



**SW Montana Recovery and Resiliency Team Call Minutes**  
**Wednesday, December 2, 2020**  
**8:00am – 9:00 am**  
**Zoom**

Introduction of new team members. Their inclusion broadens the team geographically and by scope of business activity.

Zach Allely – NPS Yellowstone, Chief of Business and Commercial Services

Steve Caldwell – Park County, Commissioner

Lander Cooney – Community Health Partners, CEO

Emily Cope – Downtown Bozeman Partnership, District Manager

Kristen Galbraith- Park County, Director of Grants and Special Projects

Jim Hart – Madison County, Commissioner

Jason Smith – Bozeman Health, Chief Advancement Officer

Katie Weaver – MSU Park County Extension/Park Local, Executive Director

Mollie Waldum – Park County Superintendent of Schools

**Guest Speakers:**

- Zach Allely – Chief of Business and Commercial Services, NPS Yellowstone
- His office oversees the NPS budget and financial management as well as commercial services. Business activity outside of the NPS requires a concessions contract or permit to do business in the park. Xanterra is the largest of the concession contracts operating guest lodging, food & beverage and retail operations in the park. Delaware North has retail operations, YPSS operates the gas stations and Med-Cor operates the clinics. There are smaller contracts as well. 69 concession contracts in total including over snow transportation operators that fall into that greater risk category with extensive policy to be managed.
- Commercial Use Authorizations (CUA's) permit lesser risk operations operate services in the park. There are 400-500 of these in place. These include tour operators and guide services that have little risk to the resources bringing in people, for example, to view wolves for the day.
- The concessioners have responsibility for facilities assigned to them in the park. Xanterra, for example, has 800 buildings that they are responsible to maintain. Many are historic, such as the Old Faithful Inn and expensive to maintain and operate.
- Unlike typical lodging and retail operations, the park concessionaires also have to provide housing, meals and recreation to their employees in the park.
- The NPS mission is to preserve the resources indefinitely for future generations while supporting an enjoyable visitor experience. These two objectives are often in conflict.
- Revenues in the park are derived from the NPS operations in the amount of \$35M annually – primarily gate fees and permits – while concessions activity accounts for \$200M annually.
- Thousands of concessions employees far outnumber NPS staff in the park.
- The park operations also support the gateway community economic activity at \$513M annually and support 7,000 jobs outside the park.

- The pandemic caused closure of the park in April through mid-June. It was fortunate that this was a low time for commercial services and gate fees, though revenues were lost.
- From what we knew then about the virus and how it was spread, employee housing in the park was limited to one employee per bathroom severely limiting the number of staff that could be accommodated especially for Xanterra who needs the most staff to run the guest service operations. This did not provide enough staff to operate all of their services and also required them to use some guest lodging facilities for employee housing. (Only about half of Xanterra's 2200 guest rooms were online for guest use for the 2020 summer season between staffing and available inventory) Further, food operations were limited to take out only with none of the sit-down dining operations open.
- Motorcoach tour operators were mostly non-existent with the restriction of 10 or less passengers though there were a few meeting that restriction. They are working with the operators and the motorcoach industry with the objective to reintroduce motorcoach tours for 2021.
- COVID didn't impact visitation to the park. 2020 visitation is slightly up from 2019's 4M visitors. NPS Revenue in gate fees were \$14.5M in 2020 and \$13.2M in 2019.
- Concession Franchise fees, the fee that concessionaires pay to the NPS for doing business in the park under their various agreements, fell from \$10.5M in 2019 to \$7.2M in 2020. Primarily from the reduced lodging availability. The non-lodging operations, retail and gas, remained flat to 2019.
- For 2021, we're assuming that things will be better expecting a more normal year. Will hope to ease housing restrictions to free up available lodging for guests to stay overnight and return to sit-down dining in a way that is safe.
- For this winter's operations, Old Faithful Snow Lodge will not be open for lodging as usual, but Mammoth Hotel will be. The good thing about winter operations is that we know all the operators bringing guests into the park and can talk to them. We are planning to divide use of the warming yurts at Old Faithful by group to avoid joining groups coming into the park and prioritizing warming huts for snowmobilers. Since winter doesn't work well for take out dining, sit-down dining will be allowed at Mammoth Hotel and Snow Lodge utilizing lobby space at Snow Lodge to provide for distancing. In addition, Xanterra is offering pizza delivery to guest rooms as an option at Mammoth.
- Zach closed with the 5 NPS objectives:
  1. People, the employees, NPS and concessions in the park
  2. Protection of cultural and natural resources
  3. Visitor experience
  4. Infrastructure
  5. Strengthening partnerships with the gateway and area communities.

Bekki Wehner – Communicable Disease Control and Prevention Bureau-

- Currently working on updating the draft vaccination plan written in October. Things are changing fast and while we're learning more about how much of the vaccine we'll be getting and when and what the prioritization among the population will be, there are still many unknowns.
- Among the current Challenges:
- How to distribute the vaccine across Montana equitably. The Pfizer vaccine requires -80 degrees Celsius and is distributed at a minimum of 975 doses. It's difficult to break down that packaging and maintain the cold chain.

- The initial delivery of the Pfizer vaccine will be a very limited supply expected in the next couple of weeks. We need to make sure that there is no waste of that vaccine by not maintaining required temperatures.
- 5-7 days after the Pfizer delivery, a shipment of the Moderna vaccine is expected. This product is easier to manage requiring regular freezers and packed in quantity of 100 doses. This will make it easier to get to a lot of different sites. With limited supply, they don't want to send too much to any location.
- Waiting on ACIP for official recommendations for distribution prior to issuing updated plan.
- Anticipate the first phase, 1a, to include front line healthcare workers that are working directly with COVID patients as well as long term care facilities (patients and staff).
- As we move into 2021, hoping for more to vaccinate teachers and other healthcare workers.
- Both Pfizer and Moderna are 2 dose vaccines. Pfizer calls for a 2<sup>nd</sup> dose 21 days later and Moderna 28 days later. Both doses need to be the same brand.
- Tracking the vaccines will be achieved by issuing a vaccine card to the individual which they will need to keep to present for their 2<sup>nd</sup> dose. There is also the Immunization Information system that providers can track doses in. This is an opt-in database for the patient. They will be encouraged to do so. Providers also have their own patient health data base systems that they will have their own information in. The vaccination card will ensure that a patient that chooses to have the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose in a different location than the first will have the required information for the administering facility.
- Paul Reichert asked if there was a guesstimate on when availability to the general public would be. Bekki thought it possible to be as early as April/May. However, there has been no testing yet for children under 18 so that population will need to wait.
- Steve Johnson asked what the role of the community pharmacies would be. Bekki shared that the CDC has entered into partnerships with many community pharmacies beyond the Walgreens and CVS brands. Steve also shared that Bozeman Health has freezers and contributed to the vaccine trials.
- Mia asked about data specific to Montana as to what portion of the population would be unlikely to get the vaccine and how we could use that information with demographics to create messaging and education targeted to those groups to encourage vaccination. Bekki shared that messaging that the vaccine is safe and effective is one of the biggest challenges. They are currently surveying healthcare workers and anecdotally, 60-70% of this group would be likely to get vaccinated. Rumor control is another challenge. She's already seeing misinformation on social media. Rob shared that in a new survey just issued included the vaccination question and early results are showing that 79% of the responders were very likely to get vaccinated.
- Mia also asked for clarification that when quantity of doses were referenced, that mean one of two doses. So if Montana were to receive 20,000 doses, that would equate to 10,000 vaccinations. Yes.
- Mia closed with the thought that we'd like to be kept apprised of any gaps in achieving a successful rollout of the vaccine. This group can provide a wide scope of resources in closing those gaps and facilitating the plan. For example, it was shared yesterday that emergency medical responders, EMS responders and paramedics, could help administer the vaccine to rural areas or far from a dispensing pharmacy. Messaging and education could be delivered at a local level by schools or workplaces. Unlikely vaccinators could be targeted with messaging to address their specific concerns with the vaccine. With the next version of the plan completed, many of the needs will be identified.
- Next call will be on Wednesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>.

