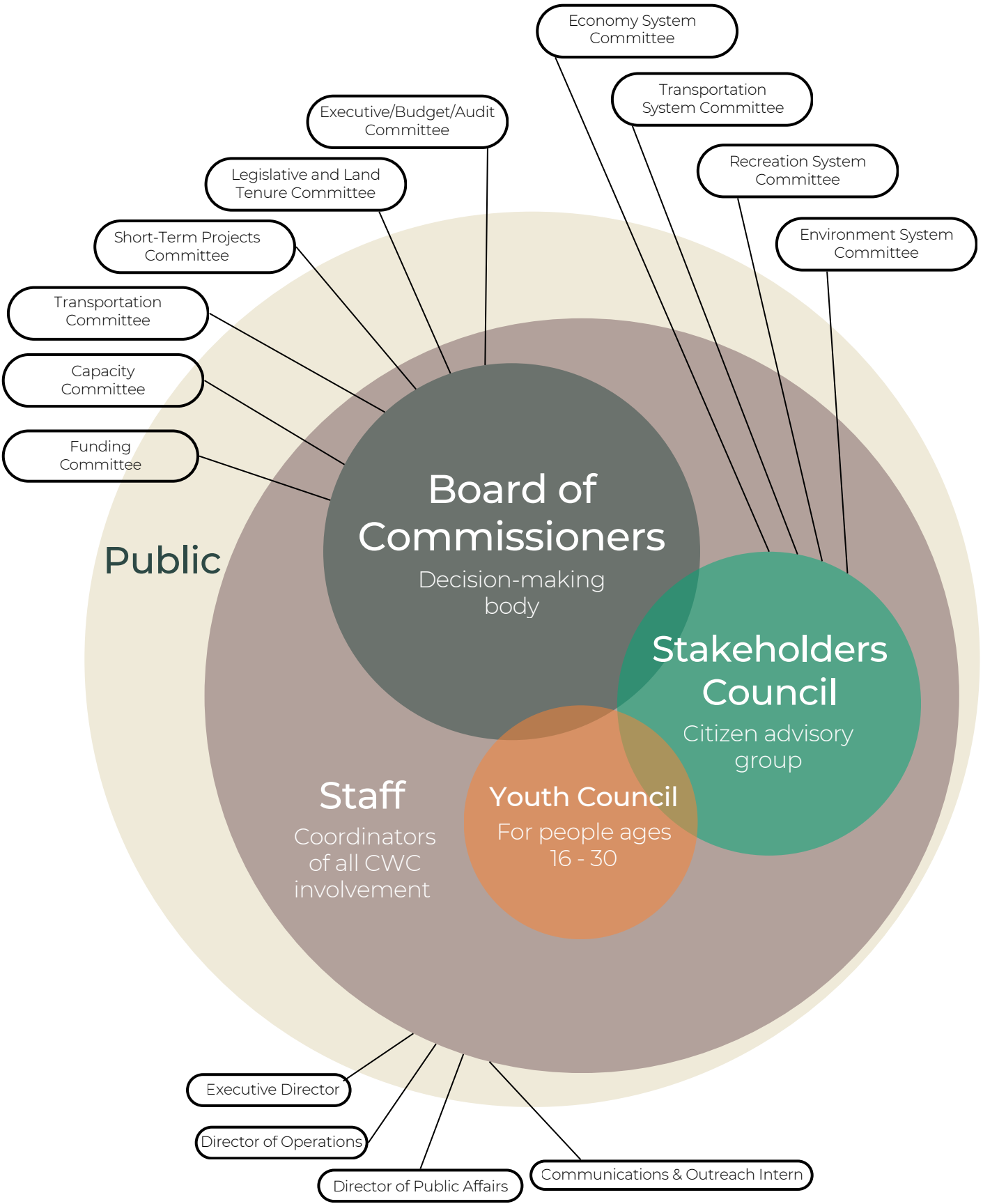
Communications
& Outreach Intern

BIRCHWOOD



Real
Executive Director

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL

There is perhaps no group as passionate about the Central Wasatch as our Stakeholders Council. This volunteer group of 35 citizens represent a variety of community interests and organizations throughout the Central Wasatch. They dedicate their time and energy to conducting research and fact-finding, discussing and formulating solutions to problems, learning from one another, and doing on-the-ground work to protect and steward the mountains they cherish. This group serves in an advisory capacity to the CWC Board and have successfully lobbied for the CWC to undertake significant projects, including a 3-year Visitor Use Study in the Central Wasatch and an update to the 2012 Millcreek Canyon Shuttle Feasibility Study.



Stakeholders Council Chair



Stakeholders Council Co-Chair

"The CWC Stakeholder's Council is committed to working to address urgent and ongoing issues in central Wasatch as well as engage the public in the CWC's mission of furthering transportation, economic viability, environmental sustainability, and recreational stewardship."

The membership of the Stakeholder's Council includes those who are not only passionate about the central Wasatch but also have specific expertise and long-term experience with these issues and region. Members are carefully selected to include broad representation from non-profit groups, business interests, academics, individual citizens, and those with expertise in areas relevant to the four systems groups.

The Stakeholder's Council has worked on projects and issues including the improvement of the Central Wasatch Dashboard, addressing enforcement of the traction law, considering development proposals in the canyons, engaging with long term planning such as the LCC EIS, BCC MAP, and Millcreek FLAP Grant, promoting diverse recreation with an urban hike guide, and investigating the importance of considering the capacity of the canyons in future decision making and planning."

- Maura Hahnenberger, Stakeholders Council Chair

REPRESENTED STAKEHOLDER ORGANIZATIONS



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE | CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU



COTTONWOOD
CANYONS
FOUNDATION



CWNCRA

CENTRAL WASATCH NATIONAL CONSERVATION RECREATION AREA ACT

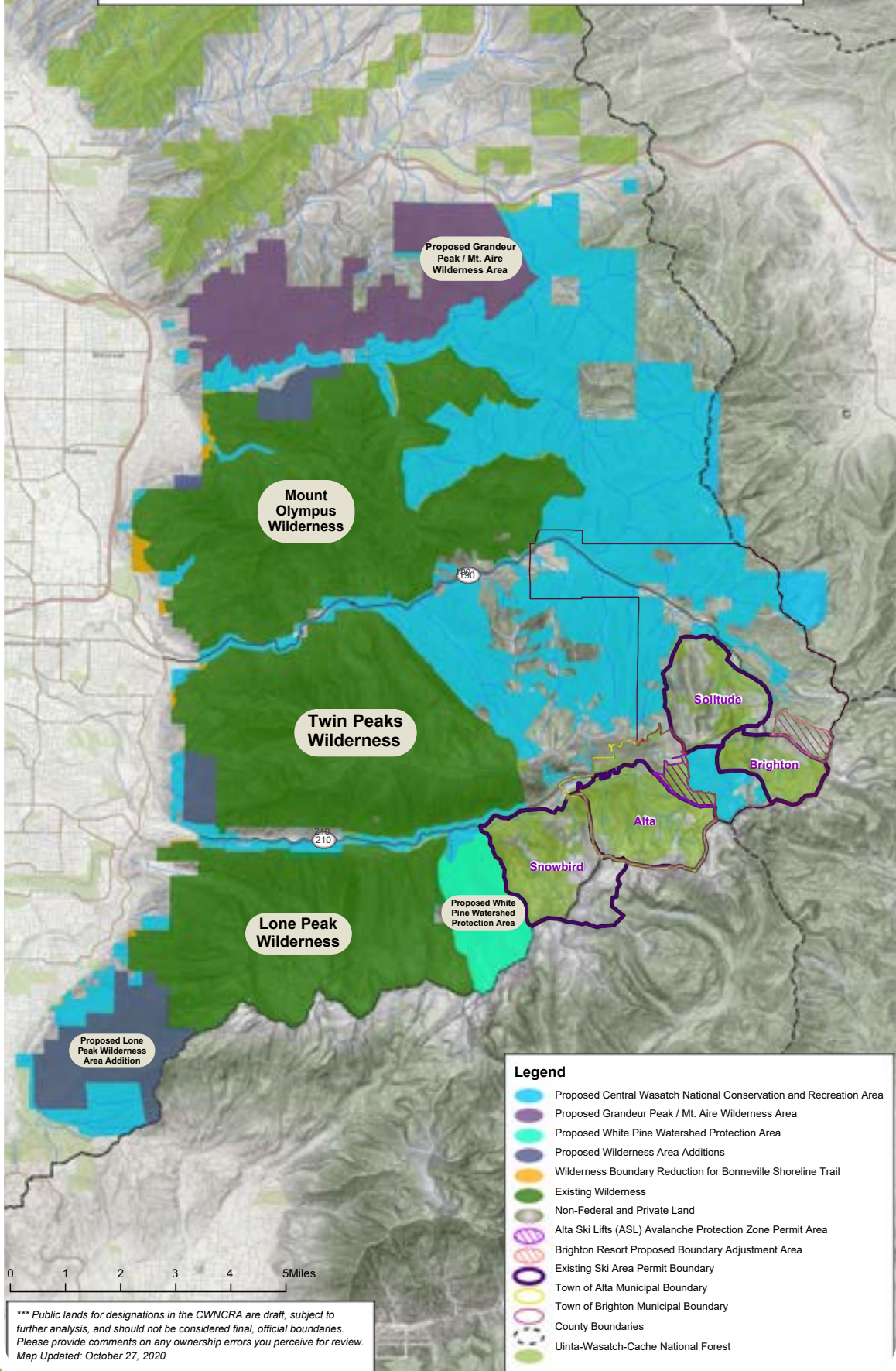
The Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act (CWNCRA) is a piece of federal legislation codifying essential components of the Mountain Accord Charter. After the Charter was signed in 2015, the first version of the CWNCRA was drafted and Congressman Jason Chaffetz ran the bill in 2016, but time ran out in the legislative session before it could advance past the House Natural Resources Committee. The Central Wasatch Commission was formally established in 2017 to continue working on the bill and carry out what was agreed to in the Charter. Updates to the bill with public input continued through October 2020, which is the most recent version of the bill. The CWC is now actively engaging in redrafting efforts for an introduction of the legislation into Congress by 2027. All referenced material and information in this report regarding the CWNCRA is subject to change with the upcoming new draft.



WHAT WOULD THE CWNCRA ACCOMPLISH?

- Designate about 80,000 acres of U.S. Forest Service land as a National Conservation and Recreation Area
- The creation of a new Mount Aire/Grandeur Peak Wilderness Area
- An addition to the existing Lone Peak Wilderness Area
- The creation of the White Pine Watershed Protection Area
- Express authorization for the expansion or construction of parking areas, trailheads, or restrooms within the NCRA if a need is identified
- Require the creation of a management plan for the NCRA within 3 years after the adoption of the bill that must:
 - Protect water quality and watershed resources
 - Protect environmentally sensitive areas
 - Manage natural resources
 - Promote public safety, including avalanche control
 - Facilitate year-round outdoor recreation

10/27/20 – Proposed Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area



ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL CONSERVATION AND RECREATION AREA

While some land would be designated as Wilderness or a special Watershed Protection Area, most of the land affected by the bill would be designated as a National Conservation and Recreation Area (NCRA), a novel designation with elements of a National Conservation Area and elements of a National Recreation Area. The following sections discuss the provisions and implications of this designation.

Affected Land

The CWNCRRA affects only Forest Service (federally-owned) land. The light blue shaded sections of the map on page 12 show the land that would be designated as a National Conservation and Recreation Area. The current landscape of the Central Wasatch Mountains is a patchwork of public and private ownership, and while the map shows the general areas that would be affected by the bill, there are pieces of non-federal (private, county, or municipal) land within the shaded area that would not be subject to the CWNCRRA.

Since the bill affects only federal land, private landowners who own property within the CWNCRRA boundaries would continue to have the same access to their property, and ownership of their land or property would not change in any way. The bill explicitly prohibits the condemnation and forced sale of privately owned land and does not allow any government to acquire land within the area through any means other than exchange, donation, or purchase from a willing seller. It does not require private property owners to allow public or government access to their property, nor does it modify any existing law respecting public access to or use of private land.

The four ski resorts that operate in the Cottonwood Canyons on Forest Service land by a Special Use Permit (SUP) issued by the Forest Service would continue to operate with no changes to their SUP. The land within the SUP is exempt from CWNCRRA designation, and current ski resort operations would not need to change based on the designation of the surrounding areas. The bill would, however, prohibit ski areas from expanding beyond their existing operating footprint.

The NCRA designation creates no protective perimeter or buffer zone around its perimeter, so activities or use outside or near the designated area would not be impacted.

Management Plan

The bill requires that the existing 2003 Forest Plan, which guides all natural resource management activities for the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache (UWC) National Forest (i.e. setting desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines for multiple uses such as recreation, timber, wildlife habitat, and watershed protection) would be amended within 3 years to include a new Management Plan.

The Management Plan would be developed by the Forest Service (the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest and the Salt Lake Ranger District) in consultation with appropriate state, tribal, and local governments, landowners within or adjacent to the Area, other key stakeholders such as ski resorts, and the public.

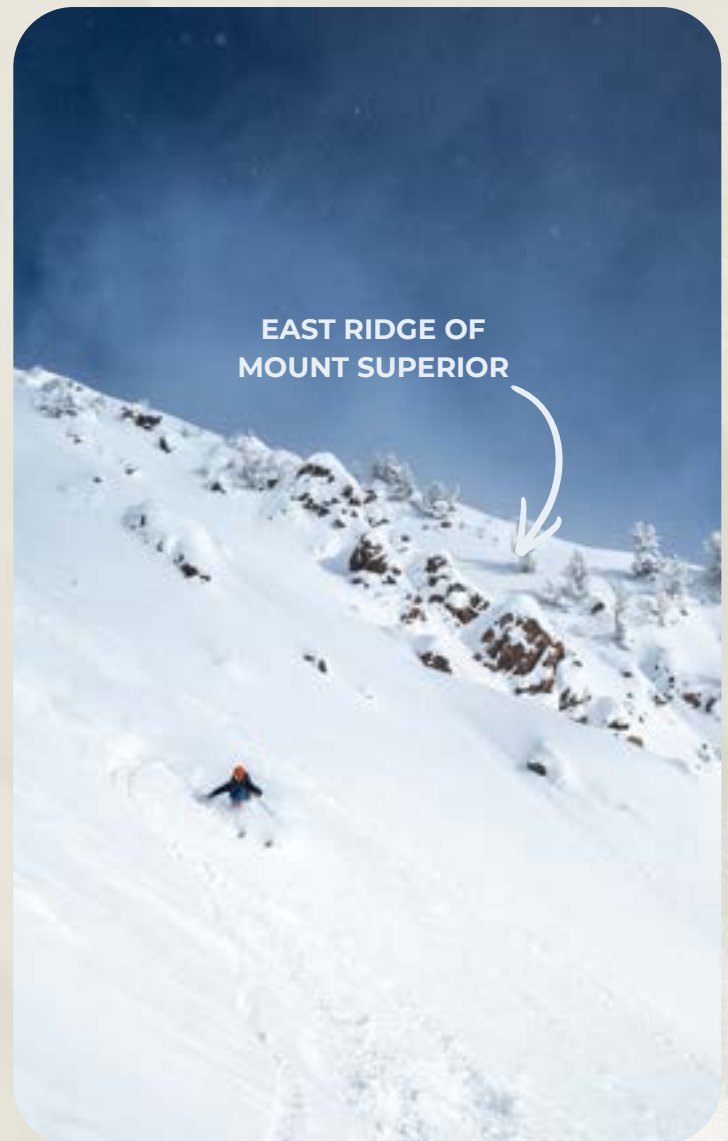
As dictated by the bill, an updated Management Plan would include standards and guidelines to protect water quality, protect environmentally sensitive areas, provide for restoration and adaptive management of natural resources, promote public safety (including through avalanche control), and facilitate year-round outdoor recreation. While the 2003 Forest Plan still in effect today was developed with year-2000 visitation levels, these new standards and guidelines would be developed within the context of current levels of use, which would provide increased resources to manage the area.

Limitation of Certain Uses and Activities

To protect against development and preserve the character of the Area, the CWNCRA would limit or prohibit three key activities:

Use of motorized and mechanized transport. Motorized vehicles and mechanized transport within the Area would be allowed, but limited to roads, trails, and areas designated for such use by the Management Plan, and as necessary for the administration of the NCRA or in responding to an emergency (see Public Safety section on page 15 for more on exceptions). This means that mechanized recreation like mountain biking would be allowed within the parameters of the new management plan.

Construction of new roads. While maintenance and reconstruction of existing roads would be permitted, construction of new roads within the Area would be prohibited except as necessary for administration of the Area or in responding to an emergency.



ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL CONSERVATION AND RECREATION AREA



This would protect the Area against disturbances (visual, soil, watershed, wildlife, vegetation) and against the potential rescission of the Roadless Rule, which is being pursued by the current administration. The absence of roads inherently protects against additional encroachment into wild and sensitive areas.

Ski area expansion. The Act would prohibit ski area expansion beyond its existing footprint. Having abundant

access to both developed and undeveloped (dispersed) recreation sites is an essential attribute that attracts visitors to the Central Wasatch. The land that the ski areas occupy is owned by the Forest Service and operated by the resorts through a Special Use Permit granted by the Forest Service, but the bill would not affect or limit ski area management, including the potential construction of additional lifts, within their permitted boundaries.

Public Safety

While the CWNCRRA prohibits most motorized transport and mechanized equipment, it specifically allows for their use for the purpose of wildland fire operations and fuels reduction activities. The bill does not prohibit or limit vegetation management projects, including fuels reduction activities within the area, though the protocol may be different. Emergency response to wildfire and other emergencies would not be impacted. The CWNCRRA does not affect UDOT's safety improvement activities, including avalanche mitigation work, or prevent installation of, access to, or maintenance of avalanche control devices.

Facilities

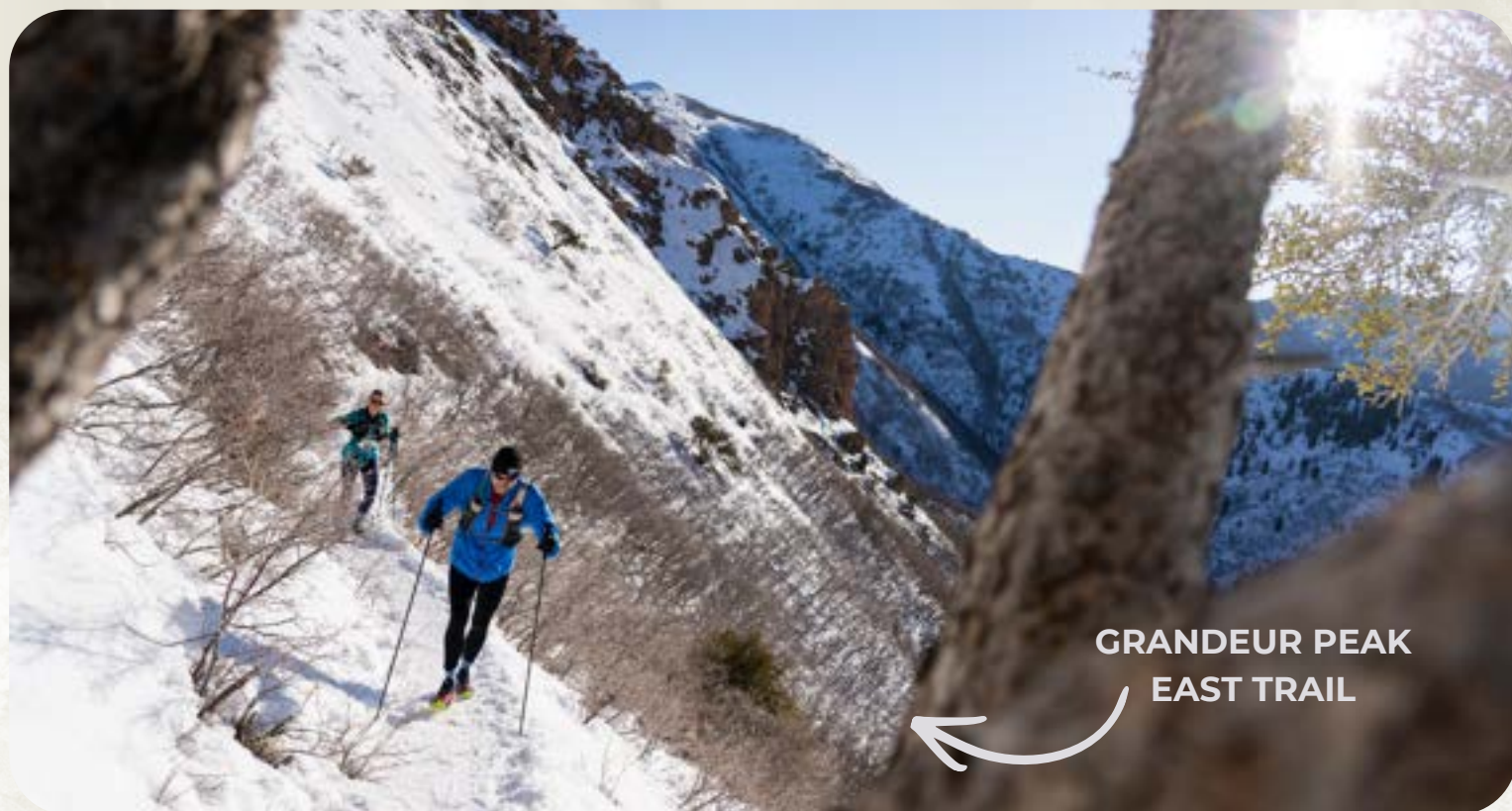
The CWNCRRA does not affect access to, or operation or maintenance of, existing facilities (water resource systems, flood control systems, electric energy systems, telecommunications systems, pipelines, parking areas, trailheads, and restrooms) located within the area. It would not prohibit the construction of new facilities or expansion of existing facilities but would require authorization by the Secretary of Agriculture (as advised by the Forest Service) in accordance with the CWNCRRA, the Management Plan, and applicable law.

Transportation

The bill was specifically designed not to interfere with existing transportation rules. The exception to this is that the construction of new roads within the area would be prohibited, which preserves the existing character of the area by limiting additional noise, disturbance, and development.

Transportation improvements and associated public amenities, such as roadway improvements, public transportation, mountain transportation systems, transit stops and stations, trails, trailheads, bike lanes, restrooms, and pedestrian infrastructure are expressly allowed under the bill for the purposes of facilitating year-round and varied recreation opportunities and improved access. These improvements and amenities would be governed by the Management Plan.

The bill would not alter transportation corridors (SR 210 and SR 190), prevent adjustments to them in accordance with the purposes of conservation and recreation access and NEPA, diminish or otherwise affect easements or rights-of-way or property rights held by UDOT, add to UDOT's permitting process for maintenance or improvement of transportation facilities, affect existing or future appropriations to UDOT, or limit UDOT's avalanche control, maintenance, and safety improvement activities.



ASSESSING FEDERAL DESIGNATION PATHWAYS FOR UTAH'S CENTRAL WASATCH MOUNTAINS

During the summer of 2025, Emory Schwieger interned with the Central Wasatch Commission and produced a thesis examining federal designation options for Utah's Central Wasatch Mountains.

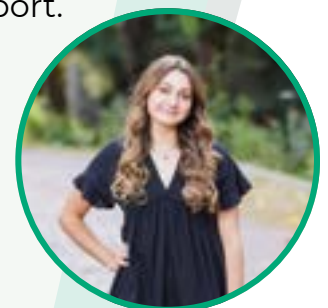
The thesis explores federal designation pathways for Utah's Central Wasatch Mountains, building on the Mountain Accord's collaborative vision and drawing precedent from the Sawtooth and Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Areas (NRAs). The Central Wasatch faces increasing pressures from recreation demand, ecological strain, and land-use conflict due to its popularity, economic importance, and critical watershed functions. Initiated in 2013, the Mountain Accord sought to establish a long-term vision for the region, culminating in the proposal for the **Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area (CWNCR)**, a hybrid federal designation designed to balance recreation and conservation objectives.

This research evaluates the CWNCR proposal through comparative analysis of existing federal models, including National Conservation Areas (NCAs) and National Recreation Areas (NRAs), to assess their management structures, policy goals, and applicability to the Central Wasatch. Case studies of the Sawtooth and Santa Monica Mountains NRAs demonstrate how established federal designations can integrate watershed protection, recreation access, and interagency coordination while promoting ecological and economic sustainability.

Based on stakeholder interviews, legislative analysis, and policy review, this study finds that the CWNCR's central goals, watershed protection, recreation management, land-use regulation, funding mechanisms, and special provisions, could be effectively achieved within an adapted NRA framework. The study concludes that establishing a durable federal framework, regardless of its specific title, is essential to codify the Mountain Accord's commitments and ensure that the Central Wasatch remains a national model of collaborative and sustainable mountain stewardship.

To read the full report, scan the QR code on the back of this annual report.

EMORY SCHWIEGER IS A RECENT GRADUATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH WITH A DOUBLE MAJOR IN ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES AND URBAN ECOLOGY.



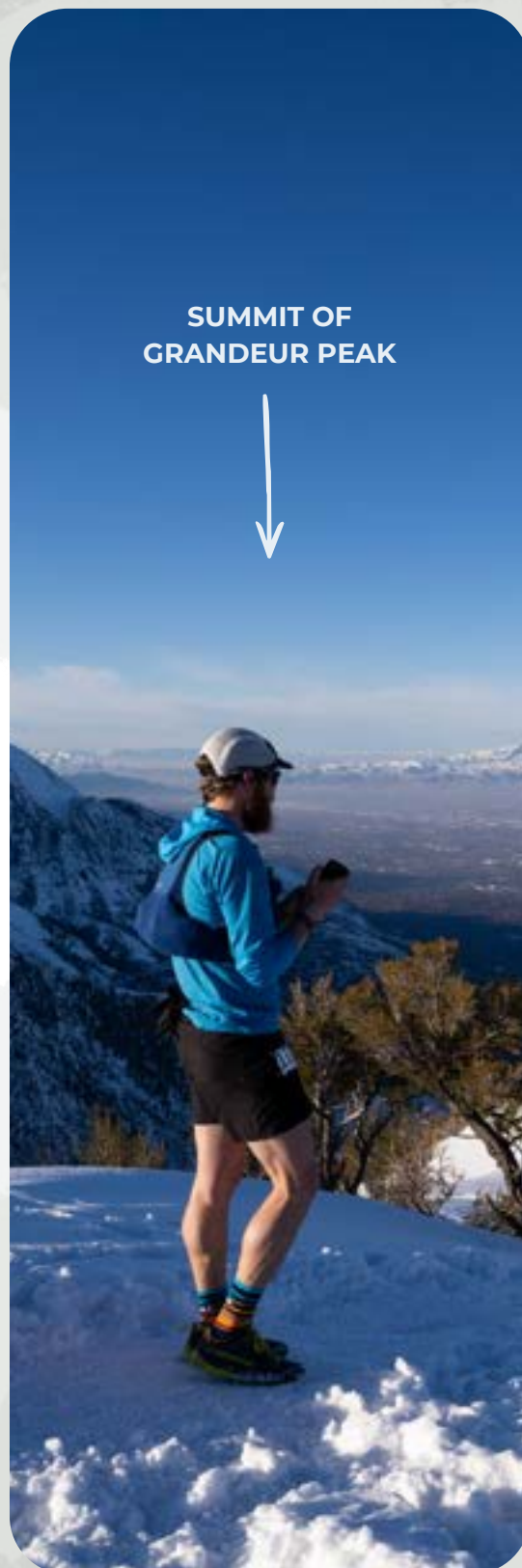
Type of Federal Land Designations

Designation	Purpose	Process	Permanance
National Conservation and Recreation Area	Novel designation designed to address the complex mix of recreation, watershed management, ecosystem health, and transportation infrastructure, and jurisdictional complexity.	Designated by Congress	Permanent. Can only be designated (or undone) with an act of Congress.
National Park	Preserve, unimpaired, natural and cultural resources and values for enjoyment, education, and inspiration for current and future generations.	Designated by Congress	Permanent. Can only be designated (or undone) with an act of Congress.
National Forest	Provide a variety of uses and values, including consumptive use, recreation, habitat, and wilderness – without impairing the land's productivity.	Designated by Congress, President, or Secretary of Agriculture (Organic Administration Act of 1897)	Permanent. Can be designated (or undone) with an act of Congress, or can be administratively exchanged.
National Monument	Protect sites with natural areas and areas of cultural, historical, and archaeological significance.	Designated by President or Congress (Antiquities Act of 1906).	Semi-permanent. Can be designated (or undone) by both Congress or the President.
National Recreation Area	Primarily recreation access and balancing tourism with land protection.	Designated by Congress.	Permanent. Can only be designated (or undone) with an act of Congress.
National Conservation Area	Protect natural resources, cultural landscapes, and historical sites. Offer ecological, cultural, or scenic value.	Designated by Congress.	Permanent. Can only be designated (or undone) with an act of Congress.
Wilderness Area	Protect opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation, preserving land undisturbed and unshaped by human activity.	Designated by Congress using the Wilderness Act of 1964.	Permanent. Can only be designated (or undone) with an act of Congress.

ESTABLISHMENT OF ADDITIONAL WILDERNESS

The Central Wasatch is currently home to three Wilderness Areas: The Mount Olympus Wilderness, the Twin Peaks Wilderness, and the Lone Peak Wilderness (all shown in green on the map on page 12). While most of the land affected by this bill would be designated a National Conservation and Recreation Area, there are some particularly sensitive and pristine areas that would be designated as Wilderness, which is the strongest protection that can be placed on public lands, preserving an undisturbed quality that promotes reflection, solitude, connection with nature, and primitive recreation. Each of the existing Wilderness Areas would have a new section of land incorporated (dark blue areas on the map), and a new Mount Aire/Grandeur Peak Wilderness Area would be established (purple area on the map), adding approximately 8,000 total acres of new Wilderness to the tri-canyon area. As originally drafted, the bill would also have made small adjustments to existing Wilderness Areas to allow for the alignment of the multi-use Bonneville Shoreline Trail. However, this has since been achieved by the 2022 Bonneville Shoreline Trail Advancement Act.

The biggest impact a Wilderness designation has on recreation opportunities is that it bars motorized or mechanized implements, which include drones, bicycles, and anything with wheels. This means that, while activities like hunting would still be allowed, there would be changes to how it must be done, such as packing game out on foot without the use of a cart. Drones would not be permitted for scouting or filming. Mountain biking would also not be permitted in Wilderness areas but would continue to be permitted within the National Conservation and Recreation Area.



ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WHITE PINE WATERSHED PROTECTION AREA



The purposes of the White Pine Watershed Protection Area are to a) ensure the protection and preservation of the outstanding water quality, scenery, and fish and wildlife habitat of the area; and b) provide for the conservation of the recreation, historic, scientific, and cultural resources within the area. The only authorized uses of the land in the area are those that further the above-outlined purposes. The Watershed Protection Area would function similarly to Wilderness, but the land was not suitable for Wilderness designation due to an existing water treatment facility and existing permits for heliskiing. Because the bill does not usurp any existing permits or rights, and because current activities and conditions on the otherwise pristine land make it unsuitable for a Wilderness designation, a special Watershed Protection Area was devised to preserve existing rights and activities while also preserving the untamed character of the land.

Affected Land

The proposed White Pine Watershed Protection Area is an 1,800 -acre area that abuts the Lone Peak Wilderness Area directly to the east (shown in teal in the map on page 12). As discussed above, this bill has no effect on non-federal land. The ownership, management, use, or improvement of non-federal land or interests in land, including water rights, would not be affected, and existing laws and regulations regarding private property would govern.

Motorized Access

Similar to a Wilderness area, motor vehicles and mechanical transport would be prohibited except for administrative purposes and responding to emergencies. Motorized access by local municipalities, water districts, water systems, and public and private utilities for the purposes of maintaining and protecting water resources would not be limited. But unlike a Wilderness Area, heliskiing is permitted due an existing heliskiing permit for the area.

Facilities

Permanent structures may not be constructed or installed in the Watershed Protection Area, though existing structures can be modified or reconstructed if authorized by the Secretary.

CENTRAL WASATCH SYMPOSIUM



*"Ten years after the Mountain Accord, we have a chance to step back together and take stock of the work that's shaped the Central Wasatch," said **Erin Mendenhall, Central Wasatch Commission Chair and Mayor of Salt Lake City.** "This symposium brings people who care deeply about these mountains into the same room—partners, experts, and community members—to talk honestly about what's working, what's changing, and what comes next. We're especially looking forward to having Darren Parry with us to help frame that conversation with his insight."*



- 2 days
- 200+ attendees
- 10 volunteers
- 9 exhibitors
- 11 presentations
- 5 panel discussions

A huge thank you goes out to Millcreek for once again donating their incredible space for the Central Wasatch Symposium!

CENTRAL WASATCH DASHBOARD

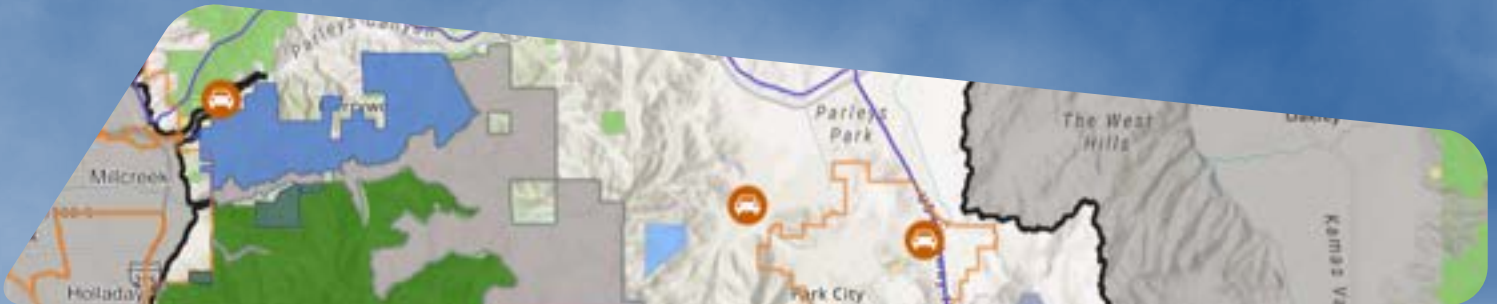
The Central Wasatch Dashboard is a tool for the public, land managers, policy makers, and technical users. Explore air quality and climate, geology and soils, vegetation communities, water, wildlife, and the human element to learn about historic and current environmental conditions of the Central Wasatch Mountains.

NEW LANDING PAGE MAP

In response to an idea from the Stakeholders Council in 2024, the Central Wasatch Dashboard's landing page now features a new interactive map showing land ownership, municipal and administrative boundaries, and proposed CWNCRAs designations. Clickable icons link to air quality and traffic data at counter and webcam locations, and clickable streams lead to water data pages. The six Dashboard icons remain the primary navigation, with the map offering additional ways to explore.



**Scan to visit
the Dashboard!**



**EAST FACE OF
FLAGSTAFF**



UPDATING THE MILL CREEK SHUTTLE FEASIBILITY STUDY

The CWC completed an updated Mill Creek Shuttle Feasibility Study in early 2026, examining a Mill Creek Canyon shuttle as a transit solution first identified in the 2012 Mill Creek Canyon Transportation Feasibility Study and again in 2015 by Mountain Accord. Drawing on a review of past studies and existing conditions, parking demand calculations, staging area scoping, an assessment of shuttle operations' impact on recreation fees, and cost estimates, the final report concludes that a Mill Creek Canyon shuttle is a feasible transit option, offering a solution to growing visitation and parking congestion in the canyon.

Developed by Salt Lake City-based transportation planning firm Fehr & Peers, the study outlines two potential summer shuttle service plans running June through October, 10 hours a day on Fridays through Sundays, with routes of up to seven stops and shuttles carrying up to 25 passengers each.

YOUTH

The Central Wasatch Commission Youth Council is an opportunity for young people to participate with the Central Wasatch Commission as it addresses transportation, economic, recreation, and environmental issues in the Central Wasatch Mountains. The Youth Council serves as an educational forum for its members and provides a platform for young people to engage directly with the Central Wasatch Commission on issues that affect them as residents of Utah and as users and stewards of the Central Wasatch.

Current Youth Council Members: Dylanger McKissen, Jillian Perry, Lars Bergstrom, Shiv Sondhi, Kent Wu, and Alden Rhodes



COUNCIL

The canyons in Utah are my backyard. I grew up with them and watched as they went from pure white in the winter, to bright green in the spring, to red and orange in the fall. I have been recreating in the canyons since I was a little kid. My family always looked for an opportunity to hike, ski, snowshoe, or even have a picnic in the canyons. Going into the canyons to recreate is now second nature to me. No matter the weather or the season, there is always something to do whether that is just taking a drive to see the views, or exploring the backcountry through its numerous trails.

Personally, my favorite recreational activity is hiking. The trail that I find myself coming back to each and every year is the Cecret Lake hike at Alta Ski Resort. This hike has been a staple in my family since we moved to Utah in 2013. It was one of the first hikes we went on and it is a great and unique experience each time we walk the trail. Overall, recreating in the canyons is something that is a must do in the state of Utah. The canyons in Utah feel like my backyard. I've grown up with them, watching them change through every season. In the winter, everything is covered in pure white snow. By spring, it turns bright green, and in the fall, the leaves shift to deep reds and oranges. No matter the time of year, the canyons always feel alive.

Some of my earliest memories are in the canyon. My family was always looking for a reason to go, whether it was hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, or even just packing food and having a picnic. Over time, going into the canyon stopped feeling like a "trip" and just became part of life. It's where we go to get outside, reset, and spend time together.

Now it's second nature for me to head up the canyon. It doesn't matter if it's snowing, sunny, or somewhere in between. There's always something to do. Sometimes it's as simple as driving up to take in the views, and other times it's exploring deeper on trails that feel hundreds of miles from everything else. If I had to pick one thing I enjoy most, it would be hiking. There's something about being on a trail, surrounded by mountains, that makes everything else feel quieter. One hike I keep coming back to every year is the trail to Cecret Lake at Alta Ski Area. It's been a tradition in my family since we moved to Utah in 2013. It was one of the first hikes we ever did here, and even though I've done it so many times, it never feels repetitive. The views change, the water looks different, and every time feels a little new. The best time to visit Cecret Lake in my opinion is late in the evening. The sun sets late in the summer, and allows you to be up there until 8 or 9pm. The weather is perfect, not too warm, not too cool. The trail slowly gets more challenging as you progress making the completion of the hike more satisfying. The pleasant sound of the crickets chirping and the stream water gushing fills your mind with happiness. The water is cool and refreshing on a hot day and there are great views to take pictures of. Oftentimes, my family eats dinner there, sitting on a rock and looking over the lake and mountains in the background.

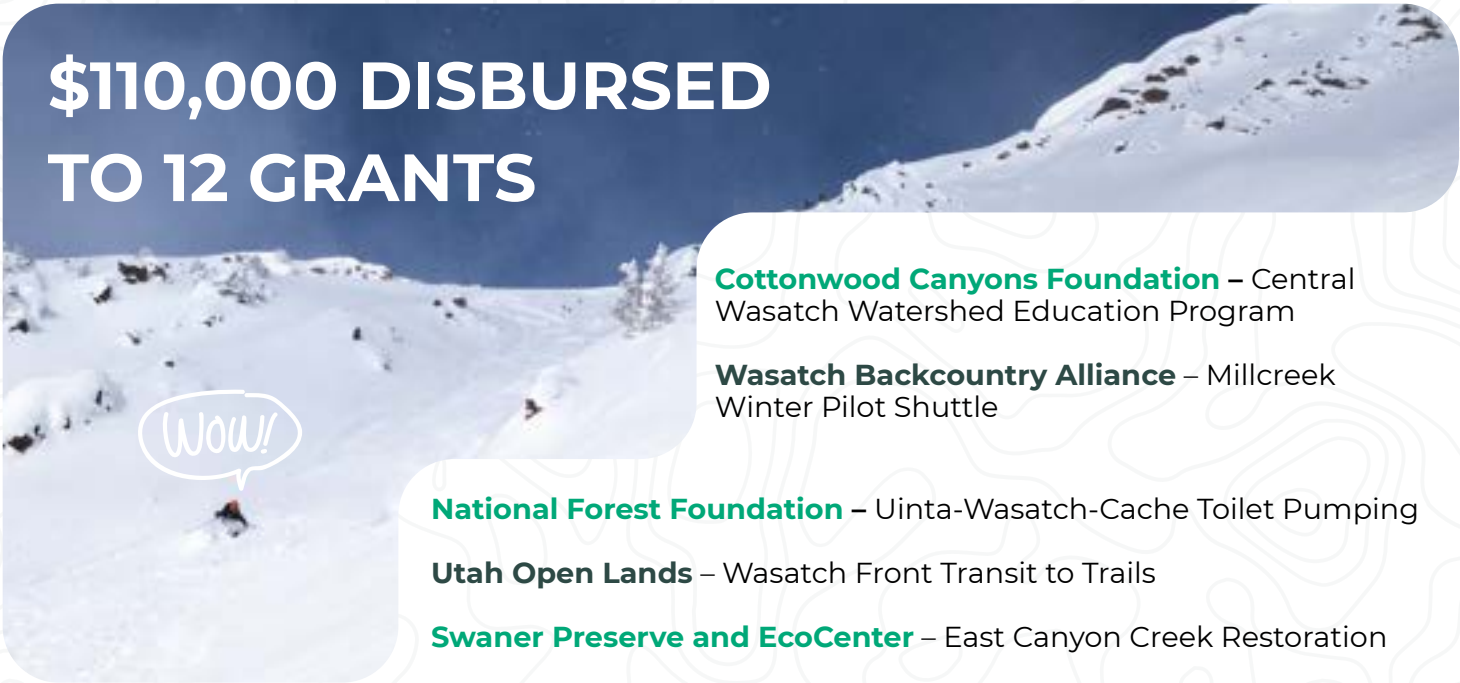
For me, the canyons aren't just a place to go. They're a part of how I've grown up. They're where I've made memories with my family, tried new things, and learned to appreciate nature in a way I probably wouldn't have otherwise.

SHIV SHONDI
YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBER



SHORT-TERM PROJECTS GRANT PROGRAM

*"The Central Wasatch Commission is pleased to fund twelve separate programs and projects from organizations working to steward recreational access, sustain the ecosystems, and champion transit solutions within the Central Wasatch," said **Emily Gray, Chair of the Central Wasatch Commission Short-Term Projects Committee and Holladay City Councilor**. "These projects and programs align with the commitment of the CWC and the broader community to preserving our beloved mountains."*



**\$110,000 DISBURSED
TO 12 GRANTS**

Cottonwood Canyons Foundation – Central Wasatch Watershed Education Program

Wasatch Backcountry Alliance – Millcreek Winter Pilot Shuttle

National Forest Foundation – Uinta-Wasatch-Cache Toilet Pumping

Utah Open Lands – Wasatch Front Transit to Trails

Swaner Preserve and EcoCenter – East Canyon Creek Restoration

Cottonwood Canyons Foundation – Tri-Canyons Sustainable Trail and Habitat Restoration Program

Summit Cooperative Weed Management Area – 910 Ranch-East Canyon Creek Corridor Cooperative Priority Weed Management Project

Salt Lake Climbers Alliance – Fixed anchor maintenance for Wasatch rock climbing routes

Wilderness Stewardship Project & Save Our Canyons – Volunteer projects and educational kids programs

Save People Save Wildlife – SR-224 Wildlife Connectivity & Safety Project, Phase 2: Implementation Readiness & Targeted Mitigation

Central Wasatch Commission Youth Council – Central Wasatch Youth Symposium

Utah Wildlife Federation – Advocacy and education programs

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

SALT LAKE CLIMBERS ALLIANCE: ANCHOR MAINTENANCE

With support from the Central Wasatch Commission's Short-Term Projects Grant Program, the Salt Lake Climbers Alliance continued its professional anchor maintenance program to improve safety and sustain recreational climbing access throughout the Wasatch. The project focused on replacing aging and unsafe climbing hardware with modern stainless-steel bolts and anchors on established routes. In 2025 alone, crews maintained more than 1,200 bolts across 27 climbing areas, including Little Cottonwood Canyon, Big Cottonwood Canyon, American Fork Canyon, Rock Canyon, Maple Canyon, and Indian Creek, helping keep popular climbing routes safer, more reliable, and accessible for the public.

"I'm incredibly proud of the quality of work and results of SLCA's anchor maintenance program. As the nation's first professional anchor maintenance crew, we are setting the standard for fixed anchor stewardship and ensuring that Wasatch climbing resources remain safer and more sustainable for future generations. Retaining a highly skilled crew and preserving this specialized expertise requires sustainable funding, and support from partners like the Central Wasatch Commission is essential to keeping this important work moving forward." — **Julia Geisler, Executive Director, Salt Lake Climbers Alliance**



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Scan the QR code to see
what we're up to!

292 followers on X

654 followers on Facebook

2,262 followers on Instagram

623 followers on Tiktok

15

tabling days

55

newsletters sent

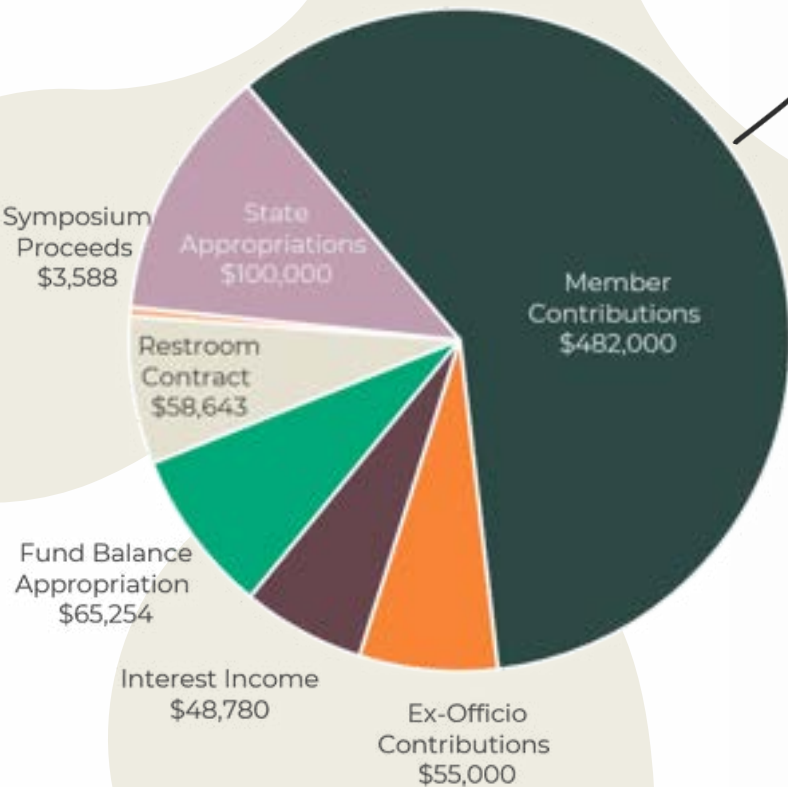
2,837

subscribers

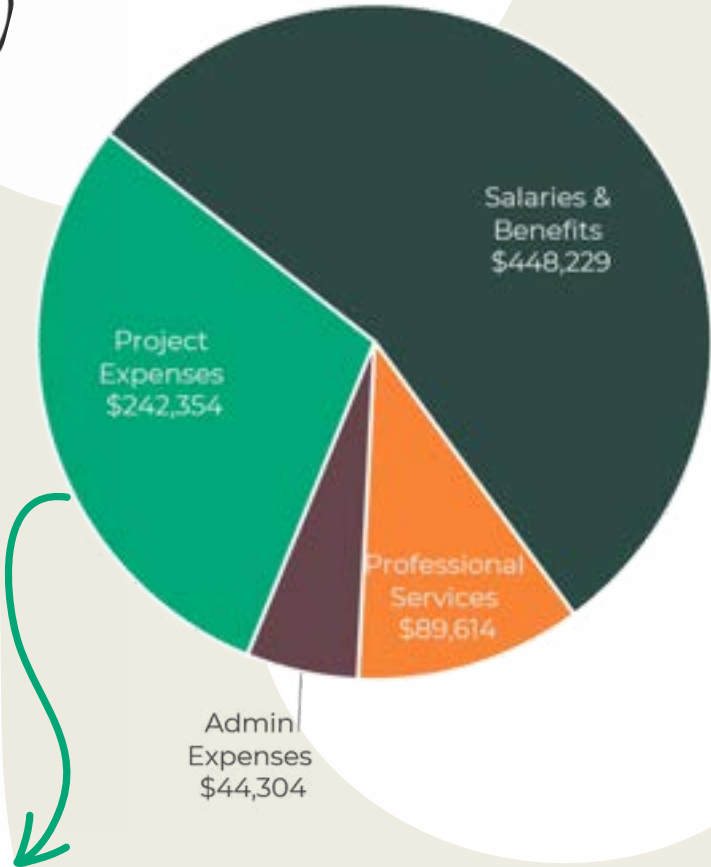
Our member jurisdictions (listed on page 6) enable the existence of the CWC through their annual contributions, which cover the operational costs of the organization and some project work. Support from the state exclusively funds the CWC’s project work.

FINANCES

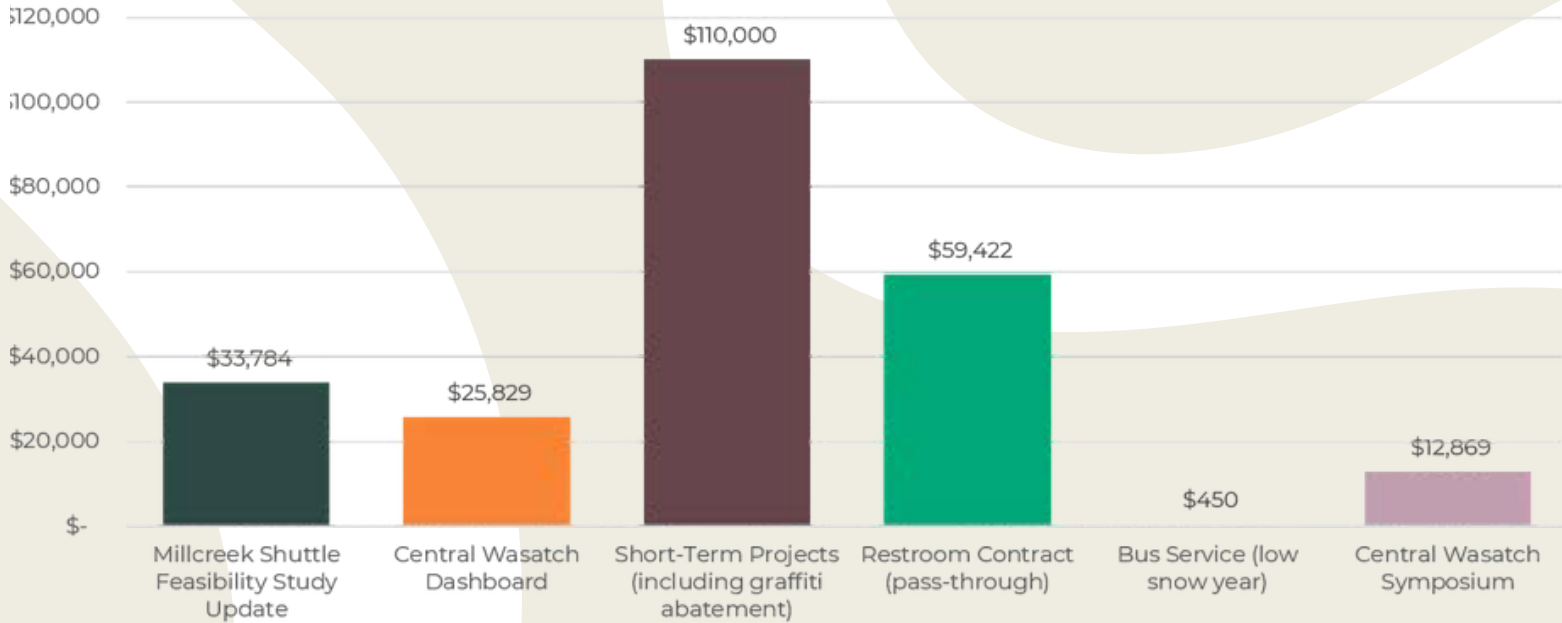
2025-2026 Income (Actual)



2025-2026 Spending (Actual)



2025-2026 Project Spending (Actual)



A special thanks to the Central Wasatch Commission's Board of Commissioners, Stakeholders Council, and Youth Council for their dedication, and Millcreek City Hall and staff for hosting many CWC public meetings.

A special thanks to Will McKay for providing the images in this year's annual report.

Thank you!

RIDGE BETWEEN
SUPERIOR & MONTE CRISTO





CENTRAL
WASATCH
COMMISSION

***“If we lose the Central
Wasatch Mountains,
what are we left with?”***

-Terry Tempest Williams



cwc.utah.gov

Protecting the Central Wasatch through canyon transportation improvements, pathways for concentrated development, and environmental and recreational stewardship.