

**Sand Flats Recreation Area (SFRA)
Stewardship Committee Meeting
Thursday, June 10th, 2021 at 3:00 pm
Held virtually on Zoom**

In Attendance:

SFRA Staff:

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

Grand County Commission:

- Evan Clapper (EC)

BLM:

- Katie Stevens (KS) Assistant Field Manager
- Reed Kennard (RK) Acting Field Manager

Stewardship Committee Members:

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

Motorized Trail Committee:

- Clif Koontz, Chair (CK)

Call to Order

Approval of Minutes:

March 11th, 2021 EC makes motion to approve minutes, MK seconds, and passes all in favor

Agency Reports

2021 Budget

AB shows remit graph. February 2021 shows a big increase over previous years, partially because of opening of three new group sites, a 206% increase. Through May SFRA revenue is up 25% over 2019. 2020 is not a good comparison. However May is only up 2% over 2019.

AB shows Balance Sheets- Financial numbers are still inaccurate. \$919,000 in investments which is high by \$200,000. Should have carried over approximately \$800,000 from 2020 to 2021. Still waiting for 2020 audit to close. Sand Flats Fees on second page more accurate but still off. Shows \$402,000 for Revenue but \$445,000 through May is correct number based on Square accounting system. Recreation.gov shows \$27,960 when actually it is \$49,000.

Committee members had a question last time on Sales of Fixed Assets line item. Chris Baird put in the estimate of \$1,300 if SFRA was to sell one of SFRA's older vehicles. On third page

discussion of percentages of expenditures compared to the budget. Contract Professional service is over because SFRA is making a short introductory video with Mark Finley. Capital Improvements are accurate now. Last time this was off as Clerk's office took out \$22,000 in both 2019 and 2020 for Road Department work. EC- Is there money to move line item expenses around within budget where there are overages? AB- Yes.

Citizens to be Heard

No Citizens to be heard

Presentation

Consent Agenda

General Business- Action Items

Discussion Items

Follow up on minutes from previous meeting

COVID19 mitigation efforts- AB- SFRA is continuing to follow Federal and County guidelines for buildings, mask mandates and social distancing. SFRA started collecting cash at the booth in May. Previously it was just credit card payments and cash only with the self-pay system.

Mill Creek Community Collaborative Committee Recommendations update- AB-This committee will present to the County in June and City and BLM thereafter. AB explains the comments she provided to the Mill Creek committee. AB agreed with Sarah Melnicoff, of Green Solutions on the idea of a seasonal staffed booth on Mill Creek road be reflected in the document. Also agreed that Cliff Koontz's idea of adding cameras to show traffic conditions online like at Arches should be mentioned. A solution that AB and some others mentioned was to expand the current parking lot to accommodate more users and then less users would be parking in front of housing. Edits to the document- AB wrote that the Sand Flats road should mention the Lion's Back resort as document only mentioned that the road is used for Sand Flats and accessing the La Sal Mountains. The preferred solution from the committee was to close all parking at Mill Creek and move it over to Potato Salad Hill. This would increase the traffic on the Sand Flats road substantially along with the development of Lion's Back. A letter from the committee was in support of shuttle service to Mill Creek. AB reminded the committee that current use in Mill Creek is limited by parking. With shuttle service it would be more difficult to limit numbers of users.

TRT monies for Responsible Trail Promotion committee update. AB convinced group to use some of the funds to run five videos from Travel Council and SFRA on channel 6 TV. Cost is \$150 a month per video and would be shown 20-40 times in 24 hours. Videos help to educate people on how to recreate properly and safely in the desert. Responsible Trail Promotion

committee will be hosting a meeting with NPS, BLM, and USFS soon to discuss what the major impacts from recreation are for each group. What signing, educational resources do they have or need? This group met several times a few years ago. Now there is funding to meet some of these needs. Share resources, ideas. Are groups seeing same problems or unique problems to their area? Example- Arches has a big graffiti problem but SFRA does not currently. Very important that educational messaging be the same across all areas.

Follow up on City meeting on traffic study for Lions Back Development/Sand Flats Rd-

AB- Meeting was held with the Mayor, City Manager, City Engineer, County Admin., BLM and SFRA. Chuck Williams, City Engineer said that Moab city is in process of a transportation study from Highway 191 to 400 East along Mill Creek but does not include Sand Flats road. He also said that the switch from a two lane road to a four lane road is 10,000 vehicles a day. County would have to do vast improvements to Potato Salad Hill road to make it the main access for parking for Mill Creek. Lionsback development is not doing a traffic study now, but City could ask for one with the next phase. Phase 2 calls for a four foot shoulder going uphill and two foot shoulder coming down. Phase 1 is construction of 34 casita and a pedestrian path on left side going up. The utility corridor could be open to hiking and biking and developer and GCATT have met. Safety of pedestrians is important.

KS- mentioned to Chuck Williams that it would be beneficial if developer gave access to Sand Flats for hikers through their property.

AB- shows plans from Lionsback and reads section of Plan Refinements as Part of the Final MPD for Lionsback. It reads that the City is working with OHV user group on the realignment of Hell's Revenge.

MK-They have not approached Red Rock Four-wheelers to his knowledge. Club prefers to go out new exit.

MO- Was out there recently and very rough.

AB- No one wants to go in there- BLM, County Road Dept. all worried that they will destroy their equipment. Still estimate 20 to 30% of those using Hell's Revenge come out exit. It would not remain fixed unless you put in a lot of money. Maybe make a decision about the exit and maybe close it.

MO- New users come out that way by mistake.

KS- How does (Charles) Well's Book show it?

MK- It will be good to use that new section (from Tip Over) back to trailhead exit when approved.

KS- Yes, one of changes on current EA is to open up that bypass. Maybe that would be the time to mark the trail to exit out the Trailhead Exit and decide if we want to nix the exit altogether.

MO- shows google images. Maybe we need a sign that says extra caution at these spots on this exit.

AB- May be confusing to have signs that say exit and trailhead exit. Tweak on maps and exit 1 and exit 2?

MK- If it stays open need to do some work on the trail.

KS- Are you suggesting decommissioning the road altogether?

AB- Search and Rescue uses it.

MK- No, but improvements will be needed, developers won't like it with all the traffic either.

MO- If someone is new to 4 wheeling it is sketchy.

MK- Only two areas, not that hard to clean it up. Mini X and C4.

AB- No one wanted to help.

KS- When it (from Tip Over back route) is opened up it will discourage use of exit anyway because new way will be more fun.

GCATT Lower Raptor route extension

AB-On the back burner, glad comments were well recorded in last meeting because it shows the support from the Committee.

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

AB- will meet with BLM engineers next week on all of this. Determine what it would take to get documents "shovel ready" to assist in acquiring funding for these projects. Should SFRA pave road with bike lanes and not do Raptor Route extension or should both things happen? Would be Paved 3 miles in to bottom of Falcon Flow. SFRA has been talking about paving the road before creation of the Raptor route to cut down on dust in the campgrounds and make the road safer.

Maddie (Logowitz, GCATT) and AB will have to work on these grants this winter.

KS- Cost of building trail and paving road are night and day.

AB- \$170,000 was the estimated match for paving under the FLAP grant, but now it is proposed as a mile further.

EC- We are going after a few sources for state funding for the gap section of the bike path on Highway 128.

AB- Chris Baird said do whatever we can to get things shovel ready. We will see where we are by next meeting.

MO- If we pave, is there a possibility to get the power lines buried? This would improve the view shed.

MK- Depends how bad the digging is.

KS- We would need proposals from Sand Flats or GCATT and then would need to do an EA. Quite a bit of clearance has been done around the campgrounds already.

Booth UTV Survey for Grand County Commission update

UTVs through May- 39% are private, 26% rental and 35% tours out of all UTVs. With a sample size just under 10,000 vehicles- 73% motorized and 27% are non-motorized.

EC- Does this capture the sunset tours? A lot of complaints Commission hears are sunset tours and the mass exodus through the neighborhoods.

AB- We capture some of those tours as they go in. Data is only captured when the booth is open- approximately 7 am to 5:30 pm each day.

New Topics:

Search and Rescue statistics 2020

9.5% of S and R time was spent on Porcupine Rim trail but not necessarily in SFRA

17% of time was spent overall at SFRA which has been consistent over the years.

KS- One of values of Falcon Flow will be to funnel some people off of Porcupine Rim but not seeing that yet.

AB- Trail is not complete and we don't have traffic counters out there yet either.

Rally on the Rocks event follow up

Reviewed statistics from two weeks before, during and the week after. 21% increase in UTV riders during the event. Week after still high. Todd Murdock, BLM wanted this information. It did get busier even though no trails in Grand County were being used.

Noise Event at Sand Flats follow up

Was held Thursday before Memorial Day weekend. Sheriff, City police, 4-5 county deputies ran the event. Mary McGann, Jacques Hadler, Kevin Walker from Grand County Commission attended and observed. Sheriff said it was a successful event, good learning experience for officers. Noise event- No citations would be issued. Wanted to encourage voluntary participation with free entry into Sand Flats. Did a stationary sound check to measure vehicle decibels 20 inches away from tailpipe. SFRA Polaris General was 92 decibels and at the upper limit of the noise ordinance. Debbie from Moab Bike Patrols' Honda tested at 85 decibels which is one of the quietest UTVs. 27 vehicles were tested in 2.5 hours. Perfect, it wasn't a long line. \$140 in passes were given out.

AB- All data was compiled on field iPads that day and a report will be generated. Another event is planned for fall.

EC- There is a weight limit and the noise ordinance does not apply to larger vehicles; would apply to a 4 runner but not a Tundra.

BLM, Outfitters, Sand Flats potential work day on Hell's Revenge

Todd Murdock, BLM has been trying to host a work day to help fix the buck and rail fence out by the River Overlook on Hell's Revenge but outfitters are too busy right now.

Cliff Koontz shared information on Escalator bypass and letter from Motorized Trail Committee with the SFRA Stewardship Committee.

MTC is asking SFRA to work with Stewardship Committee and BLM to consider approval of an optional line for the Escalator called the Elevator. Area was an open play area years ago and is a slickrock surface. This would give an option to go up the Escalator and down the Elevator. If you were waiting you could do the Elevator if this was an open route. Proposed Elevator route is 150 feet long and 25 feet off the main Escalator route. It is being used and can give impression of open play area. If it was marked it would not, only two routes permitted. MTC would help with any marking. Happy to go out on site to show and discuss. If you were to decide no, it should not be marked, the tire marks are there and need to be addressed.

KS- Question is it part of the Escalator? Is proposal to mark it or close it?

CK- Proposal is to mark Elevator as open.

KS- Can we act quickly enough to add it to existing EA for other Hell's Revenge proposals. Or does current designation for the Escalator cover it?

RK- I think this would be rewarding poor behavior by designating something like this. First thing that comes to mind, instead of pointing out legitimate route and keeping people on it.

KS- I don't think it is part of designated corridor which would be approximately 20 feet wide for Class D road. First have to designate it and do an EA. I think this is a question for the Stewardship committee and SFRA. SFRA was designated routes only starting in 1992.

AB- Hell's got marked around 2000. We convinced Ber Knight, of Red Rock four-wheelers, at a Stewardship Committee meeting that it needed to be marked on the ground. Due to the internet, people were going out there, going everywhere and getting lost and getting in trouble.

EC- Was this one of proposals last year.

KS-No. MK what is your opinion?

MK- I can argue it both ways. It would be nice to have it named so people know where it is.

MO- People are going up Escalator. Drive backwards on top to see the show.

CK- They also use it for recovery of vehicles below.

MO- What would you rate the route?

MK- With short wheel base not bad. Rate it a 6. Longer vehicle harder to do this.

KS- Giving option to an option.

AB- This is not an action item today just a discussion item. How is it on top when there are a lot of people on top watching and people are doing the Elevator? Four wheel users go up Escalator and down Elevator.

MO- Hot tubs and Hell's Gate have way more people watching and are more crowded than here.

CK- One advantage is that if it was marked spectators would see that they are on a route.

AB- Could come up with a field trip if people want to do that.

MK- Don't think we need a field trip. If we are now seeing side by sides coming down from the top. Maybe need to make it a one way obstacle.

CK- Elevator downhill and Escalator uphill.

KS- Elevator is currently off trail travel.

MK- Pretty small footprint on a trail going up Escalator and going down exit. Aren't we trying to prevent trail from getting widened?

CK- Top of Escalator is a convening area already. This might help get people to follow dotted lines better that they are.

AB- Are people in support of it being a one way trail?

MO- Signage saying recommended way of travel.

MK-Use has increased on Elevator last few years.

KS- We can add fence. Or do we want to add option to the option?

CK- Happy to do more projects to help smooth out problem spots on the exit to Hell's Revenge road. Could get heavy equipment from the state program for this to help.

Introduction to Sand Flats video for website

AB- Mark Finley was in town making another video for the Travel Council and had some time to film at Sand Flats. Matt and Sonja were able to help. Mark filmed them talking to folks in the campground and Sonja biking on Falcon Flow. We didn't have any footage of that trail yet. We want it to be narrated. Mark has lots of visuals from filming for Travel Council and 50 years of Slickrock that can be used. We want it to orient people who visit our website and who haven't been to Sand Flats yet. Show our trails motorized and non- motorized and camping. Deadhorse Point State park did an orientation video last year with Mark. It would be 3 to 5 minutes in length. AB needs to work on script this summer.

County and BLM to help with removing cattle guards, moving pipe safe to east entrance and boulder placed in campgrounds

AB-Road dept. removed Cattle guard on SF road after gaining permission. Rancher trucks cattle through now. Cattle guard going in to Radio Tower will be removed. BLM can pull it out along with the one further back on the Fins and Things trail. BLM range con can use them other places. Pipe safe up at Juniper, planning to move it up to our boundary with the forest. The location we want is on forest property so waiting to hear back from USFS for permission. Could put online payment signs up at cattle guard at UPS/ LPS boundary too.

Obtaining quotes for crack sealing, coating and striping parking lots

AB- Have quote from state contractors and waiting for BLM engineer's opinion on price as BLM paid for it last time.

Maintenance-Toilet building interiors

Toilet door chains added and door fixed by contractor

New truck acquired and researching new UTV or other trail maintenance vehicle

Road dept. got this truck for SFRA through lease program, \$600 a month.

EC- With this lease program county gets to collect equity and get money out of the deal.

AB- Started researching UTV.

Potential UTV training with Search and Rescue

Missed

Sand Flats Application for International Dark Sky area

Missed

Travel Council presentation follow up

AB- Did presentation for Travel Council board and then a tour for Travel Council employees.

Grand County Commission updates

EC- Biggest update of note is new department head in planning and zoning who is updating general plan. Wants to see how much of plan is on track and how much needs to fix. Thinks there will be some mention of SFRA in general County plan and wants to be sure description in plan is accurate. Committee may get an email from him on future planning in the County.

BLM updates

No updates

Adjourn