

Trail Mix Committee Agenda

Tuesday, November 12, 2019

11:00 AM at the Grand Center, 182 N 500 W, Moab, Utah

- 1. Introductions**
- 2. October 2019 Minutes approval**
- 3. Trail Mix business**
 - Ratifying the Chair's signature on letter to the BLM regarding e-bike policy (in conjunction with Grand County)
 - Discussion and possible action on e-bike recommendations to Grand County and/or the City of Moab on e-bike regulations
- 4. County Update – Zacharia Levine, Evan Clapper**
- 5. City Update – Rani Derasary**
- 6. BLM Update – Katie Stevens, Jennifer Jones**
- 7. Forest Service Update – Brian Murdock, Zachary Lowe**
- 8. Trail Report – Maddie Logowitz, Tyson Swasey**
- 9. Biking Report – Aaron Lindberg**
- 10. Climbing/Canyoneering Report – Brett Sutteer**
- 11. Equestrian Report – Stephen Schultz**
- 12. Hiking Report – Marc Thomas**
- 13. Trail Running Report – Justin Ricks**
- 14. Ski Report – Kirstin Peterson**
- 15. Citizens to be heard**



October 29, 2019

To: Lance Porter
Bureau of Land Management
Canyon Country District Manager

From: Grand County Council
Grand County Trail Mix (Non-Motorized Trails Advisory Committee)

Re: BLM District and Field Office E-bike Policy

Mr. Porter,

Please accept this letter from the Grand County Council and Trail Mix Committee. Trail Mix is the County's advisory body for all matters related to non-motorized trail planning, design, construction, and maintenance. Our objective with this letter is two-fold. First, we hope to further our longstanding record of collaboration with the Moab BLM Field Office by actively participating in its evaluation of electronic bicycle (e-bike) usage BEFORE the Office initiates policy changes. Second, we want to clarify our position and concerns related to e-bike usage on designated non-motorized trails.

Grand County and the Moab BLM Office have collaborated for over 10 years to enhance local non-motorized recreation opportunities. Together, and with the support of numerous non-motorized grants, we have fulfilled goals outlined in the Moab BLM Office's Resource Management Plan to create over 150 miles of new singletrack mountain bike trails. The State of Utah and City of Moab have provided roughly \$200,000 in construction funding to leverage support from the BLM and thousands of volunteers. Over the last ___ years, volunteers have donated more than ___ hours of manual labor and \$___ in monetary contributions for trails they believed would remain non-motorized.

In addition to dirt trails, Grand County has worked with Federal and State government partners, the City of Moab, multiple for-profit and non-profit organizations, and private donors to develop the non-motorized North Moab Recreation Bike Path System along US Hwy 191 and State Route 128, which is a Scenic Byway. To date, over fourteen million dollars of restricted funds have been spent to provide safe non-motorized access to and from many of the non-motorized bike trails referenced above. Another five million in less restricted funds have been spent on this network of paved pathways. We have also collaborated in the planning and construction of hiking, rock climbing, and equestrian trail infrastructure. Grand County personnel have worked in partnership with the BLM to continuously maintain and improve this extensive and world famous trail network.

In consideration of the above, Grand County encourages the Moab BLM Field Office to preserve its current policy, which does not permit e-bike use on established non-motorized trails, for the following reasons:

Over 95 percent of the roads and trails on BLM-administered public lands in Grand County remain open to electronic bicycling. These open routes include approximately 2,882 miles of



roads of various types and about 313 miles of motorcycle trails. The open roads include around 154 miles of paved roads, 99 miles of maintained unpaved roads, and 1,703 miles of unpaved, unmaintained roads.. We endorse improving information about these existing areas and directing people to these routes as opposed to combining two different user groups - mountain bikes and e-bikes - on the established non-motorized trail systems. The Moab BLM Resource Management Plan has proven successful at avoiding the user conflicts prevalent in other communities and increasing safety for all motorized and non-motorized user groups; it does this primarily by separating user group activities into different focus areas, and we support this continued practice.

We have constructed and maintained almost all of Grand County's singletrack mountain bike trails using funding from grants specifically for non-motorized trail development. Changing trail use policies to include the use of equipment that possesses an electric motor will be perceived as a misuse of taxpayer funding sources. Additionally, without thorough legal analysis of prior contracts signed with the BLM, State of Utah, and other grant funding sources, Grand County has concerns about contract breaches should e-bike usage become permissible on established non-motorized trails.

Grand County has assisted in the planning, design, and construction of trails in accordance with NEPA regulations through an environmental review process. The environmental reviews conducted in association with each of these trails contains no record of analysis of e-bike usage. Currently, several questions remain unanswered regarding the impacts and safety of e-bike use on trails designed specifically for human-powered mountain bike use. As such, we request the BLM conduct new environmental reviews of each established non-motorized trail in consideration of e-bike usage prior to considering any policy change.

We have already witnessed the challenges of enforcing trail usage by a narrow class of e-bikes. E-bikes have become nearly indistinguishable in appearance to untrained eyes. Indeed, law enforcement officials cannot adequately discern the difference between e-bike classifications from a distance. Further, the BLM has limited resources to expend on monitoring e-bike usage on Grand County's dispersed non-motorized trail networks. As e-bikes evolve to have more power and capability while looking similar to non-motorized bikes, we see increasing challenges with enforcement.

Grand County greatly appreciates the Assistance Agreement it has with the BLM, which supports the operations and administrative costs of our full-time and part-time trail staff. Still, the vast majority of such costs are born by Grand County residents. If the Moab BLM Field Office allows e-bikes on non-motorized trails, it is certain to increase the cost of trail maintenance. Our trails have been designed and built specifically for non-motorized use; the higher power, higher weight, and higher speed of electrically assisted bikes will create increased trail damage. If the Moab BLM Field Office changes its policy on e-bikes, Grand County residents will bear the financial and experiential costs of such a change.



Our successful partnership has helped to establish Moab as a renowned recreation destination. As other communities face the challenge of integrating e-bike recreation into their trail networks, they will look to Moab as a model. Our track record shows that, together, we can set a positive precedent for other communities and BLM field offices, and hope that you engage our highly trained and experienced user communities BEFORE enacting policy changes that will affect e-bike usage on the designated non-motorized trails we have built, maintained, and monitored together.

In the meantime, we ask that the Moab BLM Field Office unequivocally state to the public that e-bikes remain unapproved on established non-motorized trails. The recent issuance of DOI SO 3376 and BLM IB 2020-003 has caused considerable confusion amongst the public. Worse, several media sources have incorrectly announced that e-bikes may now travel on any route where other bicycles may travel. Indeed, our local businesses, the Moab Information Center, and local government staff have witnessed a significant increase in e-bike related questions and illegal e-bike usage. It is imperative that we utilize every means necessary to truly clarify for the public the Moab BLM Field Office's policy on e-bikes.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter. We look forward to collaborating with your team to ensure that Grand County's world renowned trail infrastructure continues to offer the best trail experience to residents and visitors to the area.

Respectfully,

Evan Clapper, Chair
Grand County Council

Paul Spencer, Chair
Grand County Trail Mix Committee