OHV ADVISORY COUNCIL
FY27 Q1 OHV RECREATION 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 Nielson, 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, Adam Pulley, Anna Sprout

MEETING MINUTES:

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

(4:49) Chair Blankenagel established a 10-minute presentation and 5-minute Q&A block per applicant, allowing flexibility for longer discussions when necessary

(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 of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Highlighted $20M+ invested in 88 projects over 3 years, with at least 50% focused on motorized recreation and over 30% taking place in Utah.

- **Project:** Requested 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. Division staff explained that $602k had been spent on the ongoing Environmental Assessment for the High Desert Trail.
    - BLM Representative, Dave Jacobson, confirmed the EA will be finalized shortly, followed by an MOU between counties, BLM, and the Division of Outdoor Recreation (DOR) to establish an oversight committee.
    - Rachel Toker, OHV Recreation (OHVR) Grant Administrator, clarified that a single consolidated support letter from the Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office (PLPCO) 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 applied only to competitive racing to cover insurance.
- **Legal Discussion:** Operating under a 10-year MOU with private landowner Dennis Jorgenson. Division Legal Counsel, Nicole Hanna, 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) Soren Marketing / OHV Tourism Partnerships

- **Presenter:** Cody Draper
- **Project:** Custom OHV trail websites for Garfield and Sevier counties featuring design, 50 plus difficulty/vehicle filters, and downloadable offline maps. Also requested funding for a Cache County winter snowmobile marketing campaign.

- **Discussion:** The 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 UORA operations ($17k donated in 2026; $30k projected for 2027).

(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:** The Council requested better coordination with the Division's Youth Education Specialist, Deirdre Miller, to prevent duplication of education material. Noted state law statutorily requires an online component for state-sponsored safety modules.

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

- **Presenters:** Joseph Nielson and Madeline Logowitz
- **Project:** Funding for a 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

- Ms. Toker provided an overview of the 29 active grant applications (out of 30 initially received, 1 withdrawn) for FY27 Q1, requesting $2,326,016 out of the $6,000,000 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! OHV Safety & Responsible Riding Education Initiative (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 Youth Education Specialist on curriculum and messaging. Motion seconded by Scott Wheeler. The motion passed unanimously.

(2:00:25) Moab-Area OHV Trail Coordination (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. The motion passed unanimously.

(2:02:44) Glenwood Raceway Track Improvements (App #6124 / #6)

- **Discussion:** Council Member, Scott Wheeler, argued the original $112,707 request was significantly underbudgeted for necessary site infrastructure needed 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. The motion passed unanimously.

(2:08:52) Facility, Experience, and Access Enhancements at the 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/committee patterned after the Paiute Trail Committee to ensure long-term public and user buy-in.

(2:13:11) Motion: Laci Werner made the motion and Brody Johnson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

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

(2:36:45) The council reconvened to evaluate the remaining FY27 Q1 grant applications, beginning with projects where representatives were present in person or online.

(2:37:26) Mobile Command Post/Drone Control Center (App #6477 / #22):

- **Discussion:** Wasatch County Search and Rescue (SAR) presented their request for grant funding to fit out a 4x4 Sprinter Van chassis (purchased separately by Wasatch County) as a mobile command post, drone central control hub, and support station. Council members raised questions regarding high outfit costs and potential non-motorized SAR 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) UPLA Public Policy Consultant 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 OHV Tourism Marketing Initiative (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: Mike Cook made the motion with the condition that organizers work directly with the Division's Youth Education Specialist to align event safety and ethics messaging. Brody Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

(3:03:24) Strawberry Snowmobile Complex Grooming and Trail Maintenance (App #6470 / #25):

- **Discussion:** Applicant, Adam Pulley 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) Back From Beyond Podcast: OHV Pre-SAR Initiative (App #6105 / #18):

- **Discussion:** Applicant, Anna Sprout presented a request to fund Season 2 of a SARsearch-and-rescue storytelling podcast featuring 3 motorized and 3 non-motorized episodes. Council members and SAR Representative 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 made the motion to bulk-approve all remaining applications where all evaluators recommended full funding at standard/requested rates without additional discussion prompts. Nicole Nielson seconded the motion. The motion passed 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 (App #6060 / List #8):

- **Discussion:** Forest Service Representative**,** Cheryl Butler, requested clarification on mileage metrics. Council Member, Brody Johnson, 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 (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 (App #6068 / #10):

- **Discussion:** Addressed post-fire/flood damage on the Paiute Trail system. Ms. Butler flagged that the construction firm providing equipment was owned by the club president. Ms. Toker confirmed conflict-of-interest forms were filed and independent contractor bids were provided showing below-market hourly/daily equipment rates.

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

(4:00:02) Little Egypt Restroom (App #6118 / #13):

- **Discussion:** Proposal to install a single-vault concrete toilet at the Little Egypt geological site/trailhead. State Trust Lands Representative, Russ Cazier, opposed due to lack of county cash match; Mr. Johnson and Brett Stewart with Utah OHV Advocates provided input, noting heavy OHV user traffic and an established 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 (App #6130 / #17):

- **Discussion:** Request for an ATV and 6x6 ATV to conduct historical tours out of Territorial Statehouse State Park. 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 (App #6057 / #19):

- **Discussion:** Request for parking-lot trailhead safety ambassadors. Evaluators, Mike Cook and Russ Cazier, noted a lack of required agency support 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 (App #6072 / #23):

- **Discussion:** Replacement Side-by-Side (SxS) purchase. The 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 (App #6396 / List #24):

- **Discussion:** Sheriff Curtis's written comments noted the application was tailored heavily toward structural firefighting and flood response with minimal SAR 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 Johnson made the motion to approve the recommended FY27 Q1 grants. The motion was seconded by Mike Cook. The motion passed unanimously.

Summary: The Council recommended funding 24 applications (13 Trail Work, 2 Access Protection, 1 Education, 4 SAR, 4 Tourism, 0 Snowmobile) totaling $2,142,036.88 out of $2,326,016 requested. Leaving $3,857,963 available for the FY27 Q2 grant cycle,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. Mr. Thomas stated he 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 Deirdre Miller and India Nielson

- 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 SxS 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 SxS, which currently lack helmet requirements) and child restraint/car seat requirements.
- Council members suggested lighter equestrian or bicycle-style helmets for toddlers in car seats/SxS rather than heavy DOT motorcycle helmets that can cause neck strain during low-speed trail rides. The council discussed the need for better data on operator age, speed at impact, and in-person vs. online safety training efficacy in regards to crash statistics.
    - Ms. Hanna explained that legally, DOT helmets are required to be worn, and non-DOT helmets would not meet this mandate.

(5:37:03) Definition Cleanup Legislation: Division Deputy Director, 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 provided by Division Director 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:** Mr. 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 for the Motorized Operations Deputy Director. The new position will oversee the State Trail Crew program, manage the restricted account, coordinate legislative policy, and lead community outreach.
- License plate redesign for non-street-legal OHVs will be introduced this coming session. The council reviewed the three different designs and selected the design featuring topographic lines..
- Director Curry, clarified that currently youth riders, 18 and younger, on organized rides are required to have a youth education certificate if they are operating the machine. Director Curry stated he would work with the Division's Education Specialist and guiding company on a reasonable substitution.

(6:04:17) Statewide Youth Helmet Program: Mr. Johnson presented a helmet program that the Paiute Trail Committee has been implementing. The Paiute Trail Committee currently works with six county sheriff's offices to provide helmet vouchers to youth caught riding an OHV without a helmet. The vouchers allow youth to purchase a discounted helmet from participating dealerships. Mr. Johnson expressed interest in expanding the program statewide. Program staff agreed to discuss the proposal internally and provide an update at a future meeting.

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

- The parcels contain critical access routes and famous rock 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 Johnson made the motion 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. Mike Cook seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

(6:22:17) Nuclear Project & Data Center Awareness: Director Curry briefed the council on proposed modular nuclear reactor power projects in Carbon County. Advised that while waterless helium-cooled reactor projects occupy State Trust Lands, 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: The Council agreed to schedule a site visit at Duck Creek on October 23rd from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Ms. Hanna offered legal counsel to program staff on navigating the requirements for a site visit in relation to the Open and Public Meetings Act.

(6:41:02) Brody Johnson motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mike Cook seconded. The meeting was adjourned.