Meet Todd Brown--Telluride, Colorado's Mayor Pro Tem

The Mountain Pact works with nearly fifty mountain communities across eleven states in the West. We created the Community Highlight Project to interview elected officials that work with The Mountain Pact to learn more about their involvement and goals, while connecting communities across states with one another. Though our work is often one on one with local elected officials, our community is far-reaching and strong, and we hope these updates provide valuable insights and relatable stories.

Meet Todd Brown, Mayor Pro Tem of Telluride!

Todd Brown has a long history in Colorado; his family moved to Arvada in 1952 when the population was a modest 3,000 people. As many do, Todd first came to Telluride for the skiing. After a long career working around the world in corporate manufacturing, Todd decided to read the "handwriting on the wall" and try something new. He took it upon himself to "interview" ski towns across the West in search of his new home. He jumped into his car and road-tripped up and down the Rockies from New Mexico to Idaho. He skied a lot, talked with locals, and did his best to get a feel for each community. In the end, there was something about Telluride that made him feel at home, and in 1995 he planted his roots at the end of the road.

Life as a Town Council Member

Todd has served on Telluride's Town Council since 2013. He was re-elected in 2017 and now serves as the Mayor Pro Tem. The former Mayor convinced him to run (maybe...
twisting his arm a little), noting that the Council needed his, "background and approach to things." Todd says that serving on a town council is, "One of those jobs that needs to be done, and it needs to be done well." But, it can be hard sometimes: people want to stop you on the street to complain about things. On the other hand, it's a great way to keep in touch with the town and its residents. Todd is involved with several other organizations around the region, one being the San Miguel Watershed Coalition, where he sits on the Board of Directors.

**Involvement with The Mountain Pact**

Todd's involvement with The Mountain Pact began when its founder, Diana Madson, road-tripped across the Southwest in 2014, recruiting ski towns to create a unified voice on federal policy issues. He says, "all of the issues that are high on the list of priorities for The Mountain Pact are core to our ideals, our economy, and livelihood." Diana and The Mountain Pact helped him step up and speak out on national and federal policy issues, and he hopes that his involvement helps impact federal issues. Recognizing that Telluride was a speck of blue in a sea of red politically, he wanted to get involved to see if his small progressive town could help encourage the surrounding conservative areas to do look at things differently. His first project with The Mountain Pact was a memorable one and involved testifying in person about coal leasing policies via the Department of the Interior. Since then, he's published op-eds, supported issues relating to the recreation economy and methane, and traveled to Washington D.C. three times.

**Why The Mountain Pact?**

When asked about the value of continued involvement with The Mountain Pact, Todd notes that it helps him work through current and pertinent national policy issues. He recognizes it can be hard to sift through the overwhelming amount of federal policy issues that relate to and impact Telluride; while at the same time generating critical action. The Mountain Pact helps with this by highlighting relevant issues in policy alerts and creating actionable steps for mountain towns to engage in.

**Looking Ahead at Important Issues**

Mountain towns across the West facing many challenges relating to public lands, outdoor recreation, and climate change with impacts increasing...
When asked about the future issues and concerns for Telluride, Todd is quick to respond with, "Water." The San Miguel River flows out of Telluride into the Dolores River, which is a tributary of the Colorado River. Todd feels this close connection requires attention. For Telluride, an average winter brings 420 inches of snow, but last year only saw 160 inches. Spring runoff was over by the end of May, and then it didn't rain all summer. Todd believes the resiliency of mountain communities in the Southwest lies in how they address water issues on the Colorado River as a whole, instead of looking at all of the pieces and tributaries individually.

Telluride: A Historic Mountain Town
Todd is proud of Telluride's designation as a National Historic District. The legacy of mining and the surrounding environment are important to the town's identity and culture. Telluride embodies the "wild west" in a way newer resort towns don't.

Historically, a lot took place in Telluride for being a "middle of nowhere town." Most of this relates back to the legacy of mining during the "era of importance" from 1890-1913.

Aside from issues such as public lands and the recreation economy, Telluride has the typical resort town problems that other communities experience such as affordable housing and parking. Todd admits, "The town has been discovered, much like Aspen and Bozeman, and the price of real estate is out of reach for anyone who wants to live within the economy."

"Everyone who comes (to Telluride) falls in love, and everyone wants it to stay the same as it was the day they arrived, whether that was yesterday or forty years ago. It's a desirable place because of its blend of livability, the outdoors, and the community of it all." Nothing is static, so Todd sees value in both living in a place AND preserving it while taking in the changes as they come along.

Look for monthly Community Highlights focused on introducing you to members of The Mountain Pact. If you are interested in being highlighted, please let us know by contacting Mountain Pact ED, Anna Peterson: anna@themountainpact.org.