

# Trails, Community Development & Advocacy

## Luther Propst

American Trails Webinar

February 22, 2024



# Many Communities Are Changing Rapidly

- Growing “Amenity” Communities – Access to Public Lands, Remote Workers, COVID Refugees & Retirees
- Declining Resource Extraction & Rural Communities



# Bozeman, Montana

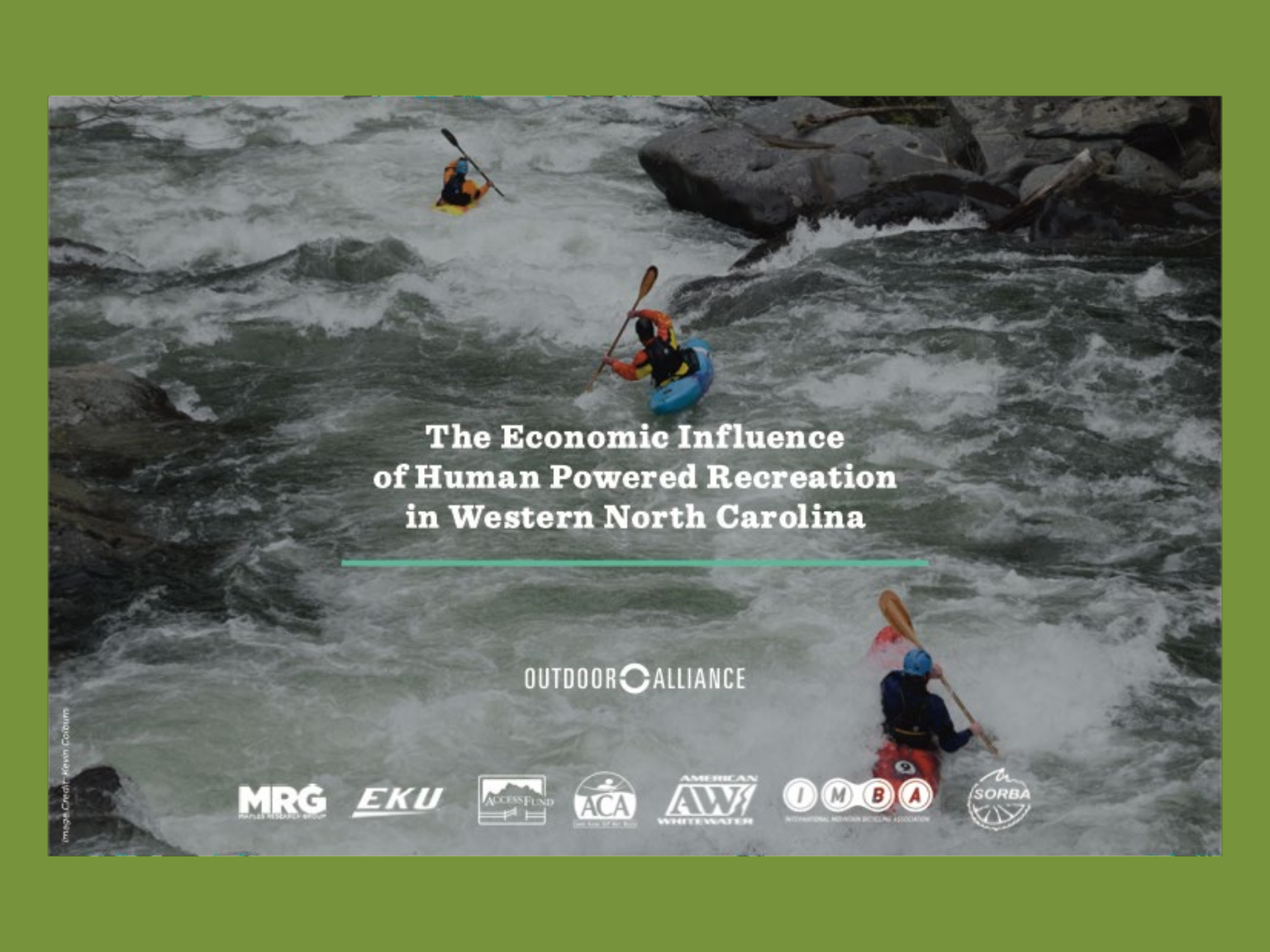


# Hamilton, Montana



# Trails & Outdoor Recreation Are Powerful – And Cost Effective– Community & Economic Development Assets





# The Economic Influence of Human Powered Recreation in Western North Carolina

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OUTDOOR  ALLIANCE

**MRG**  
MARKET RESEARCH GROUP

**EKU**



# We don't just play in the forest. Recreation dollars power this region.

The Manti-La Sal National Forest stretches from central to southeastern Utah and is home to sweeping mesas, sandstone towers and the snowy peaks of the La Sal Mountain Range. Its 1.4 million acres encompasses some of Utah's most remote and unique landscapes.

Outdoor adventures in Utah—including backcountry skiing, rock climbing, mountain biking, and hiking—are more than just fun. Human-powered outdoor recreation supports \$20.4 million in annual visitor spending in the Manti-La Sal National Forest, which receives 295,000 visits a year.

Right now, the U.S. Forest Service is in the process of updating the land management plans for the Manti-La Sal National Forest.

**Outdoor recreation needs to be prioritized in this process.**



Numbers derived from studies by James N. Maples, PhD (Eastern Kentucky University), and Michael J. Bradley, PhD (Arkansas Tech University)

1. Economic Impact of Mountain Biking in the Manti-La Sal National Forest, 2022
2. Economic Impact of Rock Climbing in the Manti-La Sal National Forest, 2022
3. Economic Impact of Snowsports in the Manti-La Sal National Forest, 2022
4. Economic Impact of Hiking in the Manti-La Sal National Forest, 2022

## **More than 92% of residents surveyed chose to live in western Colorado because of its unparalleled access to outdoor recreation.**

Colorado's GMUG National Forests attract a broad array of people to the region. Nearly 75% of the individuals surveyed earn more than \$50,000 a year. One in four are business owners.

The allure to this region is deeply rooted in the GMUG National Forests' recreational opportunities. These forests help shape Colorado's identity as a healthy, adventure-loving place to work, play, and live. Let's keep it that way.



**In the Manti-La Sal National Forest,  
climbing, biking, hiking, backpacking  
and snowsports annually support:**

ANNUAL VISITOR SPENDING

**\$20.4 million**



ANNUAL VISITS TO THE FOREST

**295,000 visits**

FOR UTAHANS

**250 full time jobs**



**\$7.88 million in wages**

**Any way you slice it, outdoor recreation brings  
substantial dollars to Utah's economy.**

# Four Major Categories of Economic Benefits From Trails & Outdoor Recreation



# Preview

- Visitor Spending (Tourism)
- Direct Spending by Residents
- Business Attraction
- Skilled Worker Attraction

# Economic Impacts of Tourism and Outdoor Recreation – From Colorado to....



66% of Colorado tourists come for activities involving the natural environment.

# Northwest Arkansas



A photograph of a roadside scene. In the foreground, there is a wire fence and a patch of dry, brown grass. A large yellow sign with black text is mounted on a post. The sign reads "WARNING TO TOURISTS" in large letters, and "DO NOT LAUGH AT THE NATIVES" in smaller letters below it. In the background, a road stretches into the distance under a clear blue sky. A utility pole with power lines is visible on the left side of the road. Further down the road, there are more signs, including one with the number "28" and a directional arrow.

**WARNING  
TO TOURISTS**

**DO NOT LAUGH  
AT THE NATIVES**

Not Just Tourism

# Direct Spending - Gear & Brew Pubs

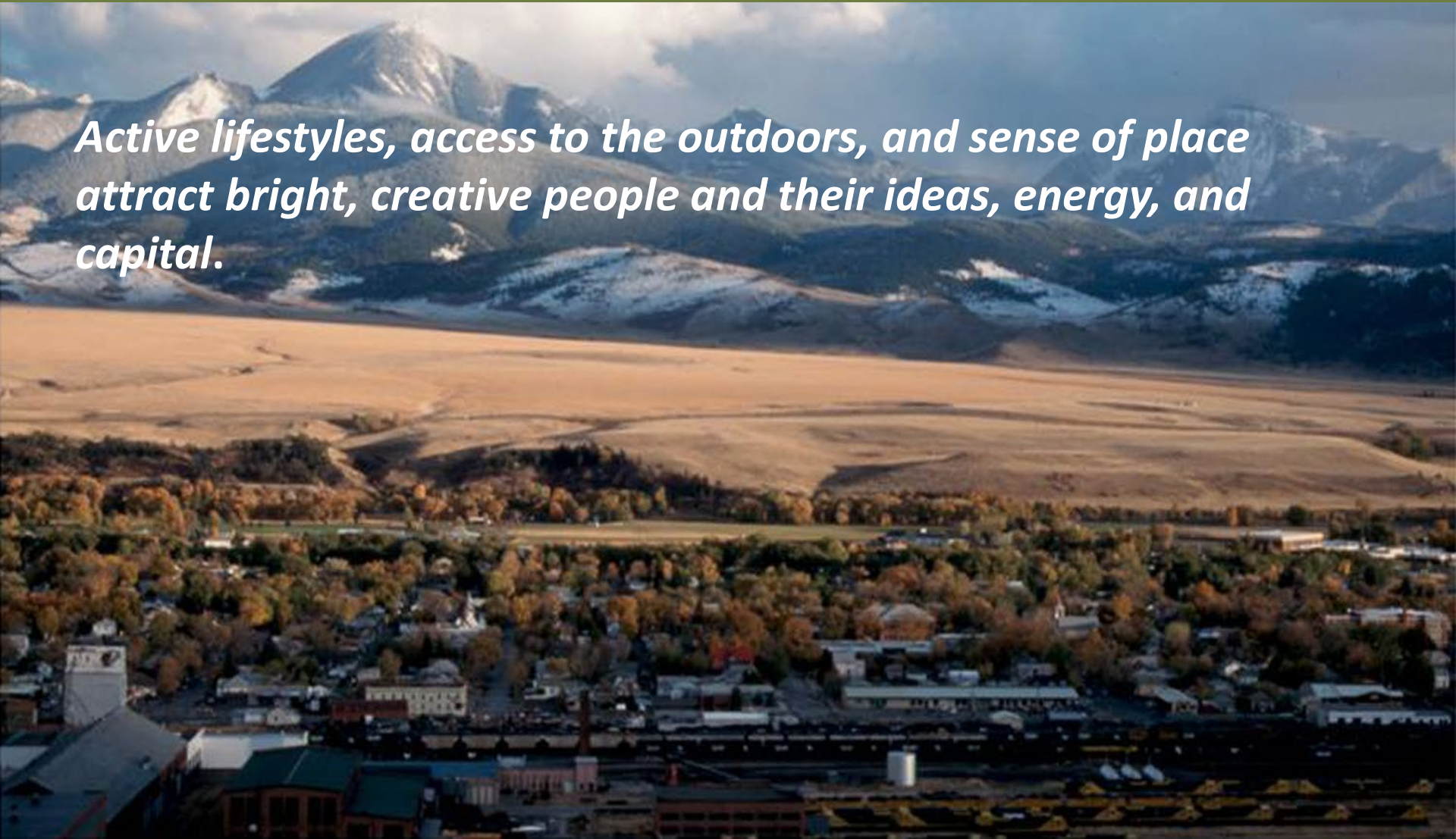






# A Comparative Advantage In a Rapidly Changing Economy

*Active lifestyles, access to the outdoors, and sense of place attract bright, creative people and their ideas, energy, and capital.*



# In Other Words, Many Highly Skilled Workers Are Fun Hogs



# The Capitalization of Our Climate



Attracting Highly Skilled Workers  
to Arizona's Sun Corridor



# Attracting Highly Skilled Workers

- Tucson & Phoenix study area
- Interviews with HR directors
- 84% of HSW Had Moved to Area
- Pay, Cost of Living, Lifestyle, Schools.
- Climate, Outdoor Recreation (e.g. Hiking, MTB), Organized Sports, Spectator Sports.

# Five Recommendations for Persuading New Allies to Support Trails



# Preview

- Articulate A Compelling Vision
- Tell Stories Based on Shared Values
- Convey Empathy Rather Than Expertise & Exclusivity
- Elections Matter
- Show Humility and Restraint



I have a dream

High and dry above the stupendous detail of our job we should hold the reason for it all. This is not to cut a path and then say—‘Ain’t it beautiful’. Our job is to open a realm.

—Benton MacKaye, Founder of the Appalachian Trail, 1925



The currency is not merely analysis and prescriptions, but values, stories and a story that resonates...



We are not thinking machines that feel, we  
are feeling machines that think.

—Antonio Damasio, neuroscientist



# Convey Empathy As well As Expertise, Avoid Exclusivity







# Elections Matter... A Lot




**Jackson Hole News & Guide**






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## Propst to run again for commission

Incumbent to campaign on housing, unbalanced growth and mismanaged resources.

By Sophia Boyd-Fliegel May 18, 2022  0

Luther Propst, vice chair of the Teton County Board of County Commissioners, has been forthcoming about a re-run for county commission for a few months.

He hasn't filed yet. The only person to do so as of press time Tuesday was challenger Alex Muromcew, a Republican.

Still, the 63-year-old Democrat hosted an announcement party at Snake River Brewing on Tuesday night to, as he said, drink beer, see friends and mobilize

# Act With Humility & Restraint



“We have an unknown distance yet to run,  
an unknown river to explore.”

*John Wesley Powell*

