

**Sand Flats Recreation Area (SFRA)  
Stewardship Committee Meeting  
Thursday, September 9th, 2021 at 3:00 pm  
Held virtually on Zoom**

**In Attendance:**

SFRA Staff:

- Andrea Brand (AB) Director
- Matt Olding (MO)

Grand County Commission:

- Evan Clapper (EC)

BLM:

- Jennifer Jones, (JJ) Assistant Field Manager

Stewardship Committee Members:

- Mike Kelso (MK)
- Tom Dillon (TD)

**Call to Order**

**Approval of Minutes**

June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021 approved with two edits, Evan Clapper's name added and Katie Stevens' initials changed from JJ to KS under Attendance. Evan made a motion and Tom seconded it, and passed with all in favor.

**Agency Reports**

**2021 Budget**

AB- Discusses remit totals. Compared to 2019 we are up 21%. Did not compare with 2020 because there was little revenue in the spring with Covid shutdown. Camping is quiet, day use up overall.

JJ- BLM use appears to be up in our campgrounds but people are staying but not paying.

AB- Balance sheets- First sheet meaningless. All departments are in same boat because audit hasn't closed yet for 2020; has to close by September 30<sup>th</sup>. They were supposed to close in July. Revenues sheet- pretty accurate, just a few entries not yet up to date. SFRA is doing really well with (recreation.gov) online sales. \$30,000 projected but brought in \$60,000 with the new group site campgrounds.

AB- Shows 2021 amended budget and discusses some items. Lease Payment Vehicles- should only spend \$6,000 if second truck arrives in September; less if it does not. Contract services for

Toilets will go over \$5,000. With increased day use, SFRA increased cleanings at nine trailhead toilets from one to two cleanings per week. Kept toilet at LPS longer and put a toilet at Falcon Flow which was new this year. Fuel budgeted at \$4,200 but should spend \$6,000. SFRA has more vehicles now with more staff and fuel prices are higher. Printing and Publishing- SFRA could be reimbursed by TRT funds for educational things like the printing of SFRA brochures and signs; TRT Committee hasn't confirmed yet. Capital Improvements was budgeted at \$150,000 but the booth entrance project was delayed this year because BLM engineers wanted a longer study. SFRA has been pulling out of Capital Improvements for Capital Equipment. We retired old 6 wheeler UTV last year and replaced it with a new 6 wheeler this summer. Fins and Things toilet needs to be painted inside and out. Some of the floor paint is coming up in three new toilets in Datura. Company wasn't happy with paint used on the floors in the 2019 toilets, cost is \$400 a floor to redo those. BLM is having the same issues. Will be some engineering costs if we expand parking lot located below the booth at Potato Salad hill. \$100,000 probably will be spent out of the budget and not \$150,000. Inventory office equipment went over, had to buy a safe for the office. Contract professional services will be \$5,000 and not \$1,000 because of production of Sand Flats Introductory video. AB projected 2021 would bring in \$700,000 or more in fee revenue which includes a projected \$90,000 in online recreation.gov sales.

### **2022 Proposed Budget Draft**

AB-Projected 2022 would bring in at least \$700,000 or more. Youth grant \$15,000 in 2021 and another \$15,000 in 2022. Utilities may be more then written here as our credit from Rocky Mountain Power may run out next year. Budgeted \$16,000 for two trucks. Clerk's office, Treasurer's office and HR will calculate this amount at just over \$40,000. Search and Rescue is fine with receiving \$10,000 again in 2022. Dumping fees will be higher in 2022. Apparently we have been paying less than we were supposed to this year. SFRA has been paying an open container rate and we are supposed to be paying for closed. Also the rental is double, so \$5,000 more next year. We put a dumpster at Fins parking area this year for spring and fall. Capital improvements is the biggest line item at \$250,000. \$150,000 for lane at booth. Paint Slickrock and Hell's and B campground toilet inside and out for approximately \$20,000. And then \$70,000 for parking lot expansion. Might install toilet vaults at Falcon Flow and LPS. Vaults with metal walls would be cheaper. Any questions/ ideas about the draft proposed budget?

EC- It looks good.

JJ- LPS and Falcon Flow toilets- can no longer have BLM staff digging holes. Contractor will need to do the digging. \$24,000 or \$26,000 for concrete toilet building. Metal walls, hole and vault would be cheaper.

### **Discussion Items**

Follow up on minutes from previous meeting:

#### **COVID19 mitigation efforts and SFRA operations update**

AB- In the spring and last year we had the booth closed up and transactions thru the window and only by credit card. This summer we started taking cash and opened up the booth as prior to Covid. We did not have masks on until recently with County mask mandates. We put in bollards and this keeps vehicles further away from booth but still accessible. Current staff feels comfortable with current system. Fan pushes in fresh air constantly. Some of returning seasonal staff might want to have the booth closed up. We will revisit this in a week. Also Jason found a

noise level tester app from OSHA and we are way below danger levels in the booth. This made staff feel better. Have earplugs available too. SFRA will purchase a plexi glass guard for spittle that comes toward us. We continue to modify operations with Covid.

### **Mill Creek Community Collaborative Recommendations**

AB- Did the group representatives give a presentation to BLM as they did to County and City yet?

JJ- Yes and Nicolle (Moab Manager) and I need to chat and plot a course forward.

### **TRT monies for Responsible Trail promotion committee update**

AB- Some of the funds are paying for five educational videos that are playing on channel 6 news until the end of the year. The Grand County Commission wanted there to be some edits on the “5 tips for an Awesome Moab Adventure” video. I have already worked with filmmaker Mark Finley on these edits and we will present the edited version to the Responsible Trail promotion committee at the next meeting and then to the GC commission for next year. Maddie Logowitz of GCATT held a meeting with NPS, BLM, USFS to find out what their issues are in the different public land areas and see if they could benefit from some TRT funding to address these problems. There is quite a bit of money to spend before the end of the year.

### **Traffic and Feasibility Studies for Sand Flats Entrance area and parking**

AB- Met with Dan Stenta and Stan Johnson and they wanted us to continue to gather data this fall. So far survey shows that 20% have already paid and this includes tours, those already paid for camping and day use and annual pass holders. A new lane would not lessen the line as much as we would like. Need to see this fall if it is actually more. Instead of building another lane alongside the existing inbound lane the one idea is to open up the current exit as an inbound lane for tours and those already paid. This way they would be lined up to go into Hell’s Revenge if they wanted and not have to cross other inbound traffic. And build a new exit lane to the right of existing outbound lane. We would need to move our intake vent further away.

EC- Did they explore options of a second collection point, second window or someone outside the booth?

AB- Yes, all ideas are on the table. We talked about idea of possibly building a second booth just for campers. Maybe put it near Baby Lions’ Back. Camping slows lines down.

EC- Are other ideas part of the discussion?

MO- Outbound lane could become inbound lane just for campers.

AB- Automatic arm is best for outbound lane because driver is on the opposite side of booth if current outbound lane was changed to an inbound lane. I spoke with Megan Blackwelder of Dead Horse Point State Park and they have annual visitation of 900,000 and only one booth. She said it worked, before Covid, because visitors are spread out over the day and they can also go to Island in the Sky when the line is long. Remember SFRA lines are for a few hours in the morning. People wait 15 minutes average when there is a line. Longer on a big weekend like UEA weekend, wait 30 minutes. We don’t shut down like Arches NP. Our issue is that people are waiting on a hill and we have commercial use that is on a time line.

MO- Is Dead Horse camping reservation only?

AB- Yes and it has 1/3 of the campsites that Sand Flats has. Goblin Valley State Park has one booth and five times the visitation but this was starting to become an issue before Covid.

### **Parking area**

AB- idea is to expand the parking lot toward the Sand Flat road up to the berm. AB met with GC Road dept. and engineer from Jones and Demille. This is county property that would benefit the users of Sand Flats. Visitors used the Hells exit area for decades but this will no longer be available due to the Lions' Back development. Part of that property is SITLA and County. SFRA parking lot for Hell's Revenge is not big enough. Engineer wrote up a quote for us of what it would cost for them to do a survey and design and the bid documents. We think an estimate for the project is over \$50,000. Some of the fill could go up to Baby Lion's Back. It would be 37,000 square feet which is very similar to Fins and things but polygon in shape. Bill Jackson said it was a good idea to fix both parking lots. Baby Lions' back used to be level.

JJ- BLM would not have any issues with you bringing fill in there.

AB- Have to get approval. Is committee in support? MK and TD and EC respond yes. And if we improve this area in front of Baby Lion's back it could give us some more day use parking.

### **Announcement for Citizen's to be Heard. No citizens responded.**

### **Sand Flats road and Raptor route extension**

AB- Over the summer worked with Jones and Demille on a RAISE grant to fund paving the SFRA road. The grant was written up with paving all the way up to Porcupine Rim. The existing pavement would be torn up and new bike lanes built all the way up too. Don't know what our chances are as we are not the perfect fit. The grant is to help rural, underserved communities. Talked to engineer about safety issues with Raptor route and conflict with traffic and the numbers of users. Engineer, Tim Halper felt like this bumped it up in importance. If it is not chosen, at least it is written up to apply for future grants. We will know the outcome in October.

EC-Is there a reason not to go for both the bike paths and paving the road?

AB-Campground connector trail will be handicap accessible and this will be pricey. Other trails shown as pink and green on map will not be expensive. Pretty simple according to Tyson and Maddie of GCATT.

TD- Separate pathway. Doing the 1.8 miles of packed gravel would be miniscule in comparison to paving. Do we want to pay 1% of paving? or 10% of paving for this path?

AB- Paving the SFRA road was projected to cost a million dollars a mile before. Paving was for multiple reasons-dust in the campgrounds, increased traffic and safety issues. Paving the road was in the SFRA Business plan in 2015. Bike lanes along paved road would be wonderful for the Raptor route. Trails would cost less. When SFRA did the campground road to the west we had to bring in \$22,000 in cobble for the campground road. Blow sand, no compaction so purple trail will be pricey. Around \$225,000 is projection from Bill Jackson ( RD dept.) or more for lower purple trail.

JJ- UR.org grant from Utah Governor's Association. BLM has been awarded these grants for Takeout Beach and Courthouse Wash and Klondike North campground.

AB- For the purple trail, this sounds like a good match. We will be meeting soon with Chris Haller, from Utah State Parks and Recreation and in charge of RTP grants. He will be looking at the Raptor route and we will talk about this extension with him. The committee has support for this and for the road as well? All agree? Yes.

AB- We just got a traffic counter for above Day's Crack too.

### **Booth UTV Survey for Grand County Commission update**

AB- Continuing to do the UTV survey. Private 31%, Rentals 26%, Tours 43% out of sample size of 20,900 vehicles. Break down of motorized vs non-motorized, 14,000 sample size is 76 % motorized and 24% non-motorized. This is similar to the percentages at the last meeting.

### **Introduction to Sand Flats video**

AB-Only rough draft so far. Worked with Mark on the “5 Tips for an Awesome Moab Adventure” video to meet some of the GC Commissioner’s concerns.

### **BLM removed cattle guards, placed boulders and plans to move pipe safe to east entrance**

AB-Cattle guards removed and pipe safe will be moved soon. Did get permission from the USFS to put the pipe safe in on USFS land. Will have signs by pipe safe and on cattle guard coming in from UPS trail too.

### **Crack sealing, seal coating and striping of Slickrock and Hell’s Revenge parking lots**

AB- Got this done through a state contract for \$32,000 by Eckles paving.

### **Maintenance-painting concrete toilet buildings in and out**

AB- This fall we will have toilets painted at Fins and Things by Scot Morgan, of Cornerstone painting. The reason we are not painting them ourselves is because of the cracks in the eaves. Painter will put a seal coat on the roof. With the storms this summer it was obvious that water is the reason why we have cracks in the ceilings. \$2,690 for whole building in and out, patching all the cracks and repainting. Fins toilets installed in 2014. The other toilets were installed in 2019 and the paint is coming up. We will see how well new paint adheres to the existing paint.  
JJ- Yes same issues with our toilets from 2019.

### **New UTV purchased for trail maintenance**

AB- Got our new 6 wheeler. It has some nice features, such as the winch system. State contract- \$21,000 with all our needed extras- street legal package, roof, half windshield, etc.

### **Sand Flats Application for International Dark Sky Park and events**

AB- Sand Flats is applying to be a Dark Sky Park. Crystal White is helping and she assisted Arches and Dead Horse get their Dark Sky Park status. She said we are eligible. I attended the first one, the Perseid meteor shower event, as did TD. Had 40 spaces filled. A guided full moon hike was held on August 20<sup>th</sup> and two more events will be held this fall. All are free and this is part of the application. SFRA has to have an ongoing educational component. We need to get in compliance with our lighting, which is just three lights at the booth. Will write up a display on this too. Need to collect letters and show there is community support. Crystal has an Astronomy tour business but she is just volunteering her time and that of one of her staff. Our intern Claire has been assisting her too. Something new and fun at Sand Flats

## **New Topics:**

### **Campground and trail signage**

AB- Weed department sprayed in B, C, D, and G campgrounds. When new roads were built for the campground expansion project, the gravel brought in had a lot of weed seeds. Up until last year SFRA has always done the work by hand. It is improving and maybe we won't have to have it sprayed next year.

### **Booth curbing improvements**

AB- Gutter got hit on our booth again. Had it replaced in June, but hit again. When booth was built there was a mistake and curbing was not built out under the eaves. The solution was to add signs which have worked fairly well, but it is still an issue. We put in bollards to protect the booth and to keep people away from the window because of Covid. Talked to concrete contractor Steve Yochim and he said it would be under \$5,000 but he will probably be retired by late fall. Waiting for contractor Danny Keys to give us an estimate.

MO- This would protect the booth and people inside.

AB-Booth has been hit four times in 10 years, none serious. Safer for everyone if we can get this done.

### **New Trail signs**

AB- Stay on the Trail signs are up on Hell's and Fins. "Stay on the trail, protect fragile soils", "Stay on trail, it's the law."

Adding small metal signs to the tops of picnic tables about not putting sand or trash in fire rings.

JJ- We have done this, it can't hurt."

### **Grand County Commission updates**

EC- Don't have anything from County for this committee. SFRA is ahead on budget process.

### **BLM updates**

JJ- Hunter canyon campground is closed due to the flash flooding. Busy season again, events coming. Klondike campground will be open.

AB- Thank you to Lee Palfreyman, BLM heavy equipment operator for placing boulders in campgrounds and removing cattle guards. SFRA doesn't have to pay for labor or equipment use just materials and SFRA receives this help 1-2 weeks each year.

## **Adjourn**