

# Central Wasatch Visitor Use Study



The canyons of the Central Wasatch provide some of Utah's most outstanding outdoor recreation opportunities. Visitors can explore several dozen high elevation lakes, thousands of climbing routes, hike or mountain bike on hundreds of miles of trail, and ski some of the best snow on Earth during the winter months. In recent years however, the increased demand for outdoor recreation opportunities has caused many individuals, user groups, governmental organizations, and other allied interest groups to wonder how to accommodate demand while minimizing the potential impacts that increased use has on the canyon's ecological and physical resources. The purpose of this study is to explore how outdoor recreation use and its associated impacts can be quantified and monitored over time within the canyons. Establishing indicators of the ecological, physical, and social characteristics of recreation settings throughout the canyons is an essential first step to quantifying and monitoring change. Our goal is to establish a set of indicators that are collaboratively generated and grounded in the best-available science and reflect the unique needs and concerns of the diverse stakeholders and interest groups who use, manage, and depend on the canyons. Through the work detailed below, the Central Wasatch Commission, the State of Utah, and the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest will gain a clear understanding of what data on outdoor recreation use currently exist and what data are essential to understand the ecological, physical, and social characteristics of recreation settings.

## Phase I - Scoping of Potential Indicators

We are conducting a systematic literature review and data search to establish a comprehensive understanding of data concerning outdoor recreation use, and recreation-related impacts, within the Central Wasatch. We are

supplementing this review and search with key stakeholder interviews to identify ongoing and past data collection or monitoring efforts related to recreation, develop an understanding of the types of indicators those agencies, organizations, and user groups feel are most important, and gather stakeholder perspectives, concerns, and ideas related to visitor use monitoring in the region. We are also cataloging all the data collection and monitoring efforts identified and evaluated the extent to which each data source could be used to help develop ecological, physical, or social indicators for outdoor recreation settings within the canyons. For each data source, we are providing an overview of why the data are (or were) collected, how they were collected, and insights into how the data can inform the development of ecological, physical, or social indicators. Our scoping process concludes with a comprehensive review of the federal and state legislation as well as federal, state, county, and municipal policies and planning documents that address, or specifically guide, the management of ecological, physical, and social conditions within the canyons. The purpose of this review is to identify and document all legal or managerial processes and standards that apply to altering outdoor recreation use within the canyons.

### Interim Report (Updated July 15, 2021)

Our interim report is available [HERE](#). The report was also shared with members of the Central Wasatch Commission, the USDA Forest Service, and other stakeholders in a workshop held on July 28th, 2021. The workshop is can be viewed below.

#### Workshop 1 - Presentation of Interim Report Findings and Vetting of Initial Indicators

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/zUcXy5tYKpg560314allowfullscreen>

Subsequent workshops are planned for late summer 2021. Project updates will be posted here. For more information, contact Jordan W. Smith at [jordan.smith.usu.edu](mailto:jordan.smith.usu.edu).