

**Sand Flats Recreation Area (SFRA)  
Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, December 8th, 2022  
3:00 pm**

**In attendance**

Sand Flats:

Andrea Brand, Director (AB)

Kathy Dickey, staff (KD)

Matt Olding, staff (MO) via zoom

Stewardship Committee members:

Mike Kelso (MK)

Tom Dillon (TD)

Molly Taylor (MT)

Dale Parriott (DP)

Grand County Commission

Evan Clapper (EC) (joins meeting via zoom at 4:05 pm)

Bureau of Land Management

Jennifer Jones (JJ)

Motorized Trail Committee (MTC), Chair (CK)

Clif Koontz (CK) (arrives at 3:20 pm)

**Call to Order**

**3:05 pm**

**Approval of Minutes**

July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022, MK made a motion, TD seconded and all voted in favor as is.

September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022, DP made a motion, TD seconded and all voted in favor as is.

**Agency Reports**

Budget 2022

AB- Balance sheet shows \$674,157 in the Combined Cash fund. Period Actual is a mistake. Year to Date Actual is about \$700,000. \$44,000 in online fees, we should make about \$62,000 but not \$92,000. I think predication is high.

Last page, we have talked about these slight overages before. Budget is over a little on vehicle maintenance.

MT- Why is fuel low? AB- County gets a good deal on their bulk fuel.

AB- Printing and publishing over some. Insurance over budget because goes all the way to June 2023. Through November of 2022 down 13% compared to 2021, but up 7% compared to 2019, which is best comparison. Projections for end of year 2022- \$7,000 from the youth grant, \$62,000 online fees.

MT- Why does it read \$95,000 for online sales for 2023? It is too high. AB will let Chris Baird know his projection is too high.

AB- I think we will bring in around \$720,000 in 2022. Predict less spent for wages- \$310,000. Benefits seem accurate. But HR and Chris have it high for wages in 2023.

MT- For 2023 budget is increased by \$100,000 for wages.

AB- Commission will pass the 8% COLA but still high I think. Next year, toilet up at \$62,000. Dumpster fees will be less this year because did not rent dumpster. Accounting and book keeping may be more in 2023. Capital improvements-budgeted \$250,000 but will spend less for parking lot and toilet painting. Shows \$137,000 taken from the fund balance for 2022. SFRA should get the fee increase passed next year and bring in \$175,000 more. Otherwise in 3 years we will not be able to do any improvements without the fee increase.

MT- Salaries approaching \$400,000.

AB- And that is one reason why we need to raise the fees. However, we are not going to spend what was calculated for 2022.

## **Citizens to be Heard**

No citizens to be heard

## **Presentation**

## **Consent Agenda**

## **General Business- Action Items**

### **Support for closing Sand Flats 4x4 trails at night**

Discussion- AB- Let's review Eplanning document from the BLM, JJ reads document.

AB- Fins and Things nighttime closure is slightly different- one half hour before sunset to half hour after sunrise. BLM document reads closure should be an hour after sunset until an hour before sunrise.

JJ- this is a planning document.

AB- Katie Stevens, BLM wanted the SFRA Stewardship Committee to weigh in on this proposal as part of the NEPA process.

MT- I make a motion to table this today until we have gathered more data. MK seconded.

AB- Discussion?

MK- Before our discussions on this involved strictly Sand Flats. Now Steelbender has been added.

JJ- BLM added Steelbender to Eplanning document based on neighbor concerns.

TD- This also now restricts Slickrock from motorized trail use but it is not a 4X4 trail. This restriction would include ebikes which would not be solving noise issues.

JJ- This would restrict all motorized use.

MT- We could say that we do not support Slickrock closure.

TD- How many issues are from motorized use on Slickrock? I would like to see data on Slickrock motorcycles disturbing campers.

JJ- Not much data collected yet.

AB- We had timed counters up on Hell's entrance last fall and will in 2023. Clif, would you like to tell us about today's MTC meeting?

CK- Commission sent a letter to the BLM in July and before they approached this committee and they never spoke to the MTC for their opinions first. Commission can do what they want but it is in their best interests to get opinions from these committees. MTC is not ready to endorse this. What are the solutions? How much will this help campers and residents in the valley? People can ride any vehicle around any time of night in town. Is this really a lack of enforcement of existing rules? More rules and this change may not fix the problem. There is less passing at night so less chance for off trail travel. Not sold on it. BLM process is in motion. MTC came up with 5 points:

- 1- Emergency vehicles should be able to go in any time.
- 2- Need exact hours of what is considered night time use. Mainly concept of quiet hours- should be in line with camping 10 pm to 6 am quiet hours.
- 3- Mainly issue with people going up to do the trail, so get up there before 10 pm and they stay as long as they want.
- 4- Electric vehicles- If the ebike doesn't have internal combustion it should be allowed. Still light and off trail issue. Positive incentive for electric vehicles.
- 5- MTC will write a letter in January to the commission. Don't want this to include more than Steelbender. All trails start from town, seems a slippery slope. Here we are only talking about areas adjacent to the valley. Now is when you can influence the process. Better now than later.

AB- Happy to hear these points.

MK, MT and JJ- Night time use does cause more damage. People can't see the trails, being "yahoos", there might be alcohol involved. Costs us money to maintain all this stuff.

CK- Low hanging fruit as not many people go out at night. Majority of motorized users will have heartburn about any closures. But I think 10 pm to 6 am is a good familiar choice for people.

JJ- Choice of sunrise/ sunset times was too be flexible with the season.

DP- Appreciate MTC's comments. We need to consider as a group, Sand Flats is a special place and not the rest of Grand County. We want people to be able to come out in a controlled situation, good trails and camping. Need to do a good study on it, take our time and make a good decision. This decision is messing with different people's freedoms.

MT- Moab has changed.

DP- People love Moab, but there are more restrictions on land use here. Most of the motorized places left in America are unrestricted.

MT- To bring it back around for our motion, we are just responding to Katie's request to take an action on it. We need to decide if we are going to include support for Steelbender and 10pm-6am closed or sunrise/ sunset. The BLM is just asking for feedback.

JJ- We did have discussions of a number of other trails but these made sense with noise and lights and neighborhood complaints. Steelbender presents conflicts with Ken's Lake campground.

MT- Wish there was a way to define this yahoo attitude.

AB- Mulberry neighborhood really hears the travel up and down the Sand Flats Road. Fins and Things closures were done because of the conflicts with campers in 2015. This is an expansion of this with the GC Commission's letter, but also would address issues with nearby neighborhoods.

MT- We need to stay focused with site stewardship of Sand Flats.

AB-Motion reads-Support for closing Sand Flats 4x4 trails at night.

Discussion on wording for the motion; include, or exclude Slickrock; night time closure 10 pm to 6 am. CK- Mentions again entering trail at 10 pm and exiting anytime and ebikes.

AB- Motion is not written well considering these discussion items. Committee can change it however you want at today's meeting and vote on it. We support what is on Eplanning with these changes.

MK- Do not include Steelbender, only as it applies to Sand Flats.

DP- Sand Flats needs be stricter on our noise and lights. Think we should email back and forth and then come back and vote.

Further discussion ensues. Evan enters meeting via zoom.

CK- BLM hasn't weighed in yet on is the time referring to entrance of the trail or leaving by 10 pm.

MK- Should have it posted like Fins.

AB- There are actually three different scenarios, SFRA's south Fins and Things hours, BLM Eplanning and then same time as campgrounds 10 pm to 6 am closure.

CK- Evan do you have any idea in regard to July 5<sup>th</sup> letter, do you have any prohibition on entering the trail before 10 pm and then leaving when done.

EV-Intent of commission's letter was for users to be done with the trail by the said time. Mitigate impact to neighborhoods. Summer time around 10 pm people would be coming off trail.

CK- Vehicles make less engine noise coming down hill. Electric ebikes banned after 10 pm from doing Slickrock. Or exempt SR?

TD- BLM is going to study impacts? How much sound is being emitted from trailheads into campgrounds? Ebikes don't create sound. Is there enough use on SR to warrant this?

JJ- Use starts in town and comes up to SFRA and then impacts campers. If we could do a study to see the impacts to resources each morning and compare with previous day. Noise meters- we don't have anyone qualified to do this now.

AB- Jason worked with Katie to put up counters on Hell's Revenge to track nighttime use. We do have a timed camera at the booth. Data switches over about every 6 weeks.

JJ- Quantify number of vehicles entering trails after 10 pm this spring. Put counter at Hell's exit to quantify how many leave the trail after 10 pm.

AB- Does group want to vote on a statement today or table it?

MK- We need to sit down and figure out what is best for SFRA.

MT- Should we take action to see if we are in agreement on a closure?

MK- Make a motion to table it but with the caveat that we vote sooner than March.

AB- We can have another meeting sooner.

MT- Email back and forth on it.

DP- Ask neighbors on Tusher St. and Mulberry area their opinions on the noise.

MT- Are you targeting a group.

DP-Whole problem with noise in Moab is because the state licensed these vehicles that don't have DOT mufflers or tires or safety equipment to go on our streets.

CK- State is going to have another LE state ranger with Jeff Arbon.

MT- Has BLM considered permitting day use at SFRA?

JJ- SFRA is not a Designated Individual Special Area like Westwater is. AB and I have talked over the years about a reservation system but have decided not to go down that path. What some people think is crowded is not to others. SFRA is close to town, in regard to resource impacts...

AB- Been watching Arches reservation system and what they have gone through.

EV returns to conversation after 5 minutes of technical difficulties.

AB- MT made a motion & MK seconded it to table it for today but meet on January 12<sup>th</sup>.

EV- What will be resolved in this month? Support to restricting to daytime use. Sticking points?

MT- Gateway to area, timing

AB- Concern about Slickrock trail being included or not.

CK- With Hell's and Slickrock joined together should close both.

EV- Amend the motion to postpone until January 12<sup>th</sup> and before then SFRA staff will send out a list of specific points to be discussed at that meeting regarding the Eplanning document.

MT and EV- Should hammer it out via email but not vote until the 12<sup>th</sup>.

TD- Motion to table, Support for closing Sand Flats 4x4 trails at night, and reconvene for a vote on January 12<sup>th</sup>. MT seconded. All voted in favor.

MT and MK- Andrea write up a statement for us to vote on next meeting.

EC- Don't want to move our discussion too far away from MTC. Loop in whoever is participating.

JJ- SFRA Stewardship Committee should be focused on Sand Flats.

## **Discussion Items**

AB- goes over PowerPoint

### **Fee change process update:**

AB- Director turned document into the BLM November 14<sup>th</sup>. Plan is for AB to go before the RAC board on January 18<sup>th</sup>. This week GC Commission approved dropping trailer fee. JJ, can you change document to reflect this?

JJ- State Director has to approve, after RAC board recommends. Go into affect ideally by March 1<sup>st</sup>.

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

John Marshall has done narration and video should be done soon and will be shown on our website and maybe Travel Council and on channel 6 TV.

### **Parking lot signage:**

New signs have been added that read "Sand Flats trailer parking."

### **Sand Flats entrance area and Sand Flats road:**

AB will be meeting with the GC Road department and LeGrand again. Ryan Holyoak mentioned using a less expansive paved surface, like SFRA road already has, than what is planned in Bill Jackson's RAISE grant application before. Grant was not awarded last year, will apply again in 2023.

**Raptor route update:**

AB- Hawk's Glide opened on November 15<sup>th</sup>. Very nice.

TD- Rode it, yes awesome.

JJ- Kestrel NEPA is still in process

AB- Kestrel trail should be built this spring.

**Sand Flats application for International Dark Sky Park:**

AB- start working again on application in January. All light fixtures are in at booth.

**Responsible Recreation program updates:**

AB- All trails and Wander apps- working on these this winter with GCATT to make sure information is accurate.

**Living soil crusts and ephemeral pools videos:**

Mark Finley's Moab's Living Soils video is on Travel Council website. Ephemeral pools will be ready for spring.

**Grand County/State partnership on HB180 UTV test:**

AB- Chase Pili, Captain, OHV Program Manager, [Utah Department of Natural Resources](#), Division of Outdoor Recreation spoke to GC commission and all is as we expected and in line with what we worked on. Everyone has to take test except those participating in an event or with a guide. Real mix up before at GC Commission meeting with state presentation, but all is fine now.

**Painting contract:**

Slickrock, Hell's and campground B toilets all got painted by contractor.

**Monsoon effects on Sand Flats trails:**

AB Shows pictures of damage on Hell's and then raked out areas and added signs.

## New Topics

**Youth grant:**

Did not spend \$3,000 of the grant because intern only worked spring season.

JJ- Next time request for reimbursement for uniforms, training materials, etc.

**Illegal bike route on Fin in G campground:**

AB This illegal route has been posted a few times on social media by different professional athletes over last 2 years.

KP- Professional athletes sponsored to the hilt. Remy Metallier has half a million followers.

JJ- This is still an active BLM Le investigation.

AB- SFRA has installed metal signs along access trail and on the fin. Biscuit root is growing along the ledge they use to access the fin on this illegal route. Biscuit root is an endemic plant to the area. In Arches they line rocks around all biscuit root plants along trails to protect it. In Sonja's (Sonja Nicolaisen, author of Plants of the High Desert) eight years at SFRA, this is the

only place she has seen it. Lots of signs now, obvious that people should not be going up there.

### **BLM repairs and improvements in campgrounds F, G, H and Fins exit:**

AB- Lee Palfreyman, BLM heavy equipment operator, has been working to close four sites in H and improve other sites and roadways. And also do work at Fins exit, fill in hole, create road and cap it with harder layer. MK is interested in bringing up Red Rock Four-wheelers to build a fence. AB shows photos of repaired roads in Fox and Globemallow campgrounds. Really helps our contractor get in to these toilets for cleaning and pumping. Contractor had a hard time after the monsoon getting in there. He fixed some of parking areas in campsites in Globemallow. Fixed road in H. Closed 4 campsites, H3 where Kestrel trail will come out, H4-6. AB plans to have seeding done by same contractor who did along new parking lot this spring. Waiting on quote for BLM specs seed mix.

**TV show “At Your Leisure”** came to Moab to do a segment on Hell’s Revenge about the MTC. GC Commissioner Jacques Hadler, MTC chair and members, AB, Todd Murdock and Keri Nelson from the BLM, MT started out on her motorcycle.

MT- Very well done.

JJ- Very good too.

AB- Chase Pili, interview in the episode on HB180 was very well done.

MT- Was very busy at the trailhead when we went out.

MK- Are we going to mark a go around area on **North Fins** dog leg section?

AB- I need to work with the BLM to find out if it requires a travel plan change or if new route is close enough to not need that.

MK- there is a good go around choice.

MT- It is a sandstone neck that is eroding.

### **Grand County Commission updates**

EV- Covered it. GC Commission approved fee schedule. Agenda item on aviation activity that got postponed this week. Para motors launch up at SFRA.

### **BLM updates**

JJ- Don’t have any updates connected with SFRA. Thanks for sharing photos of Lee’s work, looks fantastic.

AB- Contractor could not get in and clean toilets in F and G because of the road conditions in early September. We are so glad this is fixed.

## **Adjourn**