OHV ADVISORY COUNCIL
FY27 Q1 OHVR GRANT REVIEW
DIVISION OF OUTDOOR RECREATION
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DRAFT Meeting Minutes:

Minutes Of The Meeting Held on September 23, 2026 from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

HOST: ***Division of Outdoor Recreation***
At the Uintah County Building
152 East 100 North
Vernal, Utah 84078
(Hybrid meeting)

ATTENDEES: Jason Blankenagel (Chair), Brody Johnson (Vice-Chair), Cheryl Butler, Russ Cazier, Mike Cook, Brett Davis, Dean Harris, Dave Jacobson, Nicole Nielson, Laci Werner, Scott Wheeler, Maureen Casper, Jason Curry, Tara McKee, Deirdre Miller, Patrick Morrison, Mike Thomas, Rachel Toker, India Neilson, Nicole Hanna, James Boyd, Cody Draper, Kam Kohler, Gennie Bird, Calab Hall, Joseph Nielson, Madeline Logowitz, David Zhang, Michaela Hancock, Annie Epstein, Rodrick Gerhardy, Clif Koontz, Kristina Schmid

MEETING MINUTES:

(0:00) Jason Blankenagel, chair, calls the meeting to order. Everyone in attendance virtually and in person introduced themselves.

(4:49) Meeting leads established 10-minute presentation and 5-minute Q&A blocks per applicant, with flexibility for longer discussions.

(6:32) Foundation for America's Public Lands

- **Presenters:** David Zhang, Michaela Hancock, Annie Epstein
- **Overview:** Presented background on the 501(c)(3) congressional partner to the BLM. Highlighted $20M+ invested in 88 projects over 3 years, with at least 50% focused on motorized recreation and over 30% happened in Utah.

- **Project:** Requesting grant funds to install resilient metal wayfinding signs and 3-panel kiosks across 810 miles of the High Desert Trail.
- **Discussion:**
    - Council members raised questions regarding long-term involvement, local management, trail remoteness/fuel availability, and past funding expenditures ($602k spent on the ongoing Environmental Assessment).
    - BLM Representative Dave Jacobson confirmed an EA will be finalized shortly, followed by an MOU between counties, BLM, and the Division of Outdoor Recreation to establish an oversight committee.
    - Clarified that a single consolidated support letter from UUTCO covered multi-county buy-in.
    - Foundation confirmed installing ~20 traffic counters with 3-year data access shared via password/reports with local entities and the public.

(29:44) Glenwood MX

- **Presenter:** Rodrick Gerhardy
- **Project:** Phase 2/3 upgrades to convert a 15-year-old dirt bike track near Richfield into a full-scale facility (water lines, irrigation pond, parking expansion, lighting, youth/enduro tracks). Open to the public for free; annual memberships apply only to competitive racing to cover insurance.
- **Legal Discussion:** Operating under a 10-year MOU with private landowner Dennis Jorgensson. Legal Counsel (Nicole) noted that a recorded perpetual easement or right-of-way on the property title to safeguard public investment is needed.
- **Conclusion:** Evaluate and score the application assuming a satisfactory legal agreement (easement/right-of-way) is finalized post-approval.

(48:21) Utah Public Lands Alliance (UPLA)

- **Presenter:** Clif Koontz
- **Project:** Funding to continue contracted policy and advocacy work (Rose Winn) for substantive, route-specific comments on BLM travel plans, Forest Service land management, and federal rule updates. Matches equal at least 50% given below-market rates. No objections raised.

(53:50) Marketing / OHV Tourism Partnerships

- **Presenter:** Cody Draper

- **Project:** Custom OHV trail websites for Garfield and Sevier counties featuring CRO design, 50 plus difficulty/vehicle filters, and downloadable offline maps. Also requested funding for a Cache County winter snowmobile marketing campaign.
- **Discussion:** Council advised organizing sites by overarching trail systems (Paiute Trail) rather than strictly by county, ensuring map downloads are geo-referenced GIS files for navigation apps (OnX/Avenza), and involving local riding clubs directly.

(1:05:45) Utah Off-Roaders Alliance (UORA)

- **Presenter:** Kristina Schmid
- **Project:** Marketing funds (digital, radio, billboards) for the Salt Lake Off-Road & Outdoor Expo (SLOREX). Expo proceeds fund URA operations ($17k donated in 2026; $30k projected for 2027) and provide free/discounted booths to non-profit clubs and agencies.

(1:12:37) Tread Lightly!

- **Presenter:** James Boyd
- **Project:** 28-month grant to fund a dedicated Southern Utah Program Manager to build "Know Before You Go" outfitters/renter education, launch trail ambassador programs, and lead ethics courses.
- **Discussion:** Council requested better coordination with state education leads (Deirdra Miller) to prevent duplication. Noted state law statutorily requires an online component for state-sponsored safety modules.

(1:28:02) Grand County Active Transportation & Trails

- **Presenters:** Joseph Nielson and Madeline Logowitz
- **Project:** Funding for the dedicated OHV Trail Coordinator position in Grand County/Moab to address severe maintenance backlogs, manage crowd-sourced GIS repair maps, and direct the state DOR field crew (4 days/week). Scope extends into northern San Juan County and the Abajo Mountains due to heavy regional trail use. Grand County contributes $160–$200k/year for crew contracting plus employee benefits.

(1:48:24) FY27 Quarter 1 Grant Review Process & Logistics

- Rachel announced 29 active grant applications (out of 30 initially received, 1 withdrawn) for Cycle 1, requesting $2.3M out of a total $6M available for the fiscal year across two cycles.
- The council agreed to prioritize reviewing and voting on grant applications for presenters physically present in the room or online first before taking a short lunch break.

(1:51:12) Tread Lightly! (App #6437 / #16)

- **Discussion:** Council raised questions regarding administrative costs and the potential for overlapping education efforts with state programs.
- **State & Agency Alignment:** Division leadership noted an upcoming legislative request for state education specialists to unify messaging across partner groups (similar to Utah's "Fire Sense" campaign). Tread Lightly! confirmed willingness to coordinate directly on messaging and curriculum.

(1:59:16) Motion: Brody Johnson made a motion to approve funding on the condition that Tread Lightly! coordinates regularly with the Division's education lead (Deirdra Miller) on curriculum and messaging. Motion seconded by Scott Wheeler. Approved unanimously.

(2:00:25) Grand County Active Transportation & Trails (App #6055 / #2)

- **Discussion:** Reviewers strongly supported continuing the Moab Area OHV Trail Coordinator position. Council noted that Grand County's local commitment—contributing funding annually for the DOR field trail crew plus employee benefits—provides exceptional match value.

(2:01:43) Motion: Brody Johnson moved to approve application #6055 as requested. Scott Wheeler seconded. Approved unanimously.

(2:02:44) Glenwood MX (App #6124 / #6)

- **Discussion:** Scott argued the original $112,707 request was significantly underbudgeted for necessary site infrastructure to turn the private parcel into a major regional motocross and staging asset.

(2:06:34) Motion: Scott Wheeler made the motion to double the grant award to $225,414 with the explicit requirement that the applicant work with state legal counsel to execute a recorded easement/agreement ensuring long-term perpetual public access. Brody Johnson seconded. Approved unanimously.

(2:08:52) Foundation for America's Public Lands – High Desert Trail (App #6218 / #3)

- **Discussion:** The council discussed local engagement and trail oversight, confirming that the state and BLM will facilitate a multi-county/club advisory committee patterned after the Paiute Trail Committee to ensure long-term public and user buy-in.

(2:13:11) Motion: Project passed unanimously through a roll call council vote.

(2:13:51) Lunch Recess- The council adjourned for a lunch break.

(2:36:45) The council reconvened to evaluate the remaining FY27 Quarter 1 grant applications, beginning with projects where representatives were present in person or online.

(2:37:26) Wasatch County Search & Rescue — Mobile Command Post (App #6477 / #22):

- **Discussion:** Wasatch County SAR presented a request for grant funding to fit out a 4x4 Sprinter van chassis (purchased separately by Wasatch County) as a hasty mobile incident command post, drone central control hub, and support station. Council members raised questions regarding high outfit costs and potential non-motorized search usage. The applicant clarified that about 80% of local rescues are OHV-related (UTV/snowmobile) and require rapid, multi-agency deployment to remote trailheads during severe weather.

(2:55:55) Motion: Approved by roll call voting (6 Yes, 3 No).

(2:58:27) Utah Public Lands Alliance Policy Position (App #6124 / #14):

- **Discussion:** Reviewed UPLA's request to support contracted policy and legal advocacy work (Rose Winn) for submitting route-specific public comments on BLM travel plans and Forest Service management plans. Council members emphasized the necessity of non-profit representation to preserve motorized access against well-funded opposition.

(2:59:58) Motion: Approved unanimously via roll call.

(3:00:27) SLOREX / URA (App #6108 / #28):

- **Discussion:** Reviewed marketing grant request for SLOREX. Council highlighted the expo's role in attracting youth and new riders to motorized recreation.

(3:01:59) Motion: Approved on the condition that organizers work directly with Division Education Lead Deirdra Miller to align event safety and ethics messaging. Moved by Mike, Seconded by Brody; Approved unanimously.

(3:03:24) Strawberry Snowmobile Complex (App #6470 / #25):

- **Discussion:** Applicant Adam presented a request to lease an additional snowmobile groomer to cover the Strawberry complex. Council members expressed strong budget concerns, noting that state-operated grooming costs per mile are significantly lower and that restricted snowmobile registration funds are already stretched thin.

(3:12:49) Motion: Failed (2 Yes, 6 No, 1 Absent) via roll call.

(3:21:18) Steward Moab "From Beyond" Podcast (App #6105 / #18):

- **Discussion:** Applicant Anna presented a request to fund Season 2 of a search-and-rescue storytelling podcast featuring 3 motorized and 3 non-motorized episodes. Council members and Sheriff Curtis (via written comments) expressed concern over the high cost per episode ($20k+), questionable direct impact on OHV safety, and the use of non-motorized production expenses to satisfy grant match requirements.

(3:36:28) Motion: Failed (1 Yes, 6 No) via roll call.

(3:38:13) Motion: Brody Johnson moved, seconded by Nicole Neilson, to bulk-approve all remaining applications where reviewers recommended full funding at standard/requested rates without additional discussion prompts. Approved unanimously.

Approved Projects:

#4: Fishlake Motorized Trail Equipment Replacement

#5: Carbon County Motocross Track Continued Improvements 3

#7: Indian Creek and Ferron Creek Bridge Replacement

#9: Seasonal Employees for Trail Work

#11: OHV Trail Equipment

#12: Olsen Reservoir BLM Trail Designation

#15: Mary Cashen Canyon Fence Phase 2

#20: Tooele County SAR 2 for 3 ATV Request

#21: Juab Search and Rescue New OHV and Trailer

#26: Utah's Trail Country OHV Digital Trailhead

#27: OHV Trail Website Update

#29: Explore Logan Snowmobile Promotion

(3:44:14) Tri-State OHV Trail Maintenance — Tri-State ATV Club (App #6060 / List #8):

- **Discussion:** Cheryl requested clarification on mileage metrics. Brody clarified that club members actively maintain extensive trails around Panguitch Lake and Southwest Utah on Forest Service and BLM lands, requiring dedicated tools and a utility trailer.

(3:47:31) Motion: Approved unanimously via roll call.

(3:48:12) Proctor Canyon Post Fire Restoration — Garfield County Government (App #6460 / #1):

- **Discussion:** Reviewers addressed the inclusion of heavy highway-legal equipment (dump trucks) in the budget. Confirmed county usage charges comply with grant rules for emergency washout repairs providing critical access to Tropic Reservoir.

(3:50:14) Motion: Approved unanimously via roll call.

(3:50:57) Fillmore Forest Trail Repair and Enhancement 2 — Sand Rock Ridge Riders (App #6068 / #10):

- **Discussion:** Addressed post-fire/flood damage on the Paiute Trail system. Cheryl flagged that the construction firm providing equipment was owned by the club president. Staff (Rachel) confirmed conflict-of-interest forms were

filed and independent contractor bids were submitted showing below-market hourly/daily equipment rates.

(3:59:34) Motion: Approved unanimously via roll call.

(4:00:02) Little Egypt Restroom — Garfield County Government (App #6118 / #13):

- **Discussion:** Proposal to install a single-vault concrete toilet at the Little Egypt geological site/trailhead. Russ opposed due to lack of county cash match; Brody and Brett Stewart supported, noting heavy OHV user traffic and an established BLM maintenance contract out of Hanksville.

(4:09:10) Motion: Approved (6 Yes, 2 No) via roll call.

(4:10:07) Guided OHV Tours in Millard County — Territorial Statehouse State Park (App #6130 / #17):

- **Discussion:** Request for an ATV and 6x6 ATV to conduct historical tours out of the Fillmore museum. Council members noted the 6x6 machine was ill-suited for trail touring and felt the proposal lacked sufficient OHV safety and rider education components.

(4:14:50) Motion: Failed (2 Yes, 6 No) via roll call.

(4:17:47) Motorized Rider Trailhead Safety and Responsibility Campaign — Utah Avalanche Center (App #6057 / #19):

- **Discussion:** Request for parking-lot trailhead safety ambassadors. Reviewers (Mike, Russ) noted a lack of required agency support letters and questioned the return on investment compared to hands-on field education.

(4:19:37) Motion: Failed (0 Yes, 8 No) via roll call.

(4:20:15) Iron County SAR CanAm ATV Purchase Summer 2026 — Iron County Sheriff Search & Rescue (App #6072 / #23):

- **Discussion:** Replacement ATV purchase. Council acknowledged the need while agreeing to schedule future policy discussions regarding standardizing equipment options and non-motorized rescue funding ratios.

(4:25:18) Motion: Approved (7 Yes, 1 Abstain) via roll call.

(4:26:21) Beaver Fire District No. 1 UTV Request — Beaver Fire District No. 1 (App #6396 / List #24):

- **Discussion:** Sheriff Curtis's written comments noted the application was tailored heavily toward structural firefighting and flood response with minimal search-and-rescue or OHV recreation history, recommending the request come directly from county SAR.

(4:30:07) Motion: Failed (1 Yes, 7 No) via roll call.

(4:46:15) Final Grant Funding Summary: Brody moved (seconded by Mike) to adopt the final approved FY27 Quarter 1 grant package. Approved unanimously via roll call.

Summary: Funded 24 applications (13 Trail Work, 2 Access Protection, 1 Education, 4 Search & Rescue, 4 Tourism, 0 Snowmobile) totaling $2,142,036.88 out of $2,326,000 requested. Leaves $3,857,000 available for the Cycle 2 grant window opening January 15.

(4:48:58) State Trail Crew Program Update provided by Mike Thomas

- Completed 47 motorized projects (50% of total statewide crew projects) totaling 5,377.5 crew field hours (65% of overall program hours).
- **Regional Project Highlights:**
    - *North:* Carsonite sign installation (63 signs) and kiosks at Vernal BLM Sand Pocket; clearing 1/4-mile corridor for buck-and-rail fencing at Ashley National Forest; Tuttle Loop reroute work on Salt Lake Ranger District.
    - *Central:* Heavy brush and tree removal on Fishlake National Forest (South Creek BST68 and Cottonwood burn area).
    - *Southwest:* Jackhammering eroded rock ledges on Rocky Ford Trail and heavy equipment prep for Casto Canyon.
    - *Southeast:* Heavy rock jackhammering on Copper Ridge Road (6.3 miles) and drainage/trail work with Utah Raptor State Park.
- **Future Initiatives:** Proactive outreach, streamlining the online trail crew project request form, and working with land agencies to prioritize disaster-impacted trails and routes facing closure threats. Would love to hear from the council on project prioritization.
- **Program Staffing & Operations:** Transitioned field supervisors into dedicated heavy equipment operators across all four regions and converted

second-in-command lead crew members into full-time year-round staff (totaling 8 year-round field personnel).

(5:05:06) OHV Safety & Youth Helmet Legislation Discussion provided by Deirdra Miller (Division Education Program Manager).

- Highlighted that ejections and severe head injuries are the primary drivers of youth OHV fatalities in Utah. Cited Intermountain Healthcare data showing 91% of fatal side-by-side ejections involved unrestrained passengers. Noted that helmets reduce fatal head injuries by about 40% and non-fatal brain injuries by 60% or more.
- Discussed a potential universal youth helmet mandate (up to age 21) across all OHVs (including side-by-sides, which currently lack a side-by-side helmet requirement) and child restraint/car seat requirements.
- Council members (Mike, Brody, Scott) urged practicality—suggesting lighter equestrian or bicycle-style helmets for toddlers in car seats/side-by-sides rather than heavy DOT motorcycle helmets that can cause neck strain during low-speed trail rides. Discussed the need for better data on operator age, speed at impact, and in-person vs. online safety training efficacy.

(5:37:03) Definition Cleanup Legislation: India Nielsen continued with division planning a statutory cleanup to replace vague "Type 1, Type 2, Type 3" vehicle legal definitions in Utah Code with clear plain-language terms: ATV, Side-by-Side, Off-Highway Motorcycle, Snowmobile, and Off-Road Vehicle.

(5:38:16) Updates presented by Jason Curry.

- The state legislature introduced legislation extending the OHV Advisory Council's statutory sunset date through July 2037 (10-year extension).
- The proposed bill removes specific dollar amounts for OHV/snowmobile registration fees from state statute, shifting fee schedules to administrative rulemaking overseen by the Division with Advisory Council review and annual legislative fee-bill approval.
- Effective immediately, the Division modified administrative rules to close a loophole that previously allowed out-of-state street-legal OHVs/UTVs to ride Utah public lands without contributing to state trail funds.

- All out-of-state street-legal OHVs operating on Utah public lands, trails, or unpaved roads must now purchase a $35 non-resident OHV permit decal. Standard factory street-legal dual-sport motorcycles remain governed by standard motor vehicle rules.
    - **Discussion:** Scott Wheeler expressed concern on ensuring that there is education and clear definitions on what types of roads require permits on a non-resident street legal OHV.
- The Division received 34 applicants and selected 6 finalists for interviews. The new position will oversee the State Trail Crew program, manage the restricted account, coordinate legislative policy, and lead community outreach.
- License plate redesign.
- Youth Education for Organized Rides: Youth riders (18 and younger) with organized rides are required to have a youth education certificate if they are operating the machine.

(6:04:17) Statewide Youth Helmet Program: Brody presented a helmet program that Piute county has been implementing. This program allows monetary certificates to be given to Utah youth & families for doing something good in the community or on the trails. This certificate can be used to purchase a new helmet. It is believed that the DOR should run this program.

(6:10:44) Sand Hollow Land Acquisition Proposal: Jason Curry and Brett Stewart presented an opportunity to explore purchasing two private land parcels (80 acres total) located directly south of the Sand Hollow State Park tunnel (asking price roughly $100k/acre).

- The parcels contain critical access routes and famous crawling trails (Chain Reaction, Nasty Half, Way's World). Private development or fencing on these parcels would severely fracture the Sand Hollow riding experience.

(6:17:31) Motion: Brody moved (seconded by Mike) that the Advisory Council advise the Division to actively pursue land value appraisals and conduct exploratory purchase negotiations in partnership with Washington County/Hurricane City Approved unanimously.

(6:22:17) Nuclear Project & Data Center Awareness: Division briefed the council on proposed modular nuclear reactor power projects in Carbon County. Advised that while waterless helium-cooled reactor projects occupy state SITLA land, the

Division is monitoring adjacent BLM lands to safeguard existing public OHV trail networks and identify potential trail mitigation offsets.

(6:29:42) Future Site Visit & Meetings: Council agreed to schedule an upcoming field site visit and ride at Duck Creek Village (Cedar Mountain) from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, coordinated with state legal counsel (Nicole) to ensure Open and Public Meetings Act compliance.

(6:41:02) Brody Johnson motions to adjourn the meeting. Mike Cook seconds. The meeting is adjourned.