

Gunnison Valley Climate Action Conference

Monday, January 13th

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Crested Butte Center for the Arts

Free and Open to the Public

Speakers and Preliminary Agenda

6:15 pm: From Passion to Purpose, Josh Jespersen, Protect Our Winters, POW Riders Alliance



Born and raised in Pennsylvania among the rolling hills, and Amish folk in the Appalachian countryside, Josh learned to ski at Tussey Mountain outside of State College when he was three years old. Continuing to learn on the icy slopes of the Poconos until fifteen, he heard about snowboarding, and never looked back.

At eighteen years old, he committed to six years in the military as a Navy SEAL. During that time he deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. On his second deployment, situated high in the Sulaiman Mountains of the Hindu Kush, he was snowed in for more than a month, and was surrounded by dream lines. The need for shredding was renewed, and upon separation from the Navy, he promptly moved to Colorado. He soon bought his first splitboard, and again, never looked back.

Getting inspired by Jeremy Jones, he kept at it. To help motivate his fellow veterans to go out in the mountains, he decided to pick up an audacious goal, “Become the first person to climb and ski/snowboard all 54 of Colorado’s 14,000 foot peaks in a single ski season.” On May 20th, he accomplished that goal, and did so in 138 days. The itch still can’t be scratched, and he’s beyond stoked to join the POW Rider’s Alliance to bring more people out in the mountains, and maybe inspire them to keep peaks snowy the world over.

6:45 pm: Climate Action to Protect Snow: Why Research Alone Is Not Enough, Dr. Heidi Steltzer, PhD, Fort Lewis College, Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory



In an ever-changing world, at a time when the Earth was not as warm as today, I chose to be a scientist. I’ve often asked myself why. I was told that I could be a scientist, though no one suggested I study mountains or the Arctic. These were choices that surprised many, including myself.

In 1991, I was a college student studying biology at Duke University. I had never gone camping. For my first backpack trip, I winter camped with a group of ten in the Appalachians. My first solo nights were here at Mexican Cut and Hasley Basin in 1993, a year of big snow and tall flowers. That summer spent at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory changed my life. That summer led me to become a mountain scientist.

I’ve studied tundra landscapes here in the Rockies, then in Alaska, Greenland, and now China. It’s been incredible to go places few go and spend days alone on mountain hillsides. I chose to be a scientist to

explore our planet, to contemplate how mountains work, and meet people who live lives very different from my own. I chose to commit to climate action to protect snow, because the changing snow in mountain and Arctic regions is affecting the well-being and livelihoods of many.

Heidi is a professor in the Departments of Environment and Sustainability and Biology at Fort Lewis College. She is a lead author for the High Mountain Areas Chapter in the most recent [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate, September 2019](#). Find her on social media @heidimountains.

Gunnison Valley Climate Action Conference

Friday, January 17th

8:30 – 4:30

Western Colorado University Ballroom

[Register at GunnisonCO.gov/ClimateAction](https://gunnisonco.gov/climateaction)

Speakers and Preliminary Agenda

8:30 am: Welcome and Overview, Russ Forrest, Gunnison City Manager

8:45 am: How Climate Change is Impacting the West, Dr. Brenda Ekwurzel, PhD, Union of Concerned Scientists



Brenda Ekwurzel is a senior climate scientist and the director of climate science for the Climate & Energy Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). In her role, she ensures that program analyses reflect robust and relevant climate science, and researches the influence of major carbon producers on rising global average temperatures and sea level. Dr. Ekwurzel is a co-author of the fourth National Climate Assessment (NCA4) Volume II. She presents frequently to a range of audiences on climate science, educating the public on practical, achievable solutions for climate change.

A widely quoted expert on climate change, Dr. Ekwurzel co-authored the UCS guide *Cooler Smarter: Practical Steps for Low-Carbon Living*. In 2016, she was named a AAAS fellow, and cited for her “distinguished contributions to analysis and outreach aimed at strengthening support for sound U.S. climate policies, and making the science of climate change accessible to diverse audiences.” She has appeared on ABC News, CBS News, *Good Morning America*, CNN, the Fox News Channel, NPR, and *The Colbert Report*, and has been cited by the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, the *Associated Press* and *Reuters*.

9:45 am: Climate Change and the Future of Water in the Gunnison Valley, Sonja Chavez, General Manager, Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District



Sonja joined the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District as General Manager on December 3, 2019. Sonja joined the UGRWCD from the Colorado Water Conservation District. Sonja received both her BA in Environmental Biology and an MA in Limnology (study of freshwater systems) from the University of Colorado. Her areas of expertise are in water quality, water resources management, funding acquisition, and environmental and natural resource sciences, policy and planning.

10:15 am: Coffee and Tea Break

10:30 am: Panel Discussion: Climate Action at the Local Level, Luke Cartin, Environmental Sustainability Manager, Park City Municipal Corporation & Chris Menges, Climate and Sustainability Programs Administrator, City of Aspen (Moderated by Jerry Tinianow, Western Urban Sustainability Advisors, LLC)



Luke Cartin—Luke oversees Park City’s goals of achieving net-zero carbon and 100% renewable electricity for city operations by 2022, and community-wide 2030. These goals are the most ambitious in North America for any municipality, and one of the most aspiring world-wide. There are many programs underway, including; electrification of city fleet and buses, bringing on large scale renewable investment, quantifying open space as carbon sinks, and pursuing net-zero energy buildings. Previous to coming to the city, he worked in ski resort sustainability and land planning for 15 years. His work has been featured in the New York Times, BBC,

Outside Magazine, Powder, Newsweek, and other international outlets.



Chris Menges—Chris is the Climate and Sustainability Programs Administrator for the City of Aspen. Through his extensive past experience, Chris is a practiced leader in the fields of urban greenhouse gas (GHG) analysis and management, climate action planning, sustainability, organizational process improvement, utility partnerships, supporting elected officials, and influencing policy. His current role is to accelerate Aspen’s progress in reaching its GHG reduction goals with a focus on equity, resilience and other key factors. This involves planning and implementation

at the organizational and community scale, as well as influencing relevant state legislation. Prior to his work in Aspen, Chris lived in both ends of the Gunnison Valley for a combined 10 years and worked on local climate and clean energy programs.



Jerry Tinianow—Jerry Tinianow is the proprietor of Western Urban Sustainability Advisors, LLC. WestUrb assists local governments in creating and improving sustainability programs. It also works with vendors that sell products or services to such programs and interest groups that want to improve local sustainability policies. Jerry’s work at WestUrb reflects the successes he achieved as Denver’s first Chief Sustainability Officer (2012-19). Under his leadership Denver became the fifth U.S. city certified at the Platinum Level of the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED for Cities program. During his tenure Denver was also included in the “A List” of top-performing cities in climate change reporting and action by the international climate change organization CDP.

Jerry previously served as a national officer of both the Sierra Club and the National Audubon Society, and directed the Center for Energy and Environment at the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission. The Sierra Club designated him a national “Environmental Hero” during its centennial celebration. Prior to his sustainability career Jerry was a partner and commercial trial attorney with two of Ohio’s largest

law firms. Jerry received his undergraduate and law degrees from George Washington University. He was the 2018 winner of the Wirth Chair Sustainability Award given by the University of Colorado.

11:35 am: What's Our Carbon Footprint? GHG Emissions Baseline in Gunnison County, John Cattles, Sustainable Operations Director, Gunnison County & Mel Yemma, Planner, Town of Crested Butte

12:00: Interactive Lunch Hour

1:00 pm: An Interactive Afternoon modeling GHG reduction scenarios for the Gunnison Valley and developing regional goals and strategies around climate action, (*facilitated by John Cattles, Sustainable Operations Director, Gunnison County*)

4:00 pm: Panel Discussion: Working Together to Achieve Our Goals, Elected leaders from Gunnison County, City of Gunnison, and the Towns of Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte (*Moderated by Russ Forest, Gunnison City Manager*)