

Minutes of October 10, 2018 Ouray Ice Park Advisory Team Meeting

The Team met at 5:30 in the San Juan room at the Ouray Community Center.

Agenda:

Update on water sources	Joe Coleman, City of Ouray
Adopt minutes of September 12 meeting	Team
Guided group data summary	Nate Disser
Ambassador / group registration data summary	Dan Chehayl
Climber info reflected in OTO data summary	Kat Papenbrock, Ouray Tourism Office
Discussion of data needs for coming season	All

Attending were Dan Chehayl, Joe Coleman (by invitation), Nate Disser, Dawn Glanc, Grant Kleeves, Micah Lewkowitz, Braydin Mehnert, Diane Mielcarz, Kat Papenbrock, Frank Robertson and Lance Sullins (co-owner of Peak Mountain Guides). Elias is off to the Greater Ranges and Katie was down with a cold.

For the record, Dawn let us know that she no longer has an ownership interest in Chicks Climbing.

Diane has let me know that she is up for a 3-year At-large Member term (Elias had indicated 2). *Grant and Braydin, please let me know.*

The group agreed to adopt the minutes of the September 12 meeting.

Joe broke the news that the Weehawken Spring is currently producing much less water than we have been assuming: something like 850,000 gallons per day (gpd) vs. our prior understanding of around 1.5 million gpd. Distribution to the City averages approximately 700,000 gpd so overflow is likely to be significantly less than 150,000 gpd. The park will figure how to manage ice build within supply limits. Joe also reported that a water engineering firm is studying the potential for non-potable water from Weehawken Creek, though it would definitely not be available for the coming season.

Nate presented a summary of the past several seasons' data on Commercial (guided) groups use of the park. All but one guide service signs up with an on-line scheduling tool for the Concession to gather information about their park use, which yields a detailed view of how those groups are distributed through the season. For reference, a Service Day is one guide with up to four clients occupying up to two routes a time, whereas a User Day is a person in the park during a day. All 600 Service Days were used last season, though about one third of the allocation went unused because guides worked with fewer than 4 clients (1524 User Days were worked, 876 were unused). Nate's material will be made available.

Dan handed out data from Institutional (club, adaptive, training/educational) group registrations and that collected by the Ambassadors during the 2017/18 season, as well as first-pass analysis of "near-ideal" and busiest days with respect to capacity. These non-commercial group totals came in at about 1100 User Days, with some uncertainty around unregistered vs. groups coming with fewer than registered. We definitely have groups showing up without registering, and those not amending their ways will be asked to vacate going forward. On our busiest day, with Ambassadors counting around 400 folks in am/pm checks at two main entry points, crowding was quite problematic. On two days where the load felt about right, 180 and 250 people were tallied.

The group launched a full-throttle discussion of how to get at the data needs. Everyone pretty quickly converged on Braydin's point that to start we need more accurate estimates of total people in the park at various times through the day, by day of week, for extraordinary days and through the season). This objective might be accomplished by having volunteers supplement the Ambassadors' twice-daily, two-checkpoint counts with periodic tallies of people from end to end along the gorge.

Lance complemented this global baseline need with a focus on higher-resolution data needing to be collected in areas known to get overly congested (e.g. School Room and South Park), aiming to understand if possible, by anchor, the hourly user profiles through the day, week and season. By looking at the data from various perspectives and seeing the ranges of capacity and use over time we can construct a dynamic model that can inform decisions about managing the park.

We also talked about use units - Service Day, User Day and Route Occupation Day (counting by rope) - and partial days, and possibly defining a more flexible approach to allocation with varying capacity. A great example already in practice is the guide services shifting a majority of their clients to quieter Monday-through-Thursday (~55% of total) to load the park less (~45% of total) during peak use Friday-through-Sunday. The idea is to potentially address allocation shortfalls with greater access during slower times if capacity allows. The discussion of how the 600 Service Day allocation came to be in the Concession Agreement went back to the 2011 determination of "guide-friendly" routes, circled back around to the unused allocation as counted in User Days and pointed up the need to improve the use allocation metrics in understanding and managing the dynamic capacity.

Kat gave a summary of how the Ouray Tourism Office (OTO) has been studying visitors' seasonal, activity and economic patterns. Lots of great info is available at www.ouraycolorado.com. It is clear that ice climbing is not being accurately captured in existing data: while it is an estimated 60% of the winter economy, only single-digit %s of the current survey participants identify ice climbing as one of their activities. A winter recreation-specific survey has been prepared and OTO will work with the Ice Park and guide services to get a more representative response. A new study of Ouray tourism is coming this season and we will work with OTO to establish questions that can be asked by both them and us to try and correlate results better.

One key finding of the economic impact work is that guided parties spend about twice as much on their visits as others. It was suggested that this information be considered in determining allocations among recreational, institutional and commercial users. It was pointed out that we have well-established benchmarks from other recreational venues of around 25% allocated for commercial and institutional users. It was proposed that if we get to the point where we need to limit admission to the park, all groups should be scaled back proportionally.

Ice Park staff will explore and implement ways to get at the accurate count of total park visitors and more detailed use profiles for pinch points. We will look at the data and continue the discussion.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 pm.

Our next meeting will be at 7 pm on January 2. Meetings for the balance of 2019 are planned to be at 5:30 pm on April 3, August 7 and October 2 (first Wednesdays).