

Sand Flats Recreation Area
Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 13th, 2018
3:00 pm

Attendance

SFRA Staff:

- Andrea Brand (AB), SFRA Director
- Matt Olding (MO), SFRA staff

BLM:

- Jennifer Jones (JJ)

Grand County Council:

- Evan Clapper (EC)

Stewardship Committee Members

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

Call to Order

Approval of Minutes

Evan Clapper made motion to approve minutes, Molly Taylor seconded. All voted in favor, minutes approved.

Agency Reports

Budget

AB: Reviewed revenue and expenditures 2018 budget

Revenue through August 2018

- \$402,000 in revenue
- Includes \$22,220 from group site online reservations

Visitation Statistics

AB: Camping appears down but this is partially because group campsites are now calculated separately

JJ: BLM is up 3% in camping revenue

AB: SFRA is up 2% overall

AB and JJ: Season is extending past Thanksgiving now

EC: Travel Council is pushing off season

AB: Elaine Gizler, Travel Council was saying that there is a push to get folks to stay at hotels at least 3 nights

Grand County Compensation Study Update

AB: Shows group Recreation Tech III job description approved by County Council. New full-time position with maintenance emphasis was created as part of the County Compensation Study; 42k plus benefits. Interviewing next week and person could start this fall in the position. Current seasonal is excellent candidate.

JJ: Definitely necessary, you have the use and the revenue. Can keep on top of maintenance needs and there will be less need to overhaul these areas later on.

EC : Budget Advisory Board has approved their recommendations to be presented to Council in early October. Good support from Council. Imagine it will go through. Council members are ready for County to catch up to the rest of world as far as compensation.

Slickrock dotted trail update

- (TD) Trail is completed
 - Molly and Evan have been riding the trail, Tom has been out there and has seen others riding it.
 - Might want to put dots a little closer – input?
 - Tom planning on looking at other dotted trails to see what the sightline is – figure out if new dots need to be added.
 - Left dots far away on either side where it crosses Hell's Revenge
 - Want to use stencils to improve wording
 - Minimal work to finish

Hell's Revenge trailhead exit concrete project

- Showed pictures of before and after project completion.

Campground C & D Expansion project

Currently have 7 sites in "C" with one toilet and 21 sites in "D" with two toilets

The new expansion plan is to have the following totals-

- 19 sites and two toilets in "C"
- 43 sites and three toilets in "D"
- "D" will have two new Group sites
- Total of 34 new sites and two new toilets. Toilet cost 20k (down from 24k)
 - Discussion and Considerations:
 - Group sites to be closer to the entrance
 - Group sites by themselves – to reduce traffic through campground
 - Do lollipop loop to save on gravel cost
 - Camp host site
 - Toilet placement – consider an additional single toilet by group site
 - Rule of thumb is 10-12 sites per toilet, group sites own toilet
- Grand County is putting in \$100,000
- BLM is putting in \$243,000

JJ: Would like design finalized by next Stewardship Committee meeting

Travel Council UTV Videos

- Committee members viewed new Travel Council UTV video- Sand Flats and BLM assisted in filming/editing

- Sand Flats and BLM currently working with Mark Finley of Finley/ Holiday Productions on a longer video (split 50/50 by Grand County and BLM) using existing footage. It would be a more detailed educational video for website and hopefully could be shown in 4x4 rental shops.

AB: When I spoke to rental places a year ago they were interested.

JJ: BLM and Sand Flats should approach these rental places together.

All about partnership between BLM and Travel Council getting messages out including awareness of the BLM brand. I think video came out nicely.

Fins and Things new entrance route proposal

- AB explains map and new route and shows photos. AB visited route options in the field with staff and MK.
- Group discussed option of gravel or dirt surface. Gravel best. 2019 proposed budget is for gravel- \$30,000

EC: Would be nice to have a day use picnic area

JJ: BLM is adding picnic areas

MK: Not really missing anything with this change to trail

JJ: Huge improvement, vehicles not traveling through the campground

MK: Close off old route with boulders

Hell's Revenge – suggestions for potential alternate routes

- Requested by the outfitters
- MK and AB went into the field to look at this again.

AB and MK explain the two proposed routes with photos and maps.

- Route suggested by Kent Green is existing Slickrock dotted route open to mountain bikes and motorcycles. Kent wants trail open for quicker exit and to avoid oncoming traffic. Trail shows some illegal 4x4 use.
- Route suggested by Dan Mick would go from Tip Over as well but then south up obstacle

MK: This route up obstacle would have to be one way, not two way as suggested. Can't have jeeps stack up at the top so it would have to come up from the bottom.

AB: We looked at another route up (*a little to the east*) but merging into traffic would be a problem

JJ: More concerns with this route suggestion than Kent Green's idea

EC: Is our charter to provide an extreme trail?

MO: Is this necessary?

MT: Lots of UTV companies now doing it at the same time. UTV tours go faster and they hate being clogged up behind hummers and jeeps. Groups have different sunset spots but then they want to get out quickly.

MO: Is it really that bad?

MT: People only have to wait 5 to 10 minutes. Lots of passing between slower and faster vehicles.

EC: Do you feel this opening up would be a benefit?

MT: Dot route opening up would help some of the UTV tours.

AB: Comments from SFRA staff:

- Didn't feel there was a need for suggested routes
- Create two new intersections adding to confusion
- Open a large area to damage, valley has recovered a lot
- No widespread public demand
- Currently you don't see vehicles in the landscape, occasional bike
- Taking away a mountain bike dotted route

AB: Maybe committee should go out there as a group and look at it if these suggestions are of interest.
MT: Clarify. Pressure is coming from commercially guided trips and one distinct time of the day. I don't know that other private users have these issues. Really commercially oriented. I don't know if other people would want to use it. Don't think it would interfere with mountain bikers.
MK: If this route was open Jeep Safari would use it. Exit road is the worst part of the trip and by the time folks get to Tip Over they are tired. Rougher getting out then Hell's Revenge trail.
MT: But during Jeep Safari it is currently one way only.
EC: If we were going to convert mountain bike trail to 4x4 trail... If someone puts in a request who has the say?
JJ: Needs go through the committee first and then go to the BLM. Outfitters only made verbal requests.
EC: I would like to see their proposal in writing before it can be considered.
JJ: We will go back to outfitters and tell them
MK: Want to know their wishes for sure.

Discussed making the trail one way but that it would greatly effect outfitters' schedules.
AB and JJ: One way would improve visitors' experience, narrow the trail and protect resources better. Not use the exit road but come out the dotted route (*as in first suggestion*). Been discussed for a while. Sand Flats will be busier in 5 years.
JJ: If group wants to work on this change, it is due.

AB and MK explain to group Kent Green's other suggestion for sunset spot above Hell's Gate.
MK: Not a proponent of this. Conflict with pedestrians.
AB: SFRA staff not in favor. Also suggestion of picnic area at river overlook for safety.
JJ: People want to watch action. But problem is needing and pumping a toilet or creating a wag bag privacy structure and educating user groups on this.

EC and JJ: Let's look into scheduling a work day between Sand Flats and BLM and outfitters fall or spring. Need outfitters to make their request in writing.

Grand County Council updates

EC: e-bikes discussed at Trail Mix meeting. Buzz about creating e-bike trails.
JJ: Can't separate out trails. Not enforceable on BLM lands
EC: State lands do have division of e-bikes and motorcycles

BLM updates

- Horsethief expansion project done by spring of 2019
- October Westwater expansion project more campsites and toilet
- New toilet at Corona
- Campsite fees are going from \$15 to \$20 per campsite in Moab and all around Utah as well.
- Sand Flats still more because fee is per vehicle not per site.

Adjourn