

**Sand Flats Recreation Area (SFRA)
Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, July 11th, 2024
3:00 pm**

In attendance

Sand Flats: Andrea Brand (AB) Director, Matt Olding (MO) staff via zoom

Stewardship Committee members: Molly Taylor (MT), Tom Dillon (TD) remotely, Mike Kelso (MK), Mark Pope (MP)

Bureau of Land Management: Katie Stevens (KS) remotely

Grand County Commission: Evan Clapper (EC)

Maddie Logowitz (ML), GCATT arrives 4:10 pm

Call to Order 3:00 pm

Approval of Minutes

MT made a motion to approve minutes, EC seconded. Mark Pope abstains since he was not a member then. All others vote in favor of minutes as is.

Chair makes a motion to change the order of the meeting agenda to put Maddie Logowitz's presentation at 4:15 pm and then have General Business- Action Item-Vote on Falcon Climb Mountain bike trail proposal after that. All voted in favor.

Agency Reports

Budget 2024

AB- Review Budget Remits sheet- Revenue up 11% to date from last year at this time. Visitation appears down 11.5 %. Moab is down. MT- How does that number compare to 2019? AB- Would need to look. KS- Every month is higher in revenue. AB- Group discusses revenues over the years. MP- Need to be fiscally responsible. MT- Wise to keep budget in line of 4 to 8% increase each year. AB- Over \$600,000 sitting in the fund balance and budgeted capital improvement projects will not occur this year due to RAISE grant not being awarded.

AB- Discusses overages by line item and reasoning for this. Contract professional services over budget, put in money for engineer to help with RAISE grant. Also paying for two videos to be on Channel 6 TV with Emery Telcom. "Introduction to Sand Flats" and "Ephemeral Pools" and then GCATT is paying for six more videos. Need to move some money from Capital Improvements. Inventory up because of buying conference room equipment and security camera for the booth. Staff training amount will be switched out as Travel Expenses was put into Training instead of Travel by mistake. Training budget is up because of the 4x4 training with Barlow and John Marshall this spring. MP- Videos in hotels really help tourists be educated on the area; glad this is happening.

Citizens to be Heard

No citizens

Presentation

(Presented at 4:10 pm. See below)

Consent Agenda

Discussion Items

Follow up from previous meeting:

Hell's Revenge awarded National Recreation Trail status

AB- National Recreation Trail webpage for Hell's Revenge reads that it is good for hiking and walking and that should be removed. KS- This is NPS program. First 4x4 trail in the nation we think, but definitely in Utah. There are six in the Moab Field Office.

GPRA Survey update

AB- Any results back yet Katie? KS- Jennifer Jones is waiting to hear back on results.

Youth grant update

AB- Any updates? KS- Jennifer said that we are waiting to hear back on that too. As far as we know it will be awarded but don't know the time frame.

Night time trail closure BLM scoping process update

AB- Shows Dave Pals, BLM letter. KS- Bottom line is that there aren't that many people using trails after 10 pm. AB reads section of the letter- "Data from the Hell's Revenge trail exit counter from May 20th to December 15th, 2023, shows a total of 43,805 vehicles exiting the trail during this time. A total of 475 of these vehicles exited between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., with an average of 2.3 vehicles per day and a maximum of 12 vehicles on one day.

The BLM does not feel the available data supports the stated purpose and need of the proposed closure and will not be conducting further analysis. If further data becomes available, the BLM will reconsider the proposal.

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AB- Data that the BLM was looking at was from last year. Last week I sent in latest data from 2024 to date from Hell's Revenge and from Fins and Things. MT- How do you feel about this letter? AB- I am of the same opinion. Visitation was really up in 2021 and 2022. It seems to be less of an issue now. MP- Are we continuing to collect data? AB- Yes, we have the counters there. MP- Perception that there is a problem, but what does the data show? I applaud the use of the data. There will continue to be complaints so keep tracking. AB- We don't have a counter if folks just do the southside of Fins. Counter is at the exit to Fins. We have been tracking vehicles with new camera at the booth. KS- Problem has not disappeared but it has diminished. BLM does not want to do this for such a small number of vehicles. MT- Pleased to see the letter. AB- Closure for now.

RAISE grant 2024 application

AB- We did not get the RAISE grant. We should get a debriefing in August so I will let you know what we find out. I did see the two awarded in Utah. One was to put in utilities and pave a five-mile road near Green River. The other one is to study 160 miles for potential bike trail from White Mesa to Bluff and east. 30 to 50 miles will be designed. There will be public outreach. A 9.5-million-dollar study for this project. MP- Will you apply again? AB- They changed it this year, your application stays in the system for two years. However, I am considering asking to change the scope of the project back to just a paved road with bike lanes and seek other funding for singletrack trails along the road from other sources. It went from a 12-million-dollar project to 20 million this year with separated path. Modify what we did and maybe it will make us more competitive. EC- Pave it just to Pinion Trail? AB- That would be great. I have been trying to get funding for that since 2015. EC- Two projects chosen per state? AB- Yes, and our application rated 7 out of 8 as highly recommended. We were in the top four and two were chosen. You only needed 6 out of 8 highly recommended to be considered. I worked hard to bring up the section that did not rate highly recommended in 2023. MP- Need approval from commission again? AB- If we make changes then probably need commission approval again. MT- Frustrated by large budgets for a study. EC- Possibly more appealing if the path has connectivity to town. AB- Definitely, years ago Stewardship Committee asked Lion's Back development to build a wide shoulder or bike lane and they agreed, but now nothing is coming of it. MK- The utility corridor behind Lion's Back Development provides access from town. AB- Tyson Swasey, (GCATT) said people won't use the utility corridor as it is too steep.

New Topics

Proposed plan for changing Hawk Campground to parking and day use area

AB- Recaps the original plan to put parking for Kestrel trail in old campsite at the top. We waited to see how spring went to make a decision. We would like to turn Hawk campground into a day use, picnic area and add 4-6 campsites in B and D campgrounds to make up for the six closed in H. This idea has been discussed for a long time. MP- Great idea, always see people jeeping who stop here to use the toilet. Group discusses the project favorably. EC- Occupancy on the group sites? AB- We have issues with our group sites. We get big groups that don't understand staying within the boundaries, have too much stuff with them. They cause us lots of issues. EC- Day use areas separated from campgrounds makes sense for enforcement. Good idea. KS- Good idea, but if you can find room in the other campgrounds then it will be revenue neutral. AB- We have enough toilet capacity in both those campgrounds for more campsites. MP- Have you thought about switching all wooden toilets to new ones? AB- Yes, pros and cons. Open air toilets were not a problem during covid and hantavirus. Cleaner with sunlight and air. Cost wise, \$7,000 for metal toilet surround with BLM building it vs CXT concrete toilet that costs \$30,000 plus. MP- Allocate monies to build new toilets. Can you put two toilets at Hawk Day use area? AB- This could be in budget. It does depend on BLM's availability to do so, unless we get a contractor. We rent some portable toilets for booth, overflow camping and at LPS.

SFRA Dark Sky programs and application

AB- Trying to get this moving along again. We have been doing dark sky programs for three years. Crystal White was doing them but she moved. The state has graciously offered to do these programs for us and will bring telescopes. Presenters will be Nathan Martinez, Park Manager Green River State Park, Drew Sprafke, Goblin Valley State Park and Park Ranger of Dead Horse

Point State Park, Koye Willis. People need to RSVP ahead. Should be well attended. Star parties in July and August and a Scorpion Walk in September. And maybe something in November. I will be coming to the City and County for letters of support.

Leave No Trace Gold Star application

GCATT received Gold Star Award from Leave No Trace. Arches NP did as well recently. Anna Sprout of GCATT is trying to get all public lands in Grand County to apply for Gold Star status with Leave No Trace so that it can be countywide. She is assisting SFRA with the application process. Use info already available such as website and brochure info.

Shuttle fee

AB- Shows letter from the BLM. BLM reached the same conclusion 10 years ago when this was brought up by shuttle companies. MT- Shuttle companies are frustrated. KS- Frustrated with the La Sal loop road construction. Shuttle companies pay 3%. Customers are paying shuttle fee, not companies. AB- Currently they pay with their company credit cards when they come to the booth. On some company websites it does say the SFRA fee is included with their shuttle. SFRA left shuttle fee at \$2 when we made fee changes. Could have gone to \$5 as was done with regular bike fee. KS- Companies should be paying the 3% from the money collected, but not on the \$2 shuttle fee. All agree that letter is well written by Jennifer Jones, BLM. EC- Confusion comes from the guided exemption and some of the companies provide the same services. KS- Costs for guided trips are more.

Purchase of traffic counters with flashing slow sign

AB- Traffic calming signs. We did not get RAISE grant so would like to put 2 to 4 of these on the SF road. Road department is happy with their signs that are in the valley. It records how many vehicles are going over the speed limit, the proper speed and under the speed limit. They are solar and can be moved around. Ideally would like two in lower section of road and two on higher section of road. MT- Really needed in the upper section. AB- Road Department will probably install them.

Moab Sun News article on SFRA

AB- Wanted SFRA happenings in the newspaper as it had been a while except for the RAISE grant which was at times controversial. Reporter Rachel Fixsen wrote a nice article. MT and others agree.

Director attended the Mountain West Trails conference and will speak at USU Basecamp Conference in October in Moab

AB-brought together folks from all western states to talk about trails. Keri Nelson from BLM attended and GCATT and others. Really worthwhile, made some good contacts. USU Basecamp conference coming up this fall in Moab, AB will be speaking about the SFRA partnership.

Presentation

Maddie Logowitz, (ML) GCATT, presents Falcon Climb Mountain bike trail proposal

ML-Assume you all read the proposal so I will focus on questions. I am here in place of Tyson Swasey as he was not available Raptor route intended to give more rider options on the Whole

Enchilada trail. Whole Enchilada has approximately 24,000 riders per year. The trail was grandfathered in and not designed and it has caused issues for Search and Rescue. Raptor route was built to address this by creating an intermediate trail and a safer option for the Whole Enchilada. There is a need in this community for intermediate level bike trails, close to town and of a moderate length. Lots of people ride the Falcon Flow section (of the Raptor route) after work. With it being a stand-alone trail people park at the bottom and ride their bikes on the road to access the upper trailhead. This proposal would remove riders from the SF road. AB- wondered why more old road sections are not being incorporated into the design? Group discusses this. KS- Size lines bladed for one purpose and then abandoned. If we have a disturbed area, we do try to utilize it. ML- When we design, we really try to use old roads but also contain people to areas up against rock so they are less likely to wander off trail. MT- Quite a bit of slickrock used in this trail design and to protect areas from erosion. MO and EC- Is this proposed as one way? ML- Yes, seasonally. MP- Can't wait to ride this. Wondering about it being bidirectional during the slow season. ML- Less people in the off season, encounter mud they can turn around. Haven't asked BLM yet as this is new idea. MP- Thinks this would be confusing for people to know when it changes back. AB- Complaints from booth about conflicts with ebikes. ML- Did get a grant for signage. EC- Discussion about figure "8ing." Any thoughts about this? ML- Not sure if Tyson looked at it. EC- Create another trail that bisects and comes up to the SF road. AB- This trail is part of Porcupine 4x4 but one travels up a big sand hill to the SF road. ML- Need for more family friendly trails close to town. Could be something considered. EC- Parking Hawks' campground, talk of looping up from Kestrel on the road. KS- I think there is only one route parallel to the SF road at the crack and that is Kestrel Trail. EC- This proposal is a great addition for stand-alone trail system.

General Business- Action Items

Vote on GCATT's Falcon Climb Mountain Bike trail proposal

MT makes a motion to approve the Falcon Climb Mountain Bike Trail proposal and write a letter of support if needed, EC seconds it. All vote in favor.

ML- Next step is we will bring the proposal to the Trail Mix committee for approval and then to the BLM. There is minor damage on Eagle Eye, needs a tree removed. AB- We had two trees topple in the campgrounds. EC- How is motorized trail ambassador program going? ML- Good. AB- Pulls up list of patrols at SFRA by them. Group reviews data. Anna Sprout, GCATT helped AB make a file like GCATT for SFRA trail patrols.

Fairy Shrimp video- Members watch video and are happy with it except for static sound in a few sections. EC- Can Finley make a short 2-minute version of this for social media? AB- Yes. MK and MP- talk about messaging concerning pools when they are in the field.

BLM updates- KS- None that effect Sand Flats. MO- How is visitation? Bill Stevens is working on the numbers. EC- Seeing a drop in visitation? KS- Not sure. AB- I just gave my data to Bill.

Grand County Commission updates- EC- None.

Adjourn