



What is Met Rec Doing to Support Recreation? March, 2020

During times of hardship, the Gunnison Valley is known for growing tighter and coming together. The coronavirus is testing this force as distance between us is what's best for the community. As a result, a heightened level of creative connectedness has emerge. Friends and families are scheduling virtual coffee dates and happy hours. Local fitness instructors are sharing DIY-at home workouts, and libraries and museums around the world are working to make their resources digital and more accessible. Now, more than ever, Met Rec's services seem extremely pertinent as many turn to recreation to maintain their mental and physical well-being.

For that reason, in part three of this four article series, I'm sharing what Met Rec is doing to support recreation. Beginning last fall, Met Rec engaged the public and recreation stakeholders to inform its first-ever strategic plan. We collected input from two online surveys, three public work sessions, and a review of other regional recreation plans and assessments. The feedback received helped Met Rec craft a strategy and prioritize recreation focus areas.

With a services area that encompasses almost all of Gunnison County, Met Rec has the unique ability to facilitate collaborative recreation initiatives across silos and jurisdictional boundaries. Given Gunnison County's steady population growth and continued value of recreation, this ability fills an important community need that our municipalities cannot achieve independently. Met Rec has chosen to focus on recreation initiatives that deliver solutions for the entire valley. We seek to serve as an integrator capable of innovating partnerships to accomplish vital community recreation opportunities while also leveraging funding from outside Gunnison County.

Met Rec's recreation strategic plan includes four focus areas: Developed Recreation Amenities, Outdoor Recreation, Increase Access to Recreation, and Community Collaboration. Go to Met Rec's website (www.gcmetrec.com) to view the entire plan. The Met Rec Board of Directors approved the allocation of \$135,000 in recreation funding to support the four focus areas at the March Board Meeting.

Met Rec initially budgeted \$120,000 for recreation funding. However, given the impact the coronavirus will have on our local non-profits, the Board felt it necessary to grow the size of its 2020 Community Collaboration Grant Program from \$20,000 to \$35,000. Additionally, \$80,000 will go towards Met Rec's nascent Developed Recreation Grant Program, aimed at catalyzing large-scale recreation projects. A \$10,000 contribution will go to the Gunnison stewardship Fund, a collaborative effort managed by the National Forest Foundation and Gunnison County developed to support stewardship of the area's public and conserved lands. Lastly, \$10,000 will go towards a Recreation Reserve Fund. The reserve fund will grow Met Rec's ability to financially support the planning and implementation of future developed recreation projects. Grant application material for the 2020 Community Collaboration and Developed Recreation Grant Programs will be available this April.

Keep an eye out next month for our final article. We will highlight the work being done to enhance our television service. In the near-term, I hope that you find connectedness during these difficult times, whether that's spending time with family, revisiting a favorite book, watching TV, or recreation locally, safely, and responsibly.