

Sand Flats Recreation Area (SFRA)
Stewardship Committee Meeting minutes
156 E 100 N and via zoom
Thursday, June 12, 2025
3:10 pm

In Attendance

SFRA Stewardship Committee members- Molly Taylor (MT), Mark Pope (MP), online Tom Dillon (TD)

Grand County Commission representative- Melodie McCandless (MM)

BLM- Jennifer Jones (JJ)

Sand Flats- Director Andrea Brand (AB), and SFRA Recreation Technician Matt Olding (MO) via zoom.

3:36 pm Anthony Ricco, (AR) of Raven's Rim enters the room and soon after Cristen Hofhine (CH) of GC Planning and Zoning dept.

Call to Order

Approval of Minutes

March 20th minutes- MT made a motion and MP seconded, passes unanimously

April 29th minutes- MP made a motion and MT seconded, passes unanimously

Agency Reports

Budget Review 2025

AB- Down 2.5% through May compared to last year. Down from when we met in March.

Weather got warm early. Didn't hang up full sign for campgrounds as often as usual. AB shows Balance Sheet- Cash in Combined Cash Fund is at \$670,503. Last time we met Clerk's office did not have it updated. Expense Reimbursement of \$15,000 is for a different department so that will be fixed. Last page- Contract Professional services \$1,209 is for the speakers for the spring Guide Summit training but we will be reimbursed by NPS and this will show up in SFRA Fee Revenue. SFRA did this up front because they needed checks for the speakers. Sand Flats' plant book is now being sold by CNHA along with Dead Horse Point State Park and Back of Beyond Books. The book has been sold at Back of Beyond and Dead Horse since 2016. We found a less expensive printer and made a new cover and gave it a new title- "Flora of the Greater Moab Landscape" and we printed 350 of them and they are selling well so far.

MM- These are your books?

AB- Yes, a Sand Flats employee, (Sonja Nicolaisen) wrote this book and photographed the plants. SFRA makes about \$5 a copy and they retail for \$30 a copy. (Cost about \$15 to print.) Everything else is usual stuff this time of year under expenditures.

Citizens to be Heard

No citizens to be heard

General Business- Action Items

Discussion Items

Follow up from previous meeting:

E-Bike update

JJ- Hoping to have a draft Environmental Assessment out by June 30th. Will be on Eplanning for either a 30 or 60-day comment period.

AB- Did GC Commission send the new letter to the BLM?

MM- They did.

JJ- BLM wants new letter to be resubmitted as part of Environmental Assessment comment period. Dave Pals, BLM send a letter to the GC Commission on this.

MM- Commission knows to do this.

Potential Funding sources to pave Sand Flats Road and separated path

AB- Met with Cody McKinney and Bill Jackson of the GC Road Dept. and discussed options. Did not apply for the RAISE grant this year.

AB- Grant for paving Sand Flats Road NOFO will come out in October. BUILD grant, formerly RAISE, grant application due in January. And UDOT's Utah's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Schedule not sure when that is, maybe six-year cycle.

Grants for paved bike/pedestrian path Utah Outdoor Recreation include Recreational Trail Program (RTP) grant (February 1st to March 31st, 2026) which is how we got funding for Hell's Revenge, Slickrock improvements and Fins and Things parking lots in the past. Utah Outdoor Recreation Grant, due spring 2026 and also UDOT's Utah Trail Network grant (funding Highway 128 gap and trail to Utah Raptor state park) Schedule not sure yet.

JJ- Outdoor Recreation Initiative state grant that provides 10 million annually, would work for path beside roadway.

Traffic counters/ slow sign data

AB-Goes over traffic counter data from Sand Flats Road traffic counter by Fins and Things. AB wanted sign placed before Fins and Things TH, not after. Sign does tell speed limit on approach.

MP- Strange, why do the peak speeds coordinate with the peaks on the number of vehicles? And why does the average speed increase along with the peak speed?

MT- More vehicles have more of a chance of speeders but it still is strange.

AB- Shows Average Speeds chart which makes it look like most vehicles are traveling close to the speed limit. Daily Peak Speed chart shows mostly in the 40-mph range with higher vehicles traveling at 55 mph and one at 70 mph!

TD- Average speed could be lowered by bicyclists.

AB- Not sure what mileage it is set to record at the low end.

MT- Looks like Fridays have the most traffic.

Sand Flats Road updates:

AB- Magnesium Chloride put on Sand Flats Road; lasted about a month or so. Road is wash boarded again. AB spoke with Cody McKinney, GC Road Dept. that it would be ideal if we could put magnesium chloride down twice a year, but expensive. Great if we could do it in

February & August before each season. Sand Flats paid close to \$19,000 but Road dept. brought up gravel for two weeks beforehand. They probably would not have time to do this 2xs year.

JJ- Wonder if people go faster when the road is better? Traffic counters could track this.

AB- New culvert did well in the last storm. GC Road Dept. did have to go up and fix some washouts above stock tanks and they came up on a Friday, usual day off, to do that.

Night Sky video and International Dark Sky week

AB- Mark Finley made the changes that members wanted. Video was completed in time for International Dark Sky week, the week of April 21st. NPS posted it on their Facebook page and they don't usually do that with anything from outside their organization. Utah State Parks did as well and AB posted on SFRA Facebook page. Moab Office of Tourism (MOT) posted a shortened version.

MM- I saw it on Discover Moab Facebook page.

AB- State Parks will partner with us again on Star Parties in July and August, and a Scorpion Walk in September. They will be advertised in newspapers and on social media.

Relocation of H campsites this summer with BLM

AB- Six campsites that were removed from H campground will be added to B, C and D campgrounds. BLM heavy equipment operator said he would be back end of July.

JJ- How many weeks?

AB- I think he said it would take a week. AB showed completed pavilion and mentioned that cyclists are using it when they come off the trail. Shows photo of two new toilets.

Kiosks and tree sign draft

AB- Have a lot of signs in front of select trees in campgrounds, we think it is helping. Shows draft of tree kiosk sign.

JJ- Too many words. Should not have a NPS website on BLM land. Extrapolate information instead. Visual with 10-year-old tree compared with 100-year-old tree and another with an older tree.

MT- "Dead wood is important, do not burn." Kids and families want to break limbs. Everything uses it, animals, insects. Simple- Don't break limbs or burn dead wood.

MM and MT- Dead wood equals homes for animals and insects.

AB- Metal kiosk is up at 10-minute parking area. Still haven't sent big kiosk sign maps off and wonder if we should still wait since Falcon Climb trail grant has been awarded.

MT and JJ- Have Falcon Climb trail on it and put a removal decal that reads coming in 2026?

AB- Excellent idea!

Fins fence

AB- SFRA staff moved fence back from trail as requested by MTC

MT- This area needs a name.

MO and MT- "Decision Fin"

Sand Flats plant book sales

MT- Beautiful new cover.

AB- Already talked about this subject earlier.

Search and Rescue UTV trailer parked at Slickrock

MT- Is it marked?

AB- There is a logo but they are having a wrap made.

MM- Do you donate to Search and Rescue?

AB- Yes, we calculate the amount based on labor and equipment use the previous year. SFRA transfers \$10,000 to \$15,000 each year to Search and Rescue.

Follow up on Spruce Up event April 11-12th

We had 15 participants doing trail work with us, Kathy Dickey led it. Great event, got a lot of work done and glad to be part of it again this year.

Filming for Night time desert critters in the fall

AB- Mark Finley will be filming "Creatures of the Moab Sand Dunes". I am writing up something to give to Gabriel Woytek, GC Clerk for him to decide if Mark Finley is a sole source provider. If he says no then I will need to get the three bids. Mark Finley has worked on multiple videos over the years for Sand Flats, Travel Council and the City of Moab. For this project especially, it is important that Mark has this great working relationship with scientist Tim Graham having done the ephemeral pools and shrimp videos with him.

JJ- Mark Finley is great to work with. Not only does he have all this B roll footage but also really understands what messaging we want to convey. Wanted messaging for hotels and OHV rental businesses. This goes out to universe via local TV in hotel rooms and on social media.

AB- Travel Council, BLM and CNHA have partnered before with SFRA in funding and producing videos. MOT recently transferred money to SFRA for editing Moab Dark Sky Parks video.

MM- Any promotion we should use TRT money. Maybe they would only give you half since it is half promotional and half educational. There is a chunk of money sitting there. Anyone promoting in the county should use TRT monies and it would have to go through Moab Tourism Advisory Board (MTAB).

AB- They may have a different vision then SFRA and the BLM does.

MP- Will MTAB change the content?

MM- Lets have this on next meeting's agenda.

AB- OK.

Falcon Climb grant awarded

Presentation at 4 pm

Anthony Ricco of Raven's Rim

AR- gives his presentation: Shows private property boundaries and trails. Points out County easement for Hell's Revenge and BLM easement for Slickrock through the private property. Points out other County D roads on private property. Shows new planned climbing and rappelling areas. Focuses on Food Truck and Drive in Theater proposal.

JJ- Hell's Revenge is a county D road. Is there an easement on the extent of that?

CH- Hell's Revenge is a county D road with a prescriptive easement into perpetuity. D road, liability associated with county property.

JJ-- Access can't be disallowed.

AR- Right.

CH- They have to grant access. Can be relocated with discussion by both parties but access must remain.

AR- Shows climbing areas on google earth. Zooms in to food truck and drive in movie area.

Raven's Rim patrons drive Raven's Rim UTVs up to the zip line area following guides. They use zip line and then return the same way.

MM- If they come into Hell's Revenge then they would need to pay county fee.

AB- We could put a QR code for payment if they enter Sand Flats.

AR- I have talked to Red Rock Four-wheelers and outfitters about this concept.

CH- What zone are they thinking?

AR- Resort commercial.

CH- You would need to come to planning about it being Resort Special because theater is not part of that. Come to me for a meeting before you submit application. Can work on this in a way that will not be contentious.

AR- Frustrated before with planning commission hoops. Don't care about if we need a CUP or spot zoning, whatever it takes.

MM- Will you do solar? Haul water?

AR- Yes, haul up water and carry things back down. Looking into composting toilet. Need to have conversations with Health Dept. Food truck is for everyone to come off of Hell's Revenge. Bring your tours over here. Nice views.

MP- Watched the Planning Commission video and heard Mark Steen's comments. Separate issue but important. If there are things we need to do, come back to us.

AR- Suspension bridge, people still take photos of them with their bike on the suspension bridge. Creating liability issues. No plans with keeping folks off hot tubs. Mark Steen's frustration with people coming onto their property and they aren't getting anything for this while Sand Flats is. Not trying to keep people off or change things or move easements.

JJ- Tours are required to have wag bags to pack out solid waste under Grand County ordinance but not liquid waste.

AB- Generator noise. We do have quiet hours 10 pm to 6 am and we have quiet hours for generators 8 pm to 8 am. (But this is far away from campgrounds). Want to point out that currently many of the outfitters that do the sunset tours just go to the river and back and don't come over to Tip Over, though there are short cuts to come over this way.

AR- Theater would have FM transmitters, or silent disco headphones, talked about an overhead partition on the projector so that it won't shine up to into the dark sky. Planning on solar and don't want to use generators.

MP- Obvious concerns are what could come from a certain zoning.

CH- Resort Special would be 1 house per 5 acres which is similar to current zoning of Range and Grazing. Lion's Back isn't selling and it would be so expensive to get water and sewer up there.

AB- Over 50,000 vehicles go on Hell's Revenge annually.

AR- Up to 60 to 100 vehicles could park for the movie.

JJ- How would you plan for people coming over from Hell's Revenge?

MO- Standard season? Beer or wine allowed?

AR- Don't want to encourage driving onto Hell's Revenge but probably go for a beer license, not a liquor license.

MO- Recommend making it so folks can walk here too?

MP- If this was rezoned would it require road improvements?

CH- It would allow improvements but not force them.

MT- Lots of families that come to Moab and don't know what to do.

MP- Didn't know that Slickrock and Hell's Revenge had easements thought private property.

AB- SFRA bought private property signs to put up back in 2012 after all these easements were completed but Bynum didn't want them. I thought that people should know that they are on private property, maybe they would stay on the trail better if they knew this. If you want to collaborate on signage, I am happy to do that. After I listening to the Planning and Zoning meeting and Mark Steen, I told my staff to go out and check on the trail easements and they did and the paint still looked good from last fall. CH did you ever find out if SITLA did an easement with the county for Hell's exit and in from the entrance? Director tried to get this done years ago but don't think SITLA ever did it.

CH- Will have to check.

JJ- From BLM's perspective. I think it would be good to show the private property.

AB- Old map showed private property but new maps don't. We will put it back in.

JJ- It would help to define this for visitors. "No, you can't go everywhere." A toilet would be a great idea.

AB- Could be a paid toilet building.

AR- Happy to have conversations one on one and solve issues together.

AB- We do a lot of collaborating here. Many entities, outfitters, SITLA, BLM.

JJ- Outfitters may find this as an asset.

AR- We want to increase capacity in our area.

TD- Private property signs- "You are now entering private property, stay strictly on the trail." I think it would do a lot. Maybe change stripe color on the private property so they know it.

New Topics

Falcon Flow counter data

AB- goes over bike traffic counters at upper Falcon Flow TH. First chart shows Days of the week. Saturday is the biggest day. 250 bikes on a Saturday. Chart goes from April 5th to May 30th. Shows Average bikes each day of the week on Falcon Flow trail. Next chart is Hours of the day that folks are on the trail, same time frame. Third chart is daily numbers of bikes, then weekly and monthly. Close to 400 bikes a day. Bottom of chart is monthly numbers. In April 4,000 bikes and in May 3,800 bikes rode the Falcon Flow trail. We were very surprised that there were that many people.

MT- Why isn't Trail Mix doing this?

AB- We bought counter as they did not budget for it.

MO- Did you compare it with Hell's Revenge use?

JJ- I wonder if popularity is because it is so new and wonder what the use will be in a few years.

AB- This is also picking up people that are doing the whole Raptor route, could have been shuttled up to LPS. We did not compare with Hell's use but there is a counter at Hell's.

MT and JJ- Trail is close to town.

AB- My staff rides it each week and does maintenance as needed. If the issue is something we can't handle then we let GCATT know. I had staff do a training with Tyson Swasey this spring to make sure we are on same page.

Adopt a trail

Volunteers are part of a GCATT Adopt a Trail program where they ride a trail each month and do light maintenance, rock lining and raking. They fill out an online form alerting Evan Smiley, GCATT of more serious issues and then Evan lets me know if necessary.

BLM updates

Proposed Rope Swing

AB- Went out with Keri Nelson, BLM to look at the site for this soft proposal.

JJ- Another rope swing in another location proposed by another company. Adjacent to Wilderness Study Area and might be wildlife issues. We have another outfitter doing this for a few years and they have a scheduled window of opportunity each month and they camp by the site.

Leaving a Trace Moab Theater Project

AB-Went out with Ash Hanson same day and Keri and looked at six locations on the Slickrock Bike Trail. Audience for a hiking play, 60 to 80 people for first scene will gather in bowl to the right of the trail a little way in and then group breaks into 20 people per group. Each location is a big location with lots of room for actors and audience. They will have cardboard sets that they will set up on the night of the show; nothing will be out there overnight. Ash got a \$10,000 grant from the city. She has done these in other communities. We picked out the paths for audience members to walk to each location. They will charge and then if it is under SRP then they will not need to pay to come into SFRA.

MM- Cool idea.

GC Commission updates

MM- Any questions for me? Very busy.

MT- Can we put something on the agenda to discuss this next time concerning Steen property proposal.

AB- I think we should wait until they propose something again to the Planning Commission and then respond.

MT- Clearly, they are concerned about area by the hot tubs. Some of these things are setting up problems for issues of trespass.

AB- CH said that they haven't fenced it off all these years so it is a prescriptive easement.

MT- They could charge for using hot tubs, mentioned many times problem with trespass.

AB- Well I guess they could charge. They could fence hot tubs off.

MM- Think about the new letter you want to send to the commission. Class D roads are class D roads whether they go through SITLA or not.

Adjourn