



23/24 Season Report





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President's note

Well that was a historic season! But wait, you're surely thinking to yourself, that was the previous season with an epic 900 inches, right? Not for us. This season, which also weighed in at a not-too-shabby 600 inches, was historic for the WBA because we celebrated our 10th anniversary as well as hired our first Director of Operations, Dani Poirier.

With years of experience on the board of the WBA we couldn't be happier that she rolled off the board and stepped up to the challenge of the ceaseless threats to the delicate balance between development and access in the Central Wasatch. It is literally a full time job keeping track of and interacting with the various entities involved in making consequential decisions that affect this small but significant range and Dani has done an epic job staying on top of things this season.

Some of our key accomplishments and initiatives this season included expanding our Trail Counting Program, providing our Backcountry Shuttle, participating in bi-weekly meetings about access in Cardiff Fork, having representatives attend Central Wasatch Commission meetings, participating in efforts to mitigate the threat of UDOT's proposed gondola, negotiating for better parking options for dispersed users, and more.

Now that some of us are hoping for an awesome corn cycle and many are moving on to other seasonal pursuits trading boards that slide on snow or what's left of it for other gear, our work remains constant: staying focused on and preparing for issues and decisions that will affect next season and all the ones beyond. For a decade the WBA has done this work powered almost exclusively by its all volunteer board, but it's not something we can sustain indefinitely.

I want to personally thank everyone who has joined our membership program or donated this past season. It is the beginning of our next chapter. If you haven't joined or donated yet, please do. If you have, please make sure your touring partners, friends, and family do as well. We're a scrappy organization, vastly out-resourced trying to punch above our weight to protect and preserve the delicate balance in the Central Wasatch.

Thank you for your support this season and in the ones ahead. We're going to need it. I hope to see you out there on the skin track.

Cheers,

Aaron London



A note from our director

This season Wasatch Backcountry Alliance (WBA) celebrated a decade of advocacy! In 2013, a small group of passionate backcountry skiers organized to represent the voice of the backcountry community in the Central Wasatch. An imposing threat to the backcountry at the time was SkiLink, a proposal to connect Solitude to The Canyons (now Park City Mountain Resort) via a gondola on public lands to be sold to Talisker, resort owner at the time. This led to the formation of WBA, which created organized resistance to protect these mountains that we call home. Ten years in, we continue to advocate and represent the voice of the backcountry community.



For the past 10 years, WBA has been run by a volunteer board of directors, many of whom have been involved since the founding. It has become apparent in recent years that WBA would benefit from hiring an employee to help us keep abreast of the many little – and big – events, meetings, and developments that affect our mission of protecting and preserving backcountry access in the Central Wasatch.

We made the exciting decision to hire a director this past fall. I was eager to throw my name in the hat and here I am, the first director for WBA! I have been involved with WBA for the past nine years, progressing from an intern as a student to a regular volunteer, and eventually serving on the board of directors.

I jumped in head first this season and learned a lot along the way. We have been able to accomplish so much this season and I am already looking forward to all we will accomplish in the years to come. Our humble beginnings have grown into a powerful and respected voice among decision-makers and stakeholders in the Central Wasatch. It is crucial that Wasatch Backcountry Alliance continues to have a seat at the table next season and for all the years to come.

Without community support, WBA wouldn't have lasted these past 10 years. While touring might slip from your mind in the summer, our work continues through the summer long after the corn is gone and long before thoughts of first snows return. Summer is a crucial time to set up for a successful winter season. Your passion fuels our work, but we can't run on passion alone. Now that we've taken the daunting leap from being an exclusively volunteer-run organization to a more focused and organized one with a paid director, we need your support to help sustain our efforts to protect the backcountry in the Central Wasatch. Please consider donating or becoming a member today!

I look forward to working together to advocate for our beloved backcountry.

Cheers,

Dani Poirier

About WBA

Our Mission

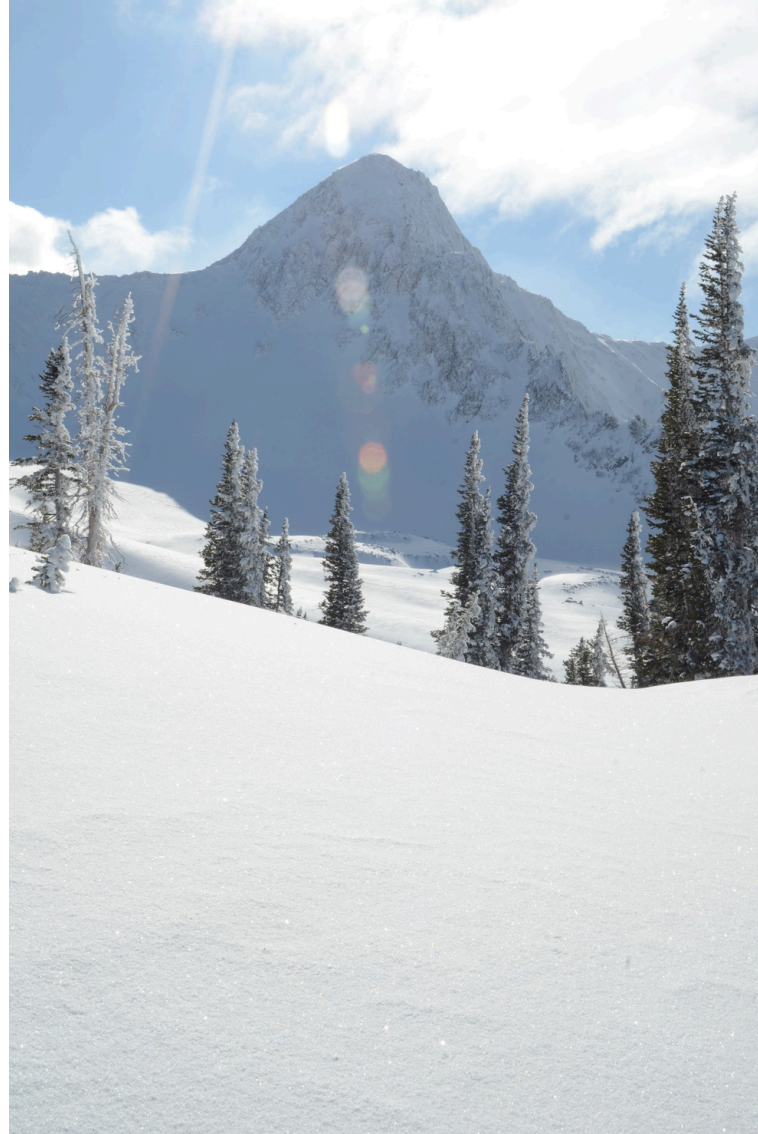
Wasatch Backcountry Alliance is the recognized voice for the backcountry community involved in human-powered winter recreation in the Central Wasatch Mountains. We represent a unified voice to media, partners, elected officials, and the general public. We focus on providing advocacy to support our causes, and serve as a central information venue for related topics.

Our Team

Board of Directors:

Aaron London - President
Jay Erickson - VP
Jake Wright - Treasurer
Claudia Wiese - Secretary
Jamie Kent - founding President
George Vargyas - founding member
Brad Rutledge - founding member
Tom Diegel - founding member
Chris Adams - former President
David Page
David Carroll
Mason Daly

Eli Davis - Social Media Manager
Dani Poirier - Director



**Advocating
for the
Central
Wasatch
backcountry
since 2013.**

23/24 by the numbers

9  Events hosted

5  Newsletters

18  Educational posts

17  Action alerts

64  Backcountry Shuttles

1  Volunteer Trail Counter Calibration Day

29  Infrared Trail Counters
Added 6 counters thanks to our new partnership with DNR!


218  New members

?!  Countless meetings attended

Additional Projects & Partnerships

 New website and educational pages

 Brought back our podcast, The Utrack

 Participated in Outdoor Alliance's DC Lobbying

 Launched WBA Membership Program

Joined **1%** **FOR THE PLANET.**

 Negotiated for dispersed & early morning parking in BCC

WBA Initiatives 23/24



UDOT's proposed gondola

WBA has been closely following UDOT's EIS and their gondola proposal for years. This season, we were an active participant in a coalition of organizations and individuals working to stop the gondola and provide common sense alternatives in lieu of UDOT's LCC EIS preferred alternative. We held meetings with UDOT and uncovered additional details, and lack thereof, to the claimed phased approaches within UDOT's Record of Decision.

This season, we built a new webpage to help inform and give our constituents the tools to engage as a citizen. We helped organize a list of town halls and meeting opportunities with lawmakers to provide a way to engage and educate lawmakers about the pitfalls and lack of community support for the gondola. We also launched a mini-podcast series that breaks down the intricacies and misconceptions about the gondola.



Parking Negotiations

Working with the Town of Brighton and Interstate Parking, we negotiated more parking opportunities for dispersed users accessing public lands in BCC. We secured 20 early morning parking spots: 10 near Solitude Entry 2 (USA Bowl access) and 10 spots Solitude near Entry 1 (Silver Fork access). Twenty is better than none, which would have been the case if WBA had not provided feedback to the Town of Brighton. While not all of our wishes were granted, we were pleased that early morning parking reservations were implemented and worked well.

We would like to negotiate an earlier start time next season to improve dawn patrol and dispersed recreation opportunities. WBA was able to quantify the popularity and importance of these zones for backcountry users thanks to our winter [Trail Counting Program!](#)



Cardiff Fork Meetings

WBA is involved in the ongoing discussions concerning Cardiff Fork. This season, we racked up close to 30 hours in meetings alone, not to mention other behind-the-scenes work we are dedicating to understanding and dealing with the property ownership issues in Cardiff Fork.

Councilwoman Dea Theodore organized a committee, "Public and Private Access into the Backcountry," and WBA is an active participant. While negotiating a formal access agreement up the Cardiff Fork road has not come to fruition for this season, we continue to pursue access options and are optimistic about the future of backcountry skiing in Cardiff Fork.

Active Projects 23/24

While much of our advocacy work happens behind the scenes, our Backcountry Shuttle and Trail Counting Programs are two of our most visible programs.



Backcountry Shuttle

Since 2016, Wasatch Backcountry Alliance has provided a shuttle to demonstrate that micro-transit solutions can work for wintertime dispersed recreation users.



Trail Counting

Wasatch Backcountry Alliance's winter trailhead counter project provides the first ever long-term record of non-motorized winter recreational use in the Central Wasatch.

Backcountry Shuttle



The idea of "studying" transportation solutions in the Central Wasatch has been discussed for decades. The preferred solutions by the ski resorts, developers, and politicians have been billion-dollar projects like SkiLink, trains, tunnels, and gondolas. When asked, the public every time has used common sense and said, "More buses!" only to be ignored. WBA, tired of talking about it, said, "How hard would it be to add a transportation solution?" As a small nonprofit, a bus system is out of our league. However, starting in 2016, we contracted with Utah Mountain Shuttle to provide a backcountry shuttle one day each winter to demonstrate that micro-transit solutions can work for wintertime dispersed recreation.

In 2021, in response to the ever-increasing traffic problems in Little Cottonwood Canyon, WBA scaled its annual shuttle day up to a weekly shuttle day running on Saturdays to maintain access to backcountry terrain in upper Little Cottonwood Canyon while demonstrating that backcountry users can play a role in helping to reduce traffic congestion and parking conflicts.

Last season, thanks to sponsor funding from the [Central Wasatch Commission](#) and an additional retailer, we expanded our service to Big Cottonwood Canyon as well! Unfortunately, the retailer was unable to provide funding this season and we ended operations earlier than anticipated due to lack of funding.



The threat of a gondola in Little Cottonwood is extremely prevalent. If we the public, companies, and others don't make enough noise by speaking up and making statements against it with all our might, Little Cottonwood Canyon will have a gondola. We urge you to take every opportunity to say, "No Gondola!" Lead by example, take the shuttle, ride the buses, and carpool. To companies and individuals, take action by funding the WBA Backcountry Shuttle! Options exist that avoid developing billion-dollar gambles in our cherished mountains.

Trail Counting Program



Wasatch Backcountry Alliance's winter trailhead counter project provides the first-ever long-term record of non-motorized winter recreational use in the Central Wasatch. This is invaluable when working with land managers and decision-makers.

For years we've all heard variations of opinion on how many more people there are in the backcountry these days. The obstacles to collecting this kind of data are daunting, especially in winter. The information we collect isn't exact with all of the places people enter and exit the backcountry, the limitations of counting equipment, and other hurdles. An exact count is a completely unreasonable expectation.

What our data can do is to give us numbers – not perfect, but better than nothing which was the only information available before this project began. What it can best tell us is the distribution of users among the trailheads where counters are located, the times of day and days of the week where user numbers peak, and over the course of a season, user numbers by day at each of the trailheads we monitor. Because we monitor at the same sites, year after year our data also allows comparing use patterns from year to year.

This project is run by volunteers and works under a permit with the Forest Service. We record user numbers from infrared counters in Mill Creek, Big Cottonwood, and Little Cottonwood Canyons from December 1 to May 1. We started this program with four counter locations. This past fall, we secured a new partnership with Utah's Division of Outdoor Recreation to grow our program with an additional six counters, bringing us to a total of 29 counters, which is a lot to manage with a volunteer team!




Each season, we coordinate calibrations where volunteers manually record trailhead users that pass our counters. This enables us to better understand and validate our data when we download data from the counters. This past season, we completed 10 hours of calibrations thanks to volunteer participation.

The Uptrack podcast

Wasatch Backcountry Alliance launched The Uptrack in 2021 as a digital roundtable discussion about transportation solutions for Little Cottonwood Canyon with hopes to answer all questions associated with the UDOT EIS proposals.

Three years later, we are still deeply involved in discussions around transportation in the Central Wasatch. Learn about the history of studying transportation solutions, WBA’s Backcountry Shuttle program, and how we, as a community, can help prevent a gondola in Little Cottonwood Canyon.

If there is a topic you would like us to cover next season, please reach out to info@wasatchbackcountryalliance.org



THE UPTRACK

By Wasatch Backcountry Alliance

WBA launched THE UPTRACK in 2021 as a digital roundtable discussion about transportation solutions for Little Cottonwood Canyon with hopes to answer all questions associated with the UDOT EIS proposals.

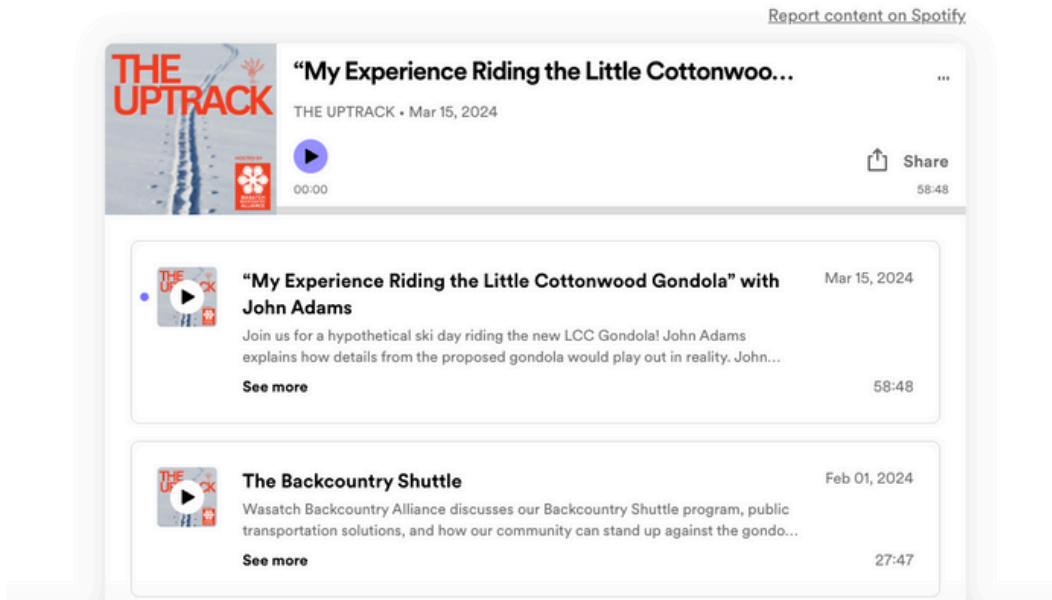
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THE UPTRACK "My Experience Riding the Little Cottonwo..."
THE UPTRACK • Mar 15, 2024

00:00 [Share](#) 58:48

"My Experience Riding the Little Cottonwood Gondola" with John Adams Mar 15, 2024
Join us for a hypothetical ski day riding the new LCC Gondola! John Adams explains how details from the proposed gondola would play out in reality. John...
[See more](#) 58:48

The Backcountry Shuttle Feb 01, 2024
Wasatch Backcountry Alliance discusses our Backcountry Shuttle program, public transportation solutions, and how our community can stand up against the gondo...
[See more](#) 27:47

Community Conversations

Decision makers are listening to WBA! Much of our work happens through meetings and communications with various stakeholders. This season, we have worked with the following organizations in various capacities.

- Salt Lake Ranger District Forest Service
- Utah Department of Transportation
- Central Wasatch Commission
- Division of Outdoor Recreation
- Salt Lake County
- Winter Wildlands Alliance
- Outdoor Alliance
- Councilwomen Dea Theodore's Access Committee (working with the Cardiff Canyons Owners Association and Wasatch Mountain Club, among others)
- Town of Brighton & Interstate Parking
- Town of Alta
- Canyon Guard (and other no-gondola coalition members)
- Save Our Canyons
- Friends of Little Cottonwood Canyon
- Friends of Alta
- Utah Avalanche Center
- Countless individual community members



Summer Strategy

Summer is never a quiet season for WBA. The important conversations, meetings, and planning don't stop when the snow melts. Summer is a crucial time to set up for a successful winter season. Here's what WBA will work on this season.

Projects	Details	Desired Outcome
Cardiff Fork access	Work with stakeholders to pursue easements or acquisitions.	Resolve legal public access up the road from BCC.
Backcountry Shuttle permit	Work with the Forest Service to secure a permit to enable trailhead access.	Ability to drop off and pick up shuttle riders at key trailheads.
Trail Counting data	Download and analyze new data from the past season.	Record and share data with our program partners.
Parking policy changes	Work with the Town of Brighton, the Forest Service, and Interstate Parking.	Improve parking policies to better accommodate dispersed users.
Heli guide ops	Work with Wasatch Powderbird Guides and the Forest Service.	Create better operations alerts and permit accountability to reduce hazard and conflict.
No gondola efforts	Work with stakeholders, no-gondola coalition, and policy makers.	Continue to conduct statewide education on why the gondola is not a traffic solution.
WBA Membership Program	Strategic planning and development.	Create more perks for WBA members.
The Uptrack podcast	Plan, research, and record new episodes.	Provide insight to WBA's initiatives and help educate our constituents on local issues.
Fundraising	Seek grants, sponsorships, and donors.	Sustain our efforts and newly created paid director position.

WBA Membership

Join our community & advocacy legacy

We are on a mission to build a stronger community to help protect the places we love to recreate. Your membership will fund current and future projects while connecting you with fellow community members through social gatherings and education.

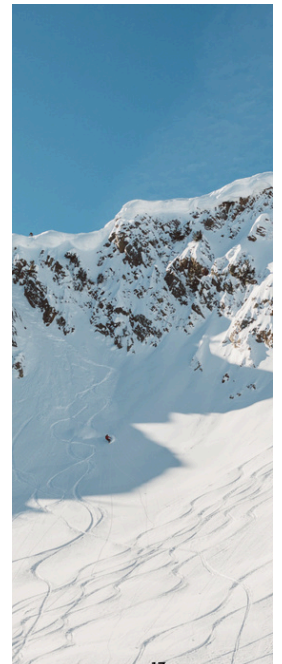
Wasatch Backcountry Alliance works with elected officials, government agencies, land managers, and businesses on access issues, transportation solutions, and more. Your support will help ensure our community has a seat at the table for important decisions -both short-term and long-range- that shape the mountains we love and how we interact with them.



\$35/year
Core Membership

or choose your own custom amount.
Membership renews annually.

wasatchbackcountryalliance.org/join/



Support WBA wasatchbackcountryalliance.org/support/

venmo



venmo

Wasatch Backcountry Alliance 

@WasatchBackcountryAlliance



Venmo

Donate to our charity verified Venmo account, @WasatchBackcountryAlliance or scan this QR code from your Venmo app.

[Donate via Venmo](#)



PayPal

Make a one-time, monthly, or annual contribution to WBA. Donations can be made with credit card or PayPal account.

[Donate via PayPal](#)



Checks

Pay to the order of:
Wasatch Backcountry Alliance
and mail to:
640 S 600 E
Salt Lake City, UT 84102

[Contact us](#)



Membership

We are on a mission to build a stronger community to help protect the places we love to recreate. Your membership will fund current and future projects, while connecting you with fellow community members through social gatherings and education.

[Join](#)



Brand Partnership

Show the community you care about protecting the backcountry. To learn about how your brand or business can support WBA, please contact our director, Dani Poirier dani@wasatchbackcountryalliance.org

[Email Dani](#)



1% for the Planet

1% for the Planet connects environmental partners (WBA) with businesses or individuals who pledge to give 1% of their sales to environmental nonprofits each year. This program enables WBA to connect with businesses that support human-powered winter recreation in the Central Wasatch Mountains.

[Learn more](#)



Shirts & jerseys

Show you care and wear the WBA logo! The gear makes a great gift for your touring partners, friends, and family. All gear is available in exchange for donations. 50% of your donation is tax deductible. Supplies are limited, so email us for the latest inventory and suggested donation amount.

[Email us](#)



Howie Garber Prints

Local photographer and backcountry legend, Howie Garber donated two stunning images of the Wasatch. Hudson Printing donated the prints to WBA. These special edition 3x2' prints are available for a \$35 minimum donation. Email us for image availability and to purchase.

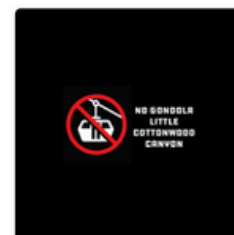
[Email us](#)



eqpd Gear Tote

We've partnered with eqpd, a super rad bag company from Washington that makes bomber bags. They've built a custom LCC Topo GearBuckets to help support WBA. For every bag sold, eqpd donates 20% back to WBA.

[Coming soon!](#)



NO GONDOLA yard signs

If you hike, bike, ski, photograph, or enjoy water from the Wasatch (where almost all water in Salt Lake County comes from), please join in the effort to stop Interconnect. A \$5 minimum donation to cover sign costs is appreciated.

[Sold out](#)

23/24 Acknowledgements

Thanks to our current members, donors, and community partners for supporting WBA! If you have a skillset or service you are willing to donate, [email us](#) to learn how you can contribute.

Party Shirt International	Skimo Co
Central Wasatch Commission	eqpd Gear
Hudson Printing	Howie Garber Images
Brad Hogan	Fisher Brewing Co.
Resonance Printing Solutions	Mary Dunford
John Sigmond	Grant Kates Photography
Salt Ski Service	Patagonia Outlet – SLC
Black Diamond	Kuhl
Voile Mfg.	REI – Millcreek
Backcountry	Alpha Coffee

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