

Recap of Community Sessions

This document is an overview of the initial community sessions hosted by the Regional Partnership Initiative planning committee between January-February 2023. It provides details on:

- The participation totals and representation of various groups who joined
- The common themes that emerged through the conversations
- The key considerations for moving forward

Participation:

Over 60 community members from the region participated in this listening phase.

<u>Virtual Sessions</u>	<u>Montrose Session</u>	<u>Delta Session</u>	<u>Grand Junction Session</u>
16 attendees	14 attendees	14 attendees	25 attendees

Representation:

These participants represented many groups, interests, and geographic locations, ensuring we had balanced conversations with a variety of perspectives critical to this work.



Government

- City of Fruita
- City of Grand Junction
- City of Hotchkiss
- CO Dept. of Transportation
- GJ Urban Trails Committee
- Grand Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Mesa County, Delta County, & Montrose County Commissioners
- Town of Paonia
- USGS



Natural Resource Management Agencies

- BLM Grand Junction Field Office
- BLM Uncompahgre Field Office
- CPW Montrose Office
- CPW Northwest Region
- USFS Grand Valley Ranger District



Business & Tourism

- Bonsai Design
- Colorado Cattlemen's Assn.
- Dark Timber Outfitters
- Delta County Tourism
- Gear Junction
- Montrose Surf and Cycle
- Seek Outside
- VanWinkle Ranch
- Visit GJ



Public Lands User Groups, Community Organizations, & More

- American Rivers
- Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
- Club 20
- Colorado Canyons Assn.
- Colorado West Land Trust
- Colorado Wildlands Project
- Colorado Wildlife Federation
- Conservation Colorado
- COPMOBA
- Grand Mesa Jeep Club
- Grand Mesa Nordic Council
- Great Old Broads for Wilderness
- Grand Valley Metropolitan Planning Association
- Grand Valley River Corridor Initiative
- North Fork Recreation District
- One Riverfront
- Outdoor Recreation Coalition of the Grand Valley
- Outdoor Wilderness Lab
- RiversEdge West
- The Nature Connection
- The Wilderness Society
- Thunder Mountain Wheelers
- Trout Unlimited
- WC Climbers Coalition
- West Region Wildfire Council
- Western Slope ATV
- Western Slope Conservation Center

Common Themes:

The following 7 topics emerged as common ground. These include issues participants feel are critical for this group to consider and recommendations for necessary actions to ensure success.

01 *Respect Varied Perspectives*

Balancing conservation and recreation is hard with few obvious solutions that please everyone, but it's critical to hear divergent perspectives so we can have a holistic view in mind. We should engage individuals who listen to others and don't target or denigrate any particular user group, as everyone's actions have an impact, and we all share a love for this region.

02 *Act Collaboratively*

There are many organizations doing great work that should be given space to focus on their core issues. This RPI, rather, can assist with coordinating resources more effectively across interests and municipalities to take collective, collaborative action rather than a piecemeal approach.

03 *Seek Representation & Inclusion*

It is important that the unique needs of all counties are equally considered, that this initiative is non-partisan in nature, and that those involved actively seek out input from community members who aren't always included in conversations on recreation and conservation, such as those in the agriculture community or community members who engage with the outdoors more locally.

04 *Focus on Education*

Participants share a desire for educating policymakers, local community members, and tourists on issues, such as the need for seasonal closures to protect wildlife, and principles, such as Leave No Trace, and Stay the Trail. Encouraging membership in established groups teaching responsible use, developing compelling messaging and outreach methods, and recognizing the impact of social media on improper use will be key.

05 *Identify Funding*

Participants recognize that so much trail maintenance and conservation work relies on volunteer efforts, so they underline the importance of securing a funding source to support this initiative and its projects which are critical to preserving this region and supporting an intentional future.

06 *Pursue Quick Results*

While planning and discernment is key to success, there is a shared desire for moving quickly to identify common ground among those representing different interests and counties, and to make fast progress on some quick win projects to build trust and momentum.

07 *Establish Consistent Communication*

It was noted that effective communication across communities, user groups, and government agencies is not the norm, but will be essential to ensure everyone is on the same page and agreements can be reached.

Key Considerations:

We are building our steering committee and preparing a grant application to secure resources that will support initial actions. We are keeping these considerations in mind as we move forward:

- Common ground establishes a solid foundation for us to work from while acknowledging we will face future hurdles
- Appreciation for this group being grassroots-based, enabling more flexibility in focus than if it was a government entity
- Importance of offering a mix of virtual and physical meeting options throughout the region so all equally invested and engaged