

Don't miss these great articles in today's Newsletter!

- Public Employee Morale
- Be Seen in Avon
- Saving Recreation on the Colorado River
- Creating Space in Frisco
- Welcome New Talent to NWCCOG

From the Director's Desk: Conversations with Managers

So how ARE Public Employees Doing?

Practically everyone has had to adapt rapidly in March.

In calls to municipal and county managers NWCCOG asked, "How is the morale of your staff?". The answers reveal that public employees have made many shifts and it is becoming clear that aspects of the past 5 months will become a new normal-remote work: challenges staying connected as teams, more agitated citizens, and living amid a lot of uncertainty, as well as an above-average amount of problem solving. The calls are ongoing in some Counties. Here are some observations from the Roaring Fork.



Every manager we spoke with has expressed pride and gratitude in how well workers have adapted, but there is also an undertone of concern best expressed by Clint Kinney, Manager of the Town of Snowmass Village who said in reference to both employees and citizens, "people are exhausted of trying to figure out how to be safe and do what they are doing." He acknowledged that "it is going to be like this for a while, and "the gray is weighing on people." Kinney noted that "the template for opening up was clear," but in every department or situation, "the template for rolling back" if one police officer or a wastewater worker is exposed, tests positive, or someone's relative tests positive, "the next degree of nuance" in "defining what is safe and what is not" is not always something that can be defined by rigid protocols. He listed off a series of department-specific scenario questions which have no right answer.

That gray area also goes for businesses. In many places, municipal and county officials are getting closer to their business communities than ever before. In Aspen, City Manager Sara Ott, highlighted how her staff developed a "[recovery streets plan](#)" and how there was already a staff team that was a liaison to Main Street

businesses that shifted roles to the "Health Protection Team" to help local businesses navigate public health orders from the County and state. Those relationships between the City and businesses will only be stronger after this.



Credit Kelsey Brunner/The Aspen Times

People used to gravitate to the public sector because they valued service and certainty, though many public workplaces have actively redefined this through hiring, training, and culture. If the image of a public worker; a finance director, a clerk, or a public works employee 10-plus years ago was of someone who valued the clarity and stability of a well-defined work silo with a 9-5 schedule without too many surprises. That model (which had already been eroding) seems to have exploded

during this crisis. For some, this is extremely stressful. Public sector work right now is extremely dynamic, so much so that Pitkin County manager Jon Peacock said he is observing "response fatigue." He attributes this also to a public sector climate from the national and state as well as local level that sometimes seems to be without leadership or strategy. It was a sentiment echoed by many others.

So much change, adaptation and uncertainty is harder on some than it is on others. City of Glenwood Springs Assistant Manager, Jen Ooton spoke highly of Glenwood Springs staff who entered 2020 after a number of years of disruptive road projects many of us remember, hoping that 2020 would be the year they could expect to get back to focusing on honing excellence. She noted that there are many "Type A" perfectionists in the organization who "have a high degree of pride in how we deliver services" who once again have had to "shift expectations."

Not all municipal cultures have been radically altered. Some have just taken the change in step and accepted some of the learned advantages. At the town of Basalt, Town Manager, Ryan Mahoney noted that their office culture has "returned to status quo, except for those who have daycare or childcare needs" who are now able to do half time from home. He had high compliments for staff who "seamlessly" shifted to working for home for months, and Pam Schilling, Town Clerk, who pulled off an election during the first weeks of the pandemic. He also had praise for the innovations of [TACAW](#), The Arts Campus at Willits, and the Basalt Chamber shifting from the summer concert series to having Wednesday night Live in Basalt with street "Buskers" who were the musicians that may have been booked for concerts performing pop-up street performances in Willits or Historic downtown Basalt, in shifting locations to prevent crowds and encourage pedestrian street vitality for the struggling retail sector. That is the kind of adaptation that just might be around for a while.



CREDIT COURTESY THE ARTS CAMPUS AT WILLITS

For those on the front line of delivering public services, hang in there. You are doing

such valuable work in very difficult circumstances, and most managers expressed that the health crisis and intertwined economic crisis were likely only 5 months into a 12 to 24-month cycle. Just keep hanging in there.

Jon Stavney

Executive Director

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Town of Avon - Be Seen

Some of the most elegant solutions in public management are also simple.

Avon has done significant work to improve streetscapes, and pedestrian friendliness in recent years with significant public outreach and extended planning exercises, including a paint it, and live it before you build it experimental approach to planning. Years of planning and outreach resulted in dedicated bike lanes, shortening crossing distances with landscape nodes, and other classic streetscape improvements, but Avon Road, the "main drag" which connects I-70 and the North side of town with Highway 6 and Beaver Creek proved a challenge that confounded engineers as well as pedestrians. The 5 round-a-bouts were a prior innovation that revolutionized vehicle circulation. They also continued to be a challenge for pedestrians, especially when vehicles were driven by visitors who were unfamiliar with the Colorado law and norm of yielding to pedestrians when they appear to want to cross.



Photo Credit: Mayor Sarah Smith Hymes

Avon's "Be Seen" program provided something street crossers could grab on to-literally- large orange flags located in buckets on either side of the crossing-point with instructions. This changed the dynamic from passive pedestrians waiting to be noticed.

Chico Thuon, the Avon Councilman who suggested the idea said, "I felt it was a bit of a racetrack for locals and people to ignore the brick crosswalks," he noted, "the flag really gets the drivers attention and sends the message that pedestrians are present." He hopes the next

generation of flags will have reflective material so they will show better at night. Mayor Smith Hymes also suggested the idea after seeing examples in Jackson Hole. Collectively, their persistence led to Council direction to Avon staff to install the crossing flags.

The solution reminds me of the days of student crossing guards to my elementary school, trained kids who took pride, got up extra early to take the extra responsibility. They would initiate a short street closure with their bright jackets and flags to usher kids across the streets before and after school. Avon's "Be Seen" program puts a modern, self-empowered spin on the crossing guard.

Problems? Town Manager, Eric Heil said Avon staff were skeptical at first and thought that the flags would

quickly "walk off;" however, Heil said "generally it is working fine as a low-cost solution," although he also noted that after a contentious Town Council meeting this summer one of the buckets of flags ended up in the Eagle River. Avon staff decided against flags with logos which might be considered souvenirs. Avon also added mid-lane "Yield to Pedestrian" signs which has helped slow traffic and remind motorists to look for pedestrians. For reference, the wired pedestrian crossing signs that are button operated with flashing lights run just under \$20,000 each depending on how close they are to electricity. They are still the gold standard for a crossing that is not at a signaled intersection. On the other hand, Heil estimates that flags and a bucket cost about \$25 at each location.



Photo Credit: Mayor Sarah Smith Hymes

Protecting the Colorado River recreational values is hard work

How many "human hours" in meetings does it take to accomplish an alternative management plan for Upper Colorado River Wild & Scenic?

In water years, it is a blink of an eye. In human years, it has been more than a decade of hard work amongst a group of stakeholders representing 26 entities across the Continental Divide to develop the Upper Colorado River Stakeholder Group Management Plan.



In June, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service have formally accepted the final plan from a group of Upper Colorado River stakeholders that seeks to protect recreational fishing- and boating-related values along the Upper Colorado River from Gore Canyon to lower Glenwood Canyon. Instead of engaging in the federal process for formally designating a river into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, the agencies decided to rely on the stakeholder group plan to protect the

outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) identified in the eligibility phase. The federal agencies adopted the plan into their own management plans.

How much human power does that decade of work to finalize this plan reflect? From our back-of-the-napkin estimations, that decade includes more than 2,000 hours of staff time for NWCCOG staff and members, including the NWCCOG Water Quality/ Quantity Committee (QQ), Grand County, Summit County, Eagle County, and QQ associate member the Colorado River Water Conservancy District. Total for the 40+ stakeholder entities represented in this effort, we estimate more than 10,000 human hours dedicated to developing this plan. That is around **5 years accumulated work hours!** That dedication and effort is reason to celebrate!

Adding to the complexity of developing the plan was the diversity of stakeholder interests, from environmental and boating representatives to transmountain diversion water users. As QQ Chair, Eagle County Commissioner, and member of the Stakeholder Governance Committee Kathy Chandler-Henry observes, "Creating this plan took a staggering amount of time and negotiation, and now the fun part starts-implementing the protections put in place over many years!"

The Plan centers on protecting the "outstandingly remarkable values" of recreational floatboating and fishing on the Upper Colorado River. The Plan establishes "ORV Indicators," to assess the status of these values. If these metrics are not met, the stakeholder plan includes a process for addressing the issue and potentially elevating it to organizations with formal authority over river management.

The Plan also hinges on "Resource Guides," which describe ranges of other fishing and floatboating-related factors, to inform group discussions; and establishes a set of "Voluntary Cooperative Measures," which are cooperative actions that, when available, may help to protect or enhance the recreation-related values. The group produces annual reports with details of monitoring efforts and which cooperative measures have been implemented.



NWCCOG Executive Director Jon Stavney reflects, "I remember attending some of my first W&S alternative meetings in Frisco, when I was trying to get oriented in the water world as a new Commissioner, and it took me a few meetings to figure out that what was being negotiated was to not have something happen--to keep the management of the Upper Colorado River in local control rather than restricted by Federal guidelines. The number of stakeholders from

either side of the Continental Divide was astounding--attorneys, engineers, smart water people. It was like designing a mechanical Rolex as a committee."

NWCCOG also supports this adaptive management effort by serving as one of two fiscal agents-the other being Northern Water Conservancy District. NWCCOG contracts with the W&S Stakeholder Group Administrator, Anna Drexler-Dreis. NWCCOG looks forward to continuing support as this group moves into its implementation phase!

Visit <https://www.upcowildandscenic.com/> to learn more about this "Rolex" of a management plan.

Our human-powered adaptive management doesn't stop here. NWCCOG and QQ members work on other adaptive management efforts through the region.

The innovative [Learning By Doing Adaptive Management Committee](#) includes countless human hours on projects and monitoring in the Upper Colorado.

The Grand Lake Adaptive Management Committee explores operational options for [improving water clarity in Grand Lake](#), Colorado's largest natural lake impacted from the movement of transmountain diversion water through the lake as part of the Colorado Big Thompson Project.

Just to name a few!

Frisco awarded \$50,000 in CDOT grant to assure more permanence for Pedestrian Promenade.

August 3, the [Summit Daily](#) announced that CDOT had awarded a \$50,000 grant to Frisco as part of their program to Revitalize Main Street. According to the Daily, CDOT is offering a total of \$4.1M in funds to help communities be innovative with traffic thoroughfares and public spaces to create more areas for social distancing while helping businesses to thrive.

As towns across the region determined the best ways to meet the needs of their businesses and their communities, ideas for extending the footprint of retail and restaurants into bigger, broader, and safer areas bubbled up. While many towns have closed their main streets to traffic offering business owners an opportunity to increase dining and shopping areas, Frisco has worked hard to make their main street welcoming, safe, and navigable for bikers and walkers -while encouraging their businesses to contribute to the overall cheery vibe - all socially correct of course.

Town Manager, Nancy Kerry was proud of her community saying, "businesses are adapting -- they have spruced up their sites, decorated them ... and rallied about the idea investing in their spaces. She went on to say that the weekly business call attendance had dropped dramatically -- which is a good sign, "businesses are busy, and no longer need the urgent information from local government."



Credit: Town of Frisco Website

While there still seems to be some worry about the future, Kerry indicated that many restaurants reported a very strong June and July, with lodging managers seeing an uptick in fall and winter reservations.

Kerry went on to say it would not be logistically feasible to attempt to keep a pedestrian only main street into the winter, but next summer and perhaps into the future, the idea of more outside dining could really take hold.

Addison Canino, Assistant Public works director and Gilly Plog from the towns' Environmental Programs expanded their roles to complete the grant application and help to manage the grant. In conversations with Canino, a good part of the grant will be to develop what they have been calling "parklets". Canino explained, parklets will be placed strategically throughout the town, on both the north and south sides of the street, be flush with the level of the sidewalk and have picket fencing to separate the parklet from the

traffic. They can be decorated, have flower boxes, tables and umbrellas to enhance the already cheerful atmosphere of the Promenade. He mentioned the additional seating outside the Log Cabin cafe would be an example of a parklet.

Asked how he sees the Pedestrian Promenade, Canino replied "I would have to say it has been a success. As Nancy has stated, businesses have adapted and are making things work in their favor, with some reporting the best months they have ever had. That is not only good for them, it is good for the community. Taking my regular walks up and down the Promenade to make sure our infrastructure and signage is still looking good, you see nothing but happy people, outside and enjoying our little town."

Frisco has revised the old adage and turned it to 'challenge is the mother of innovation.' The innovation exhibited by this savvy community is the tip of the iceberg of what can happen when we put our minds to solving challenges.

NWCCOG Welcomes New Talent



JONNAH GLASSMAN SHIP MEDICARE COORDINATOR

Jonnah Glassman is joining Vintage (previously the Alpine Area Agency on Aging) as the State health Insurance Assistance Program coordinator and will provide free health benefits counseling services for Medicare beneficiaries and their families or caregivers. SHIPs mission is to educate, advocate, counsel and empower people to make informed healthcare benefit decisions.

Jonnah is a Denver Native, calling Summit County home. She Graduated from Colorado State with a Bachelors in Social Sciences. She has a background as a Wellness Counselor at National Jewish Health for 6 years. Most recently, Jonnah came to us from The Family Intercultural

Resource Center (FIRC) where she ran the Food Equity Programs including two Food Pantries and their volunteers, for the last five years.

When she is not working she is climbing mountains, running trails, biking new places, or snowboarding in the backcountry.

SCOTT PUGSLEY BUSINESS LENDING ASSISTANT

Scott grew up in Southern Wisconsin, moved to Denver, Colorado in 2006, Avon, CO in 2007, and have been in Dillon since 2010.

He will be working in the Northwest Loan Fund for which he is uniquely qualified. Scott's held various roles in the Commercial Department of U.S. Bank since 2007, starting in an admin role before transferring to Summit County in 2010 to learn credit analysis, then into various relationship management and business development roles since 2014, most recently as a Divisional Portfolio Manager for high value clients. Prior to U.S. Bank Scott was a Home Mortgage Loan Officer, and Industrial and Construction Sales Rep for Fastenal.

When asked what he's most looking forward to in his work at NWCCOG, he responded, " I am looking forward to working with a local team that collaborates to help local businesses succeed with their start-up and expansion needs, and helping retain and expand employment in the local economy. Small business owners are very passionate about their business, and I really enjoy getting to know them and learn about their business, and help in any way we can."



He and his wife Suzanne love to explore Colorado by hiking, bike riding, skiing/riding and concerts at the Dillon Amphitheater. He's on the board of the Friends of the Dillon Ranger District and involved with Summit County Softball and Hockey rec leagues.



**ASHLEY
BEMBENEK**

WATERSHED SERVICES

Ashley will be working with the Watershed services team as the 208 Administrator and Water Quality Specialist.

Ashley is the principal scientist and owner of Alpine Environmental Consultants, a firm that specializes in watershed planning and related issues. Ashley graduated with honors from Montana State University with a degree in environmental science that focused on soil and water. She has 14 years professional experience and has worked in western Colorado for the past ten years to help organizations understand water quality, prioritize projects to improve water quality and watershed health, and support policy initiatives.

Ashley loves to ski, mountain bike, climb, and spend time on the water.

[See NWCCOG Coronavirus Resource Guide here](#)

NWCCOG strives to not duplicate resources compiled elsewhere. For municipal actions taken, [CML](#) has the best resource. For current public health orders, those should be sought from your county website. There are numerous resources for businesses or individuals kept up to date regularly. If you would like guidance on what is the best resource for your needs, contact Jon and I will guide you there.

[Coronavirus Anxiety Workbook](#)

THANK YOU

So many of our Members are doing tremendous front-line public service through this difficult time; if you are one of them, Thank you, you are appreciated more than ever for your public service. I've been privileged to be on daily update calls with both Eagle County and Summit County EOC, and it is assuring to listen in to collaboration going on in real-time.

NWCCOG offices are closed to the public and most staff are working remotely so please contact them by phone or email. AAAA is in full-tilt mode adapting to meet the needs of Older Americans across the region. Energy Program Employees are working with strict safety protocols for themselves and their clients. The Elevator Inspection Program has suspended mosts field

inspections and are catching up on a back-log of remote work. More than half of our programs and nearly 50 employees regularly work remotely. For more detailed and current status, please call your usual contact at NWCCOG.

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please forward them to this link.*

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Next NWCCOG COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, October 22, 2020

Full Council Meeting

Location: Virtual

Time: 10:00 a.m. - TBD

Primary Agenda Items: Review of draft 2021 budget

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments

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