

Grand County Motorized Trails Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 15, 2024

APPROVED March 14, 2024

The meeting was held at the Grand Center and called to order by Clif Koontz at 12:35 pm with introductions by those in attendance.

Members in attendance:

Reid Bakken, E-bike Rep

Payton Blasco, BLM

Dave Cozzens

Clif Koontz, Chair

Mike McCurdy, Grand County Commissioner sitting in for Bill Winfield

Keri Nelson, BLM (departed at 1:50 pm)

Anna Sprout, GCATT (departed at 1:17 pm)

Jeff Stevens, Vice Chair

Zane Taylor, Motorcycle Rep (arrived at 1:00 pm)

Guests in attendance:

Madeline Logowitz, GCATT (arrived at 12:40 pm)

Keltain Reece-Sullivan, GCATT (departed at 1:39 pm)

A. Approval of Minutes

Dave Cozzens made a motion to approve the January 18, 2024 minutes, Jeff Stevens seconded, motion passed unanimously.

B. Citizens to be Heard

Mike was in SLC for the legislative session and attend an outdoor expo where many people were under the impression that "Moab was closed," referring to recent closures of the Labyrinth Rims TMP. Speaking as a Grand County resident (rather than a Grand County commissioner), Mike let them know that most routes have not been closed, so he encouraged them to continue visiting Moab.

C. Approving Support Letter for BLM's RTP Grant Application

Clif said that he shouldn't have put this item on the agenda because the BLM hasn't finished developing information about the proposal, but the agency is likely to do so in time for next month's MTC meeting, so he asked if anyone wants to make a motion to table it for now. Reid Bakken made a motion to table this agenda item, Dave Cozzens seconded, motion passed unanimously.

D. Scheduling Trail Projects

Maddie described Spring Spruce Up that continues a tradition started last year by Facelift, which is a "volun-tourism" event that attracts volunteers and visitation. Sign-ups will be on Friday evening (April 12), projects will be on Saturday (April 13), and a pizza party will be on Saturday evening. She said they've had roughly ten volunteers per project, and said that ideally projects would be closer to town although shuttle service might be possible.

Clif said that Mark Pope offered fencing near Tombstone rock as a possibility. Jeff suggested Behind The Rocks, whether simply collecting any trash at the sand dunes, or something more involved. Keri suggested Pritchett Canyon, and Jeff agreed to be the trip leader and point of contact for Spring Spruce Up organizers. Pritchett has enough work within the first two miles that volunteers could even hike or e-bike to the sites if they don't have a vehicle or spare seat available.

As stated last month, the White Knuckle Hill outing will meet at Black Ridge Road on 2/24, while the Top of The World outing will meet at 9am at Dewey Bridge on 3/16 [actually scheduled for 3/24].

E. Updates from MTC Stakeholder Representatives and Executive Subcommittee members

Reid said that the E-bike Subcommittee discussed results of the Trail Mix and MTC member survey. The subcommittee plans to release the survey results after the public is surveyed as well, possibly with help from a resource such as USU. Maddie said that GCATT has used an online platform called Type Form for a master plan in 2019, and they included QR codes on flyers placed around town as well as online.

Mike said that the commission seems potentially receptive to funding things like the MTC.

Keri said that the fencing component of the White Knuckle Hill project can be done after 2/24. The BLM is opening some campgrounds from winter dormancy, including three campgrounds tomorrow and others on March 1st, which is detailed on Recreation.gov and DiscoverMoab.com. The top (southeast end) of Kane Creek 4WD route will be temporarily closed by the pipeline company, but will reopen in time for Easter Jeep Safari. There's a rock fall blocking the route also near the top (southeast end), and she'll send photos of it to the MTC and RR4W. The interagency guide meeting will be on 3/16, which the BLM invites MTC members to register for and attend.

Jeff asked Keri about accessing Pritchett Canyon as the private property is developed. Dave said that, in the early- or mid-1980s, Grand County chose not to challenge Pace Ranch's closure of the road to Sinbad Valley even though a county grader had been used on it. That choice immediately prompted property owner Lucy Nelson to charge a fee for the public to travel the road through her property to Pritchett Canyon.

Keri said that Phase 1 of Mud Springs has been approved, and an RFP will be posted for machine construction of trails that will accommodate e-bikes and handcycles, so the corridor will be 48" wide and steps will be limited to 12" in height. The trail system will also accommodate NICA races, possibly with extensive parking on Trust Lands Administration (TLA) property.

Zane said that, halfway up Kane Creek 4WD route, blocking off hill climbs on the southwest side might need 170' of fence and a couple signs. If the BLM also wants to block the northeast side of the route (other side of the creek), then even more fence would be warranted, as the sandy soil should make for relatively easy installation.

Maddie said that Mud Springs trail development could use help from volunteers as well, hopefully including e-bikers. She said that Tyson Swasey may scout Phase 2 this spring to assist San Juan County in applying for UORG and RTP grants in 2025. She encouraged the MTC to suggest work for Keltain to promote volunteer recruitment, to educate, and to assist with trail work during MTC outings.

Reid said that motorized trail ambassadors are a great start, but the county should fund more work on motorized trails through GCATT. Maddie pointed out that Trail Mix built up its own program for years before GCATT was established and county employees replaced nonprofit employees. Clif said that Trail Mix has certainly accomplished a lot, but added that motorized-trail advocates have contributed similarly over the same period, albeit through individual nonprofits and businesses that even had some degree of coordination prior to formation of the MTC. Clif applauds the county for investing in non-motorized trails and, while he greatly appreciates the Recreation Special Service District funding several thousand dollars of motorized-trail work through Ride with Respect each year, he believes it's in the county's interest to do motorized-trail work on a larger scale since it contributes so much to the livelihoods and lifestyles of residents. The county could do so through nonprofits, through its own staff in GCATT and/or the road department, through the new Moab-based trail crew that is already being developed by a major commitment of the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation (for work on motorized and non-motorized trails in the desert and forest), or through the land-management agencies themselves (although their overhead is often higher). Clif acknowledged that, whatever entity performs such work, the responsibility of supervision is significant. As a point of comparison, he asked how much the county invests in non-motorized trails each year.

Maddie replied that, in addition to covering non-motorized trail work, the GCATT budget covers the Trail Ambassador Program, although GCATT has also secured significant grants such as the grant last year for motorized ambassadors. Annually GCATT receives five hundred thousand dollars from transient room tax and four hundred thousand dollars from optional sales tax, of which one hundred thousand dollars is allocated to paved paths. Maddie said that, if GCATT were tasked with motorized-trail work, they would need some more capacity in terms of things like office space and storage space. She said that the county might be encouraged to fund motorized-trail work if they see leverage from other funding sources such as grants. She also noted

that UDOR has access to heavy equipment that could be used on motorized trails by UDOR's crew or others if it's sufficiently coordinated. Mike added that the county might be able to steer some of USU's resources toward motorized-trail work or other aspects of the MTC.

Dave encouraged Grand County to keep all citizens in mind when establishing its priorities.

F. Adjournment

Clif adjourned the meeting at 2:46 pm.