



**Rocky Mountain Conservancy
Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes
October 14, 2022
In-Person at The Ridgeline Hotel & Conference Center**

Board Members: Brian Ross, Walt Borneman, Lynne Geweke, Jan Robertson, Charles Cofas, Katherine Dines, Joel Mayo, Claudine Perrault, Jim Pickering, Howdy Fry, Kim Skyelander, Rich Fedorchak

Staff: Estee Rivera Murdock, Carolyn Carlson, Jess Willuweit, Chris Wenzel, Carlie Bangs, Ian Stafford, Madison Abbott, Mia Axon, Lisa Oakley, Steven Ochoa – Diversity Intern Cohort Coordinator

National Park Service Guests: Darla Sidles - Superintendent, Kim Swift - Chief of Interpretation, Carly Adams – Executive Assistant

Absent: Christina Kraft, Zac Wiebe, Tim Davis

Call to Order – 8:58 AM

Approval of the Board Meeting Minutes – June 24, 2022 & Specific Grant Hall Board Meeting – August 25, 2022

- Motion – To approve two prior meeting minutes with no questions or corrections
 - **Motion:** Walt Borneman, Second – Jim Pickering, no objections, no abstentions, unanimously approved

Review of 2022 Financials:

- Operations & Finance Committee – **Jess Willuweit** presented on:
 - Highlights
 - Financials trending positively – nice revenue increase in organization
 - Through Aug 2022, Product Sales at \$4.5M compared to \$3.8M in 2021
 - Inventory is remaining consistent – doing our best to stay in front of sourcing/inventory challenges
 - Through Aug 2022, Operational Revenue \$715K compared to \$640K in 2021
 - Admin Operational Revenue \$513K compared to \$320K in 2021 – increase due to Young-Pierce property donation
 - Through Aug 2022, unrestricted net assets at \$13.8M compared to \$14.7M in 2021
 - Through Aug 2022, temporarily restricted assets at \$1.7M compared to \$2.8M – variance due to Brand Land property
 - Through Aug 2022, Operational net assets at \$6.2M compared to \$4.7 in 2021
 - Through Aug 2022, realized gains of \$239K from bulk of Field Institute building sale and vehicle trade-in values
 - Board approved a total of \$3,082,636.57 in total projects for 2023 (Breakdown: \$2,163,360.00 in RMNP projects and \$919,276.57 in RMC projects)
 - Total projected available funding at \$4,369,804, excluding the funds designated for Grant Hall
 - Organizational net worth up at \$22M

Philanthropy Committee Report:

- Philanthropy Committee – **Walt Borneman, Katherine Dines and Mia Axon** presented on:
 - Reviewed 2022 Philanthropy Plan, Donors and Gifts
 - Mia Axon brought on as a Consultant after Michael Allen's departure, with 4 main areas of focus:
 - Assessment of Program – Necessary positions (Director of Philanthropy, Marketing, etc.)
 - Nurturing and Mentoring role to Philanthropy Department Staff
 - Strong push for a good 4th quarter – Annual Appeal & Colorado Gives Day
 - Develop 2023 Plan - Major fundraising, retain donor database and continue to grow
 - YTD 2022 fundraising total at \$705K vs. \$1.9M in 2021 – still pushing on to finish 2022 strong, as 2022 budget goal is \$1.2M

- Overall Philanthropy is trending positively
- Dr. Richard Hoffman has pledged another \$50K in 2023 for trail work – Thank you!
- YTD Gross Membership total is \$109K, down so far from the projected \$172K goal
- Develop, Lead, Nurture campaign where tiers are synergistic between donors, members, park volunteers – making personal calls to donors, making connections and effort to maintain relationships
- Coordinating rollout of Annual Appeal Letter print and mail pieces in November 2022
- Special initiatives include general solicitation, major donors, and Lead & Nurture campaign – Every donor is important!
- Wine & Cheese Holiday Celebration to be held in person at the FRVC on 11/05/22 – anticipation of a successful event
- Colorado Gives Day on 12/06/22 – marketing and social media updates to be rolled out. Welcome board member involvement in donor engagement with phone calls
- Looking ahead to smaller project specific fundraising campaigns - Bear Boxes, Grant Hall appliances and furnishings, etc.

Investment Committee Report:

- Investment Committee - **Howdy Fry** presented on:
 - Transition to Vanguard has been a success
 - Thank you to Jess, Carolyn and Investment Committee for time in facilitating and their diligence in the transition from TPF to Vanguard
 - Thank you to Howdy for all time and effort in RFPs during transition from TPF to Vanguard
 - Total endowment balance at \$9,659,218.72 as of Oct 2022
 - Market is in current state of fluctuation. Economy and stock are on hard times - patience is key. Currently down 22% YTD in value.

Ad Hoc Committee Reports:

- Facilities Committee – **Charles Cofas** presented on:
 - Completed acquisition of the Young-Pierce property
 - Sold Field Institute building
 - Grant Property Update: workforce housing/fellows & RMNP needs
 - Nate Kinley applied for building permit on 09/19/22. Expectation is approximately 6-8 weeks for approval
 - Anticipate construction groundbreaking in November 2022
 - AIA contracts currently in process
 - Providing oversight, Steve Lane will be at the site weekly to assess work completed and billed accurately
 - 3rd Party Contractor, Mattias Borrman of Borrman Consulting, obtained for transparency, to audit and compare disbursements with site progress to make sure the financial side of the projects moves along with (and not ahead of) the actual site progress
 - Thank you to Charles Cofas for countless hours championing this project

Education Committee Report:

- Education Committee – **Kim Skyelander** presented on:
 - Carlie Bangs, Education Director was hired in May 2022
 - In process of learning all past projects, classes, Field Institute programs and how to build out the Education Program as we look ahead to 2023 and beyond
 - Welcome new members to the Education and Field Institute team – Danielle Wolf, Field Institute Coordinator and Olivia Gonzales as the Brown Family Foundation Education Fellow
 - Successful rollout of 2022 Bettie Courses (named after pioneering botanist Bettie Willard) focusing on programs that introduce women and those that identify as women to the outdoors. Programs emphasize science, ecology and building skills and confidence
 - Climbing the Thumb – 10/1/22, 10 registered, 8 showed up, 6 on full scholarship
 - Stream Ecology, 10/8/22-10/9/22, 12 registered, stats TBD
 - Successful implementation of Outdoor Exploration Club – K-2 and 3-5 groups both full
 - Local family day was a success! 14 local Estes Park families, including 25 children walked around Lily Lake. This was a trial program to seek interest for family program opportunities on no-school days.
 - Beginning to schedule 2023 courses – 3 confirmed so far

- Scenic Eco Tours (Bus Tours) up and running! Multiple private tours occurring as well as consistent Thurs/Sat/Sun tours
- Winter Park Field Institute field trip – Headwaters Discovery Center – updating ways to tell the story of RMNP

Executive Committee Report:

- Executive Committee – **Brian Ross** presented on:
 - Laurie Mathews has been approached about joining the Board of Directors. Term would begin in Feb 2023.
 - **Motion:** To accept Laurie Mathews onto the RMC Board of Directors
 - Motion – Katherine Dines, Second – Howdy Fry, no objections, no abstentions, unanimously approved to accept Laurie onto the Board of Directors
- 2023 Park Project Funding & Aid Funding & RMC Project Funding – **Estee Rivera** presented on:
 - Reviewed spreadsheet containing each of the 2023 RMNP asks
 - Total 2023 RMNP Request total: \$2,324,159.93
 - RMNP Projects - \$2,163,359.93
 - Aid - \$160,800.00
 - Total 2023 RMC Project Request total: \$919,276.57
 - RMC Project – Conservation Corps - \$679,738.41
 - RMC Project – HSLC - \$44,852.63
 - RMC Project – Bailey Fellow - \$16,000.00
 - RMC Project – Brown Fellow - \$10,000.00
 - RMC Project – Sessel Fellow - \$10,000.00
 - RMC Project – NGF Other - \$20,776.40
 - RMC Project – NGF Field Institute - \$40,000.00
 - RMC Project – RMC Education Fellows - \$45,000.00
 - RMC Project – Task Agreements - \$15,177.00
 - RMC project – Other - \$37,732.13
 - Ops & Finance Committee recommends full funding for RMNP and RMC projects
 - \$4.3M in restricted funds for RMNP and RMC projects use only, excluding funds already set aside for Grant property building
 - **Motion:** To approve the entire 2023 RMNP and RMC Request Totals (above)
 - Motion – Claudine Perrault, Second – Katherine Dines, no objections, no abstentions, unanimously approved

Rocky Mountain National Park Reports:

- Diversity Internship Cohort Coordinator –**Steven Ochoa** presented on:
 - RMNP hosted over 25 interns in 2022, 16 opportunities for professional development and team building directly through the cohort and supported 10+ opportunities more broadly in the National Park.
 - Highlights for professional development include the Wilderness Program Day, a team building activity introducing people to rock climbing and a resume workshop specific to early career interns.
 - Facilitated a Systems of Oppression workshop to increase awareness of the forms of oppression and hurdles faced by minority communities to outdoor-based careers.
 - Engagement in various outreach and recruitment efforts including a career fair with Colorado State University, a virtual federal jobs workshop with interns at Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and collaboration with the organization Latino Outdoors to provide access to outdoor recreation opportunities to Spanish speaking and Latino identifying people, creating a path for Spanish-speaking member of the Estes Park community to also be included and engaged through other RMC programs such as the Bettie program.

Rocky Mountain National Park Reports:

- RMNP Superintendent – **Darla Sidles & Chief of Interpretation – Kim Swift** presented on:
 - Thanked Board and RMC Staff for their ongoing professionalism. Proud of their partnership with RMC
 - Thanked Board and RMC Staff for their synergy and support and approval to fund all 2023 Park Project asks. Very appreciative!
 - Timed entry going well overall - ended on Oct 10, 2022
 - Completing After Action Review over the next few weeks regarding Timed Entry System; lessons learned, adaptation of program, challenges for potential new year, etc.

- Visitation to RMNP down 10% from 2021 most likely due implementation of timed entry, remaining COVID guidelines and rising gas prices.
- NEPA stakeholder meetings being held to engage public input on these concepts.
- In the process of building and obtaining equipment for new Emergency Operations Center. Hopeful of a successful rollout shortly.
- Construction at FRVC started later than anticipated. Not yet down to 1 lane restrictions but expected to start shortly.
- The entire Moraine Park Campground will be closed for all of 2023. Roughly 300 sites being remodeled, restored, and maintained as part of the RMNP Great American Outdoor Act project for 2023
- Brief list of higher prioritized RMNP projects include:
 - Kawuneeche Valley Ecosystem
 - Mental Health Awareness Programs
 - Cascade Cottages
 - Indigenous Connections
 - Shadow Mountain
 - Staff Training tools
 - Update to Oliver Toll book
 - Updates to Junior Ranger booklets
- Thanked Chris Wenzel for exemplary retail merchandising in Rocky nature stores
- A huge thank you to Diversity Intern Cohort Coordinator, Steven Ochoa. Although he has decided to resign his position with RMNP and relocate back to CA, his efforts here have had a tremendous impact. Currently posting and interviewing for a placement in this position.
 - Increase diversity and intern collaboration
 - Merges training, consistency, and job placement opportunities
 - Short-term position with RMC, will become NPS hire after 1 year using federal base funds

RMC Staff & Executive Director Reports:

(Due to time constraints, Estee Rivera presented quickly on all department updates)

- **Education – Estee Rivera with Carlie Bangs** presented on:
 - Reference Education Committee highlights above
 - Carlie and Danielle working on creating and distributing surveys and having open conversations with former instructors to gain insight and feedback on classes and programs – what worked well previously, what didn't, thoughts, concerns, suggestions, etc.
 - Currently utilizing the downstairs classroom at the FRVC during the interim, since the Field Institute building sale
- **Retail – Estee Rivera with Chris Wenzel** presented on:
 - Overall Retail is doing very well – Way to go Chris!
 - Doing best to stay ahead of inventory challenges. Product ordering 8-12 months out. Trying to keep VCs shelves stocked
 - FRVC construction anticipation
 - MPDC shut down early (a month ahead of schedule) due to rabid bat discovery. Deemed a safety concern.
 - As of Aug 2022, BMVC still highest producing sales with YTD total sales of \$2,028,927.10 over total 2021 sales at that location of \$1,285,139.68
 - All visitor centers are up in 2022 YTD sales totals over 2021, except for FRVC, down by only \$30K thus far in the year due to the anticipated upcoming construction and lane closures. NPS had inadvertently listed this park entrance as closed on their website.
 - Kudos from Board Members to Chris W for her resilience and perseverance through these challenges!
- **Administration – Estee Rivera with Carolyn Carlson** presented on:
 - Successful transition of our endowment funds from Texas Presbyterian Funds to Vanguard.
 - Completed the screening, interviews, and successful onboarding of several new seasonal Retail Clerks, a Field Institute Coordinator, a Member & Donor Services Associate, a Fall Brown Family Fellow, a Bailey Research Fellow, and several RMNP interns
 - Project Highlights:
 - Cascade Cottages: Under contract with Mundis Bishop to provide construction drawings for future project phases.

- Shadow Mountain Lookout Tower: Park has determined final materials selections and scheduled last on-site visit. Construction drawings from Anderson Hallas expected by late Feb '23
 - Sister Park: Along with RMNP, met with full delegation from the Republic of Slovakia including the Minister of the Environment, Slovak Ambassador to the US, and the Slovak Director for National Parks to provide successful partnership guidance and answer questions
- Stewardship/Conservation Corps – **Estee Rivera** with **Ian Stafford** presented on:
 - Corps is our signature program – thank you for strong work surrounding this!
 - 48 RMCCC participants (9 leaders/39 crew members), representing 23 different states
 - Provided trail maintenance to more than 265 miles of trail, opened 500+ miles of USFS road throughout Sulphur Ranger District, cleared 1064 trees from trails, built 45+ structures to allow for safe hiking along wetlands and stream corridors, surveyed habit of 300+ acres of RMNP, constructed 139 slash piles for prescribed burns in the winter and across all Corps crews, RMC-CC was able to provide 19,450 service hours
 - Hosted two successful High School Leadership Corps programs during the summer
 - Partnered with Yosemite Climbing Association to host the Rocky Mountain Facelift volunteer event across the Estes Park Valley. Working with over 10 partners, program brought 70+ volunteers to work at Lily Lake/Twin Sisters, Thumb Open Space, and along Lake Estes/Big Thompson River Walk. Throughout the event, a total of 300+ lbs. of trash were removed, established a Search & Rescue trail at Thumb Open Space, widened the Thumb trail for a ¼ mile to better accommodate hand cycle access and provided reinforcement to 40 ft. worth of switchbacks.
- Philanthropy – **Estee Rivera** with **Madison Abbott** presented on:
 - Madison has risen to the challenge of taking on the Donor Services Manager role and leading the department with Michael Allen's departure – Major kudos!
 - Working on efficiencies with the database and integration of systems, working closely with Mia, Carlie and Ian
 - 145 RSVPs thus far for Wine & Cheese event in November 2022
- Executive Director's Report – **Estee Rivera Murdock** presented on:
 - Estes Park Visitor Center Update: As of 10/11/22, memorandum of understanding through Dec 2023 approved by town trustees and mayor
 - Retail expansion space but plan is to also focus on expanding educational presence
 - Potential to open in the next couple weeks to months!
 - Chris Wenzel and her team looking to staff this location with clerks
 - All POS systems, registers, credit card machines, in stock and ready to implement
 - Congratulations to Estee for cultivating good partnerships and seeing this effort through to success!
- Recognition of Outgoing Board Members – **Brian Ross and Walt Borneman**:
 - Joel Mayo – Thank you!
 - Incredible wisdom and reassuring experience will be greatly missed
 - It's been an honor to work with and serve with you
 - Presented with Images of RMNP plaque as a thank you for dedicated service
 - Jan Robertson – Thank you!
 - Over 40 years of commitment
 - Legendary, unwavering passion, service, knowledge, and legacy
 - Has been a strong influence in Diversity & Inclusion
 - Presented with a scholarship fund promoting stewardship in RMNP in her honor – Magnificent Mountain Women Scholarships for Bettie courses
- Dismiss staff and move into Executive Session

Meeting Adjourned: 3:01 PM

Upcoming 2023 Board Meetings:

February 2023 ; June 2023 ; October 2023 – Specific dates TBD