

**Sand Flats Recreation Area (SFRA)
Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes
156 E 100 N and via zoom
Thursday, March 20, 2025
3:00 pm**

In attendance:

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

Grand County Commission representative- Melodie McCandless

BLM- Jennifer Jones (JJ)

Sand Flats Director Andrea Brand (AB), and SFRA Recreation Technician Matt Olding (MO) via zoom.

GCATT- Anna Sprout present for technical assistance, leaves at 3:10 pm

Call to Order

Approval of Minutes

Approval of the minutes from December 12th. MK makes a motion and MT seconds. All vote in favor.

Agency Reports

Budget Review 2024

AB- Almost made \$800,000 last year. Up 8% over 2023. For this year up 28% for January and 25% for February. A lot of this is Recreation.gov group site reservations. Also warm weather increased the visitation some. December 31st, 2024 Cash in combined cash fund \$480,940. Expenditures, only thing since last time up was camp host, over \$500, stayed busy and kept him for a longer season.

Budget Review 2025

AB- Cash in combined cash fund not updated yet. I met with Clerk's office last year about us getting budget info updated in Caselle quarterly, which they said they would do, but they weren't able to do that this time.

MT- Interest is confusing to me.

AB- \$62,000 interest. I just found out last year that we had this interest. Along with other departments it was in an account with the general fund for a few years and not carried over into the department budgets until now. Expenditures- Capital Improvements expenses connected to the work for Raptor route parking area. Will get \$400 back from Canyonlands Solid Waste Authority, charged us for dumpster that we did not rent over the winter. Clerk's office has been having an issue with them and their bookkeeping errors for many accounts. I caught this going through all their charges. Splitting utilities with GCATT 50/50.

Citizens to be Heard

None

Discussion Items

Evan Clapper's service to SFRA Stewardship Committee recognized

E-Bikes BLM update

JJ- Was a large response, approximately 1,200 comments that you can view on E-planning from the scoping process. Working on writing up the draft alternatives, working with GCATT and SFRA will be pulled into this soon. Draft environmental assessment hopefully by early summer. Have a briefing with Acting State Director next week. Several factors in play including Executive Order from previous Trump administration. There will be a public comment period.

AB- Explains to MM that Sand Flat Stewardship committee, Trail Mix and the Motorized Trail Committee last year turned in letters to the Grand County Commission concerning ebikes. The GC commission considered these letters and sent a letter to the BLM last fall.

JJ- These letters are all on the Eplanning scoping report.

MM- Are ebikes allowed at Sand Flats?

JJ- All of the iconic mountain bike trails, ebikes are not currently allowed on them. Slickrock and all the 4x4 trails allows ebikes. Also if someone has a physical disability they can apply for a reasonable modification request and BLM will give them a reasonable modification letter so that they can go on these trails.

AB- At SFRA it is only the Raptor Route and Porcupine Rim (where it is part of Whole Enchilada) that ebikes are not allowed.

JJ- BLM does not issue reasonable modification letters to the people wanting to do the Whole Enchilada trail on BLM land because it goes into a Wilderness Study area. We appreciate the thought that went into those letters.

RAISE grant update

AB- SFRA and the Grand County Road department did not apply for the RAISE grant this year. Our application rated low in 2024 and the due date for 2025 was a month earlier than usual. It was due at the end of January instead of February. There was not enough time to work with engineers Jones and DeMille. FLAP grant would have been a good match but Castleton road project was chosen and not Sand Flats. Had been told that Kane Springs was first on the list for this, then Sand Flats and then others.

MM- I was at that commission meeting last year and they chose Castleton because it was shelf ready.

AB- Well it was a continuation of past FLAP grant (on Loop road).

MP-Do we have to do this project with the Road Department?

AB- Well it is a County class D road.

MP- Public doesn't understand why it isn't happening. I think we should start earlier with the grant process.

AB- I will meet with Road dept. and find out what they want to do for 2026.

MP- Price increased from previous year because the scope of project changed due to separated path.

AB- Phases would be a good way to go. Get it through Day's Crack or Falcon Flow because that is where we have the greatest need.

MM- Might be easier to do it in phases.

AB- Road dept. wanted it to go to Porcupine. We could get funding for a separate (bike) path and pave to first 4 miles where it is needed the most. This would take care of dust in campgrounds and safety issues where it is so busy on the road.

MP- Take off a year and go forward from a better position.

AB- Jones and DeMille does the engineering and updates all the numbers.

MK- Yes phases sounds like the way to go.

AB- Based on counter data we are 3-5 times the number of vehicles we should have on a gravel road 9 months of the year.

Leave No Trace Gold Star application

AB- GCATT and Arches NP received awards and hoping we are the third entity to receive an award in Grand County. The application changed, so getting the info to Anna Sprout, GCATT.

Traffic counters/ slow signs installation

AB- Counters will be installed soon. GC Road Dept. has been very busy and didn't want counters up over the winter because of concern of vandalism. They will be placed one past the Fins and Things parking lot and then one past Falcon Flow parking lot. Gather data in the field with the lap top. SFRA counters were stolen this winter and these were keeping track of the time people were exiting Hell's and Fins trails. We got three new ones that will be installed soon.

TD- You could put a tracker inside the cameras like people do with their pets.

Night Sky video

AB shows night sky video to the group. Please share your comments. It can still be edited.

MP- Makes a point, think it will make an impact.

MT- Doesn't come across enough that SFRA is the focus.

AB- SFRA paid for the filming and Travel Council paid for editing.

MM- Maybe people will realize they should turn off their lights when camping.

MT- Lost the theme of what the video is.

AB- If we have edits and concerns I can work with them. Finley just sent it to me last week, this is the draft. We are applying for dark sky park status, thought this will help with this process. State rangers come up for free to do shows which we have to do as part of the application process. It is a video to educate all of the user groups coming to Moab. Started out it was SFRA and state park ranges. And then we filmed night sky event and we interviewed Rhodes Smart and then NPS was involved.

MT- They should mention that you have programs at SFRA.

MM- Doesn't mention SFRA. Talks about Moab and the parks but not SFRA. Video should mention that SFRA has dark sky programs.

MT and MM- Should say SFRA in writing. Highlight SFRA as well.

MP- Talking about parks that surround Moab. Mention that SFRA is one of participants.

MM- Still great spot to see dark sky programs.

MT- Shocking how bright the RVs are and city of Moab.

MM- Other cities you see like a haze and no sky. But in Moab amazing how much of the sky you can see even with brightness of town. Town is working on installing down facing lights.

TD- Glad it mentioned that you need lights when you are walking in town. Acknowledge that we don't want to shut off all the lights, but you don't need to light up the sky to do so.
MM leaves for another meeting at 3:50 pm.

Update on work with BLM for parking/ picnic area and relocation of campsites

AB shows PowerPoint with photos. Aerial photo shows old campsites and revegetation looking good. Shows new parking areas, two new toilets and stairs, picnic pavilion and surrounding boulders. All completed by BLM and SFRA staff. New signs will go up next week.

Update ten kiosks and tree signs

AB- Shows photos of new tree signs installed. Had some tree damage in campground recently and posted it on Facebook and got a lot of attention.

TD- Are people looking for firewood?

AB- Sometimes we see limbs ripped off and they don't burn them. I think when they get over to the picnic table they notice the sign about not collecting wood. It is on their camp tag and camp post too.

MP- Do any of campground kiosks talk about trees? Look at blackbrush, colony takes 1,000 years, if you destroy it, it won't come back. One by one they will be gone. That story needs to be told. People need to understand that it isn't just one tree, it adds up.

MK- We take people out on trails and explain to them how old the small trees are and they can't believe it.

MP- People that are coming from other places don't understand how long it takes for things to grow.

AB shows kiosk sign on Pinion trees and reads how trees are discussed in the SFRA's main brochure.

JJ- BLM has dumpsters converted for wood that camp hosts used to sell wood from. You can use them if you like. 6x6 feet in size.

TD- I have seen automated ones online that you put in your credit card and it opens up and you take out a bundle of wood. 63 bundle one is \$20,000. Make the money back quick and it saves the trees.

AB- Send me what you found please.

JJ- At Horsethief you can pay online and then go to camp host and retrieve wood. Folks would come there from dispersed camping and buy wood too. You would have to buy wood from local folks.

MK- Good thing to do.

JJ- Love the idea of automated.

AB- Reviewed kiosk map with group. SFRA met with staff and GCATT. Changed colors and MTB trails are dashed and 4x4 shown with solid lines.

Reprinting plant book

AB- SFRA found less expensive printer for SFRA plant book; CNHA is interested in carrying them. CNHA may also be interested in helping pay for the production of our next videos.

Toilet contract 2025 approved

AB- 2026 is when the toilet contract goes out for bid not 2025. Zurich Bros. is contractor again.

Emery Telecom contract 2025 for videos on channel 6 TV approved

AB- SFRA will pay for three videos to run, Intro to Sand Flats, Five Tips for Moab Adventure and one on mountain biking. GCATT has no money this year. Not sure what Travel Council is doing.

New Topics

New Travel Council and GCATT Crux Academy videos

AB- Shows video about camping that AB wrote and narrates. Wish there had been better communication with all entities involved Crux Academy, Travel Council, GCATT, SFRA and BLM. Crux Academy filmed MO and AB in November of 2023 and then no communication afterwards. There are 13 videos, two hours, on Moab recreational activities and you need to sign up for a free online account to watch.

JJ- These are to teach local business employees including guides. BLM had no opportunity to be involved.

AB- You see Mark Finley's footage and new footage from Crux Academy in these.

JJ- Mark Finley is great to work with because he includes us in editing process.

Motorized Trail Committee work at SFRA in February

Rake and ride on Fins and Things, MP participated. AB shows photos of work on Fins.

MP- Did you see Clif's recommendations?

AB- Not yet, just know he wants us to move the fence to help with angle of approach.

MP- Describes fencing needs and blocking. Wants to block off route through trees. The route to the left of this, when looking from the bottom, they blocked off. To the far left another route is seeing new use, this is blocked off. But this route, which is first one you come to on the trail, we are proposing as long-term solution to open up officially as an easy route. Routes 1 and 2, furthest to the right, will be hard routes. Need to be fenced and well signed.

MK- Can we fill bottom with rocks to preserve routes?

AB- We filled with materials few years back, did not last.

MP- V shaped notch, no solution except concrete if you kept these open.

MK- Let's put this down as a project.

MP- Trees aren't going to last.

AB- Happy to get this done as soon as possible. Route 5 is a further away, may need to make a change to the Travel plan.

MP- Would need to shave off cap rock. Has a more solid bottom.

JJ- Sounds like you have to do a proposal to Travel plan amendment.

MP- Clif may have something written up.

SFRA High school apprentice position filled missed

Grand County Road Dept. Work on Sand Flats Road spring 2025

AB- Magnesium chloride on the road looks nice. SFRA paid for it this time, \$19,500, taken out of Capital Improvements. Shows photos of culvert that is being replaced on road where it had flooded three times in the past. AB asked road department to fix, please.

Spring 2025 Guide Summit

AB- Was great! How many folks attended?

JJ- 208 registered.

AB- Sand Flats staff attended. AB shows Dovetail presentations in photo.

JJ- Massive partnership between USFS, NPS, BLM, SFRA, GCATT, and CNHA sponsored the event.

AB- Listed speakers, and tables that were set up. MT attended

Search and Rescue data and trailer update missed

Spruce up event April 11-12

AB- Discusses event. SFRA will be participating with volunteers working on Falcon Flow that day.

Filming for Night time desert critters in May

AB- Mark Finley should be coming out to film with Tim Graham n May.

EA for Falcon Climb complete

JJ- Finished EA last week.

AB- Maddie has asked me to write letter of support for the grant.

BLM updates

JJ- Kick off meeting about 128 gap project for .7 miles of paved pathway. Already looking for more money. Construction should be complete by end of 2026 but needs more funding. Trails and roadway folks work together on needs. Intent is to have it look like existing path. Thanks for all letters of support on this project from BLM and County. Challenges with spending capabilities right now. Toilet contract awarded and have continuing resolution through September. Termination for employee has been reversed. Lots of uncertainty. Spring breaks happening!

AB- Lots of families come to SFRA now.

GC Commission updates

None as MM had left meeting earlier.

Adjourn