

2011 Outdoor Alliance Summit

December 6-8th, 2011

American Alpine Institute, Golden Colorado

Attended by: Executive Director, Julia Geisler (JG) and Chair, Jonathan Knight (JK)

December 6, 2011

Intro:

This first ever summit represented an effort to unite non-governmental organizations (NGO's) representing human-powered recreational user groups and federal land managers. Partnerships were the focus as the federal agencies have been directed to seek creative ways to fund projects that support the Obama administration's America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative. This was especially pertinent in regards to the SLCA's recent involvement in the Wasatch Watershed Legacy Partnership (WWLP). The conference was well attended by NGO's and agency employees as well as some administration officials and outdoor industry leaders.

En route, we prepared by defining our goals for SLCA at the summit. These included meeting key sponsors, looking for potential funding for the Lower LCC EA, promoting the WWLP, discovering the pluses and minuses for doing a joint membership with the Access Fund, and establishing the Access Fund's interest and commitment to Joe's Valley toilets, to name a few. We stayed on task for the SLCA, however the interactive nature of the summit broadened our perspective in support of the common goals of the OA.

Upon registering, we met Zach Lesch-Huie, the Affiliate Director of the Access Fund, and had a chance to update him on the SLCA and pertinent issues for the Wasatch climbing community. Following the opening social, we enjoyed slide show presentation documenting white water recreation in western China along with the imminent demise of this resource due to the comprehensive development of hydro power in the region.

December 7th, 2011

Wednesday was the big day, and Will Shafroth, Counselor to the Secretary of the Interior for AGO, gave the opening address. The rest of the day was spent attending presentations and participating in break-out sessions based on even more partnerships. We split up for these in order to cover more topics as a team. Following are some of the take-away points that we gained that may be relevant to the SLCA.

Case Study: Cheoah River dam released to revive a dead river: (JK) (JG)

- 100+ partnership meetings, 1.25 million in funding for facilities, Alcoa's \$35,000/year funding commitment, and the reclamation of habitat and recreation opportunities along the river corridor make for an impressive effort.
- Target non-climbers and parties who may be outside the box for membership and funding with the pitch for conservation through recreation.
- A need for a dedicated (and sometimes paid) staff of experts for projects to be a success.
- Many of the projects that the SLCA is pursuing fit into the breadth of AGO.

Case Study: Redding, CA Multi-Use trail system: (JK)

- Good example of government/private/public sector cooperation from planning to the big public unveiling.
- Professional services key in the building of trail infrastructure
- Land exchanges fueled by public support (salmon habitat restoration)

Case Study: Youth Engagement in a Snow School, Boise, ID: (JG)

- REI may be a good source of funding for SLCA focused on youth. REI helps to fund "Snow School" with Winter Wildlands Alliance in Bogus Basin which is centered on conservation through recreation.
- Stakeholders need a say in shaping projects.
- If possible, have events at the site of projects to raise awareness for the project.
- A youth climbing component to SLCA (Young Climbers) needs to have an environmental education component to get most funding.
- For a youth program to be successful, it is helpful to tap into what youth learn in school and spring board off of programs they already have in place.
- A good idea: connect students with role models in the climbing community for mentorship.
- The forest service has a grant "more kids in the woods" that SLCA may want to look into.
- University Environmental Ed and Recreation students can be used as volunteers to do presentations in schools the day before kids come out to volunteer with SLCA focused on conservation through recreation.

Case Study: Sandy Ridge, OR mountain bike trail development: (JK)

- Adjudicated youths hired to work and learn skills along the way.
- Local guides reciprocate by taking them biking on the trails they built.

Case Study: North Cascades National Park crag development: (JK)

- Crag development discovered and stopped by the NPS.
- Instead of busting individuals, the NPS worked with the climbing community and the Access Fund to stop the development, and to start working towards a viable plan for the area.
- Crag reopened after a crag day / management planning is pending.

Case Study: Buffalo Creek, CO mountain bike trail development: (JK)

- Burned out area of the South Platte. A rocky fire break was the basis for an expert level trail.
- Blackjack trail is now a local economic driver enhanced by an annual race that helps fund the maintenance and development of the trail system.

Case Study: Snake River Fund - WY: (JK)

- River was a junk show, and fee demo was proposed. Individual approached the USFS and offered \$50,000 cash if they would not pursue the program.
- I mentioned that the USFS was putting the WWLP together, and shared the current CCF model including their proposed role as a clearing house for WWLP projects. Folks in this breakout session (and in general) expressed concern over the conflict of interest posed by the role of the ski areas in the partnership. Tips to help build partnerships: develop a narrative, prioritize avoiding controversy in the mission, and build trust. This does not bode well for the WWLP, imo.

Case Study: Yosemite "Facelift": (JG)

- Ken Yager : Yosemite Facelift founder and organizer. He is willing to give advice about events and working with FS. www.yosemitieclimbing.org 209.379.2650, 209.626.9789
yagerca@gmail.com
- Ken worked hard to form a working partnership with Jesse McGahey, US Park Ranger, Climbing Program Manager. Jesse is also willing to give SLCA advice when needed.
Jesse_mcgahay@nps.gov 209.372.0360, 209.742.3289
- Facelift is a five day event that is held to clean up the Valley. Ken was spending 1,000 plus hours a year on this event. Now has help with a steering committee put in place by the Forest Service. FS provides vehicles, tools, and some man hours. Facelift has 80 sponsors/ partners. It costs \$20,000/ year to run the event. Facelift is now an official National Park Event. Ken says that relentless perseverance to FS pays off. It is helpful to educate new FS staff as soon as they are in position so that the previous staff can help to brief new FS staff.
- The volunteers for Facelift are FS volunteers and under FS workman's comp.

- Facelift started to do evening programs with food and booze. (Question for Ken: How did he get booze into the park for an event? He secured a solid beer sponsor with New Belgium. 24 kegs are donated for 6 nights. Last year was the first year with zero arrests.)
- Facelift volunteers weigh their trash (we can do this for clean up days). It starts a bit of competition and it is a way for Ken to track the increase or decrease of trash in the park.
- Ken asks locals and regulars in the Valley where trash is and makes them leaders of trash clean up groups.
- Kleen Kanteen became a partner instead of doing bottled water and Facelift logo is on the bottle. Mt Trails has also done this. May be of interest for our crag day events to do this.
- Ken and FS are challenged with funding for recycling. He recycles 90-95% of the waste. FS pays right now. How can we recycle more at our clean up days? (Especially for big projects such as the Grit Mill and the Pavilion.)
- Ken was having a problem with volunteers disturbing artifacts in the park (anything older than 50 years) including old beer cans, ect. He has worked hard to form a partnership with archeologists to have them do education at the event and to relax a bit about picking up real trash (old or new). FS relaxed their supervision of volunteers after Ken formed partnerships with archeologists. Ken has an educational component (mostly dealing with archeology) that volunteers have to complete when they sign up for Facelift. This may be a way for FS to relax their supervision on our volunteers for crag days.
- Reel Rock donates films for Ken's evening programs. (Maybe they would also donate to SLCA.)

Case Study: Indian Creek: (JG)

- Indian Creek is presented with public and private conflicts regarding climbers' access.
- The steep slopes, even with moderate use, cause drastic erosion on Indian Creek soils.
- There are now 7 access trails to the most popular climbing crags.
- Showing before and after pics for projects in a great way to show what an organization has done. Maybe we can include this in the SLCA history.
- Both public and private groups support restoration. May be a leg to stand on when addressing the Church to do projects on their land in the Cottonwoods.
- The private land owner in front the Super Crack crag, Heidi, is protected from liability issues by signs on her property saying to "recreate at your own risk". George: Is this really a legit way to provide some protection for private land owners?
- Activists need to be conservationists first, climbers second. Restoring an entire site and not just the base of the crag and the trail will create a more desirable climbing destination.
- Take the NEPA documents to the public in laymen's terms so that they can understand the issues.
- SLCA can help to raise awareness of the issues at Indian Creek and other climbing areas through emailing our members and using our website.

December 8th, 2011

Take-away points from final day:

- SLCA needs to help to bring mt bikers, the Church, bc skiers, hikers, industry, ect to the table for the WWLP to be a success.
- For partnerships to be successful, the partners need to be able to recite the needs of all partners so that respect forms.
- A good idea for the WWLP MOU would be "SLCA will not advocate for policy. We will advocate for projects."

Take-away points from talks with the Access Fund regarding Joint Membership Plan:

I have already sent the board the info that Access Fund provided about their joint membership plan. Here are some other points that were discussed.

- The climber gets representation locally and nationally with a joint membership plan.
- AF will do modeling of SLC area to send emails to those who may donate based on mailing lists from organizations such as Climbing Mag.
- Can use them for emails to members.
- Access Fund does three mailings: 1. Acquisitions 2. Renewals 3. Appeals to members
- Access Fund can send us reports as often as needed. We talked about the need to have access at all times to our mailing list.
- There is a 70% renewal rate to Access Fund. 70% of donations come through snail mail. Membership has flattened and stayed still (which is a common trend for non-profits). People start to donate at 35 years old. It seems that doing joint memberships is the AF's focus to keep their memberships.
- AF may consider doing a junior membership.
- There is not an option for us to just allow people to sign up for SLCA because they would still be the administer.

Take-away points from Joe's Valley discussion with the Access Fund:

- A need for a greater climbing management plan at Joe's Valley and SLCA being maybe the only ones who could pull this off with the help from the AF's Conservation Team.
- How does SLCA want to pursue this?

All in all, the summit was an inspiration. Challenges that the SLCA face are common around the country. Hopefully SLCA can learn from the case studies things that work and things that don't. Mentors are out there willing to help guide our organization so that mistakes are not repeated.