

**Sand Flats Recreation Area (SFRA)  
Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, March 11, 2021  
3:00 pm via zoom**

**In Attendance:**

SFRA Staff:

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

BLM:

- Katie Stevens (JJ) Assistant Field Manager

Grand County Commission:

- Evan Clapper (EC)

Stewardship Committee Members:

- Mike Kelso (MK)
- Tom Dillon (TD)
- Molly Taylor (MT)

Grand County Active Trails and Transportation:

- Tyson Swasey
- Maddie Logowitz

**Call to Order**

**Approval of Minutes**

December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Molly makes motion, Evan Clapper seconded, passes unanimously

**Agency Reports**

SFRA 2020 and 2021 Budgets

AB reviews remit chart comparing 2021 with 2020 and 2019. Increase in revenue for February due to increase in visitation and three new reservable group campsites available on Rec.gov.

People can reserve 6 months out.

AB reviews 2021 budget- Prediction of \$633,075 in fee revenue for 2021. \$10,000 in grant but will pull closer to \$15,000 as intern position is filled this year and was not last year. Will find out what \$1,300 in sale of fixed assets is. \$38,000 is shown under Capital Improvements but only \$12,000 was spent in 2021 with Shade Structure contract. \$38,000 is shown because funds were never transferred at the end of 2019 to the Road department for their hauling of cobble for the

campgrounds. Commission Admin., Chris Baird said that it was never transferred. Now error in that the money was switched over in both 2020 and 2021; this needs to be resolved.

Balance sheet is showing wrong amounts in Cash in Combined Cash Fund and Investments and will until the audit is over. Chris said that budgeting software won't interface with the accounting software until 2020 closes out.

MT- Basically, since the last minutes in 2020, large amounts of money are not shown.

AB- We are going to wait for the audit, should be about \$800,000 for the carryover. Cash in Combined Cash fund on Balance sheet for end of year December is off as well.

## **Citizens to be Heard**

No citizens asked to be heard

## **Presentation**

Grand County Active Transportation and Trails (GCATT)

Lower Raptor Route Pathway options

Presenters Tyson Swasey and Maddie Logowitz

AB gives background on this trail proposal and concerns with completion of Raptor route and thousands of cyclists spilling out onto the Sand Flats road and safety issues.

TS- Over 25,000 cyclists use Whole Enchilada annually. Only have estimates for use on Raptor route when complete. Would be good to put a counter on Falcon Flow.

AB experiences technical difficulties during GCATT presentation but all other members remain connected.

TS- Bottom and top are built, middle section is last to build. With AB, have decided to postpone that middle section until we come up with a solution to alleviate large number of riders coming onto the road. Scouted five ways to get around Days Crack. Chosen option keeps riders close to Sand Flats road in case they want to bail out earlier. Looked at other options out along Fins and Things trail but some impassable. This is best route and also canyon has a fair bit of impact already, uses an old closed road. Green and the pink lines would be single track trails, 18 to 24 inch single track. Would see hiking traffic as well. But G down to D campgrounds- purple section we are proposing as rec path trail, details still to be determined. Hardened surface trail 4-6 feet wide, accessible to everyone, families with strollers, handicap individuals as well. Link between campgrounds that would give people an option that doesn't involve Sand Flats road. Adding the family aspect and wheel chair will be a great asset to the area. People would like it. Lots of sand need a surface under it first. Sections near E and going east would use old road beds. Around the rec path style trail would end around F and then around campground D or through it, this part is a concept line.

MO- Where would the trail end, the Slickrock parking lot?

TS- Good question maybe end at Fins parking lot. Up in the air. Not easy way to get from D to Slickrock. But that could change.

AB- Back online

MO- Great idea and especially connecting the campgrounds. For people with children, dogs, get them off the road.

AB- One option not shown was along the road but still would be dusty if SF road remains unpaved and noisy. Another idea single track on the north side. Purple path is something we are missing right now. In winter locals walk and jog the Sand Flats road. Once season starts they don't do that.

MO- Place in Oregon Sun River has bike paths that connect campgrounds.

KS- Like to commend Tyson for coming up with a feasible idea. Purple line- we have such need for this, where everyone can be on it. Could be crushed limestone surface.

AB- Arches has trails like this and waiting to hear back from Maintenance supervisor there.

KS- Reach out to State Parks as they manage lots of trails.

MT- Agrees with Tyson and Matt. Anything to get off the Sand Flats road would be great.

TD- Agree

EC- Like the campground idea, no brainer. Speak a little more about other options you looked at.

TS- Pretty much "No Go's". Canyon to the north ends in sand dunes. Looked at using old roads and come out from canyon right above G, but that valley is really sandy as well. Options to the south of chosen route were also not ride able. Best option would require some crib walling a switch back in one place. Jumps onto old roads behind H campground. Green line could use old road. That section route is not determined yet but know it could be done.

EC- Wanted to be sure it was the best choice.

TS- Really cool route and other spots end in despair. Beautiful in there, people are hiking in there and this would consolidate social trails.

AB- Proposed route would old road and hiking trail. Would share the Pinyon trail for a short section. Beautiful in there with Hoodoos.

TS- 2 to 3 feet maximum width.

MO- Could add length to the Pinyon trail and access it from the campgrounds.

AB- That is exactly how I hiked it with my family after going on it with Tyson.

KS- Good solution to a shared recreation area. BLM would undertake the Environmental analysis.

TS- GCATT builds trails for locals. This would definitely be really good for local community to access from town and UTVs are making it harder and harder on the road to ride because of the way the small tires push the dirt to the edges of the road.

MO- With the amount of dust the road kicks up on the weekends, you would not want to walk or bike the SFs road.

KS- Green and pink routes would be good candidate for RTP grants but the purple would be a good candidate for the Governor's office grants.

AB- Maddie and I spoke and she would go for grant for upper part and I would go for grant for the purple path. Thank you Tyson.

## **Consent Agenda**

## **General Business- Action Items**

## **Discussion Items**

Follow up on minutes from previous meeting:

### **Campground shade structures complete**

AB shows photos of the four shade structures, all reservable on rec.gov. Contractor was no longer available. Fortunately BLM heavy equip. operator Lee Palfreyman was able to come up and spread fill under the shade structures to level them out. Last photo is picnic area for Fins and Things parking area and it is Handicap accessible too.

### **COVID19 mitigation efforts for SFRA operations continue**

AB- Some things we are doing to mediate the line. Jason Turner, SFRA is contacting different rental companies to buy day passes in bulk ahead of time. Passes are available online as well. Road Dept. and Sheriff said SFRA still could not wave people around line. It is not safe; not built for that. People have to wait in line.

### **Dalton Wells- Utah Raptor State Park**

AB- Sand Flats management will not have to take care of Dalton Wells. 36.5 million dollars has been set aside to build infrastructure for the park. Kudos to Mary McGann as she had a lot to do with this happening.

### **Mill Creek Community Collaborative Recommendations to Protect Mill Creek Canyon**

AB- is one of the many members of the group. Conclusions will be written up and presented to Grand County and Moab City. AB has concerns with Potato Hill becoming only entrance for Mill creek. There will be 57,000 plus vehicles from Mill Creek and the Lions Back Development traffic added to existing traffic on the Sand Flats road. Cliff Koontz, Jim Webster, and others had concerns as well. These concerns will be included in the document. Clif Koontz had a lot of good ideas. If Mill Creek entrance is moved to Potato Salad Hill and there is an Entrance booth it should be far enough down the road so that this traffic doesn't back up on the road and affect those waiting to go up to Sand Flats.

### **Lions Back Development utilities construction update**

AB-Currently traffic lights near junction of Sand Flats road and Mill Creek but will be removed in time for Jeep Safari. Crews were hooking into water main. Other utility construction further up road will be ongoing. Sheriff's Command Center for Potato Salad Hill during Jeep Safari will most likely go in proposed parking area on County property.

## **New Topics:**

### **Three new SFRA staff hired**

AB- Claire Collier hired as intern under youth grant, Crystal White, seasonal, Brendan McGann new permanent. Lots of knowledge, great crew. The support commission gave SFRA last year in approving seasonal wage increases so that Sand Flats could compete with NPS and BLM positions was really crucial to hiring. Had 25 applicants and good applicants.

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

AB- Maddie Logowitz, GCATT and I tasked with coming up with where these funds could be spent. Other members include GC Commissioners Kevin Walker, Jacques Hadler, Travel Council Director Elaine Gizler. AB suggested running five educational videos from Travel Council website- Hiking, Biking, 5 Tips for an Awesome Moab Adventure and others on channel 6 and the TRT committee agreed. Funding could also go to new signs and new trail kiosks and labor for the installation of those.

ML- This slide shows mini signs we have put up so far in campgrounds. Information about single tracks and bio crust, level 2 building off of what people already know. Leave no trace ethics specific to the desert, wag bags, and remove food waste. A number of kiosks need to be replaced. One issue is that kiosks are different sizes and made of wood. Would like to upgrade to metal kiosks of standard size.

AB- We would like some of this information up in our campgrounds and some more kiosks at trailheads.

ML- Specific signs for mountain bikes but could be transferred to motorized signage. Shared screen. Survey came out in 2019. 500 responses, 40% residents, 60% visitors. Questions on how visitors are learning about the environment. Trailheads are top resource but we can improve on other resources such as shuttle companies and bike shops.

AB- At last meeting MO had asked about the apps used.

ML- App use data came from the same survey. It is a little skewed. Surveys were in bike shops on book marks, on social media, Discover Moab website, message boards all over town. Trail forks is at top because more mountain bikers took survey, but most other apps are used by all user groups. GCATT department collected this data.

### **Sand Flats and MTC Volunteer work day on Fins and Things**

AB- Regular volunteer day with 10 people, picked up trash all along the road. SFRA staff covers campgrounds and trailheads well but not always along the road, so this was a big help. They earned annual passes. We hadn't had any volunteer days until this year. MTC and Sand Flats held a Volunteer Day Rake and Ride in November. Folks earned annual passes too. They worked on North Fins from Diving Board to the Radio tower, lined with logs and built rock walls, raked. 30 participants. Locals commended us for this work but I was sure to let them know it was Sand Flats in partnership with MTC Rake and Ride volunteer day. Great partnership working with them on these projects.

### **BLM, Outfitters, Sand Flats and MTC Volunteer work day on Hell's Revenge**

AB- Mid- February Todd Murdock, BLM headed up this project, outfitters SFRA, MTC. MTC did a Rake and Ride and BLM and outfitters fixed the fence at the Escalator. Great help getting things ready before the start of the season.

### **Potential City Traffic Study for Lions Back Development and Sand Flats Road**

AB- Many concerns about traffic impact with all this development but a traffic study was never done. Spoke with the Mayor about a traffic study and setting up a meeting with the engineer and BLM and Sand Flats.

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

AB- Reviewed Traffic and Feasibility study that AB wrote up with problems and ideas for solutions. Reviewed scenarios with the group. Looked at Deadhorse and Arches aerial photos of their entrance stations. People waiting on a hill to enter SFRA compounds things.

MO- What is the time frame on this?

AB- If we were going to have company do a traffic study, don't know how valid with Covid. Dan said he would review this for me. He would help me write up things to pass on to the engineers. Hoping for studies maybe be completed this spring.

MT- Going through engineering study could be a lengthy process. This has been an issue for a few years. Hopefully we can implement some of these soon. We should all chime in on the email from Dan.

Group discussed Arches improvements and issues.

MO- Change when lanes are open and closed. Doesn't need to be overcomplicated. Seasonal issue.

TD- Going out there is a good traffic flow. Option 2 with lights is good or automatic gate.

MT- Should email ideas on this amongst group.

AB- Need to look at overall plan. Parking at Hell's Revenge and whether expansion is needed here or not.

MT- Limit access to Hell's Revenge in the future.

TD- In Sedona in every trailhead parking lot, you have to pay to park.

MO- Summit County this year has major issues with parking and they are going to implement the same thing in Park City area.

KS- Forest Service implemented this in Sedona.

AB- Shows group Mary McGann's letter about Community Project Funding and potential of paving Sand Flats road. Rep. John Curtis and Senator Romney are interested in funding transportation in Grand County. Highway 128 bike path is first on the list and also Kane creek and Sand Flats road. Bill Jackson heard talk of paving all the way to the loop road. Mary said to get documents ready for the Sand Flats road, engineering plans, costs, and the need for project.

EC- These federal funds are highly competitive and that is why County is looking into hiring lobbyist in the future. Have this law firm coaching us through it. Highway 128 is first. Hopefully goes well, learn in the process and more funding is to come. Think they are looking into projects that had some federal funding in the past but are not yet complete. Extending the pavement at Sand Flats, which currently ends before half of the campgrounds, makes sense as a project. Could be early as next year.

KS and EC- traffic and impact studies. Numbers on trail use, bundling this info would help, letters of support from business owners, private campers, video projects that show problems or issues and document these impacts. Dusty, windy days, wash board on road. Already photos of problems, mag treatment, visual documentations for PowerPoint. Create a folder with this info.

AB- Have some photos but haven't focused on the road and will do, good list.

MO- Film cars going by on the Sand Flats road.

EC- USGS probably has dust storm videos.

KS- USGS has gathered a lot of data on dirt roads in area.

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

AB- Survey for County Commission and County Attorney. With Square system record numbers of private, tours and rentals for UTVs. Records time and date all spring. Reason the commission

wants this is because they are looking for ways to mitigate noise, and the questions are: Are the UTVs a miniscule problem, or larger, percentage of use and the economic impact on the community with different user groups.

### **Grand County Council updates**

EC- Letter from the County Commission to the BLM asking them to look at the use and possible management techniques in the area. This body has talked about permits for Hell's Revenge for peak season and busy weekends. Guided groups are not the problem, Encourage visitors to go with a guide and make those operations easier for commercial guiding companies. Happy to hear your comments. County hasn't voted to approve this draft yet. Not specifically about Sand Flats but all high use areas. Effort of transparency and share with the group. If you want to send an email would be happy to share that with the commission next Tuesday.

MO- Support permit system. Implement is probably a harder thing.

EC- Bummer that you can't just go on a whim. But when you do get a permit you can expect a certain level of quiet and space. People know how to preplan and this will be a good thing.

Permits could do a lot to disperse this use. Not go from 0 to 60 all the time.

KS- Guides would not need a permit?

EC- Maybe allotment is 50% guided and 50% private. NPS could not figure out system and so now there are no outfitters in the Fiery Furnace. Not a problem now but it will be soon. Better to get working on this ahead of time is what this letter is about.

AB- Would have been nice if we could have closed Hell's Revenge this winter with the heavy snow.

EC- Could see scars in the rock from chains

AB- Saw that too.

MK- Should not be allowed.

KS- BLM in GJ does have seasonal closures, not sure hoops you have to go through. Letter mention of decibels not sure if BLM has regs. on that. Active travel plan revision is happening.

AB- Why did reservation system fail? Entry to Arches why did this fail?

EC- Had to pick up the permit in hand. The reservation system as a whole was pushed back on by local businesses. And also at a national level it was a concern to the NPS.

AB- Limits for Hell's and Fins and camping reservations could be part of a reservation system.

### **BLM updates and letter of support**

KS- Current equipment is too big. Currently putting in for Mini skid steer through Fig grant. Asking for a letter of support from the Stewardship committee for this grant. Help on Fins and other trails. Prefer Vermeer mini skid steer.

MK- Advantage is you can get it into difficult places and bring material from above back down and fill in damaged areas.

EC- Could do a Straw poll, head nod for agreement. TD, MK, in agreement. It should come from Sand Flats Director. Committee is in support. No obligation on our part.

MK- This equipment can do a lot of work that 10 people shoveling cannot get done and quickly.

KS- Could the letter include sentence that committee supports this?

EC- Yes

AB will write letter of support.

## **Adjourn**