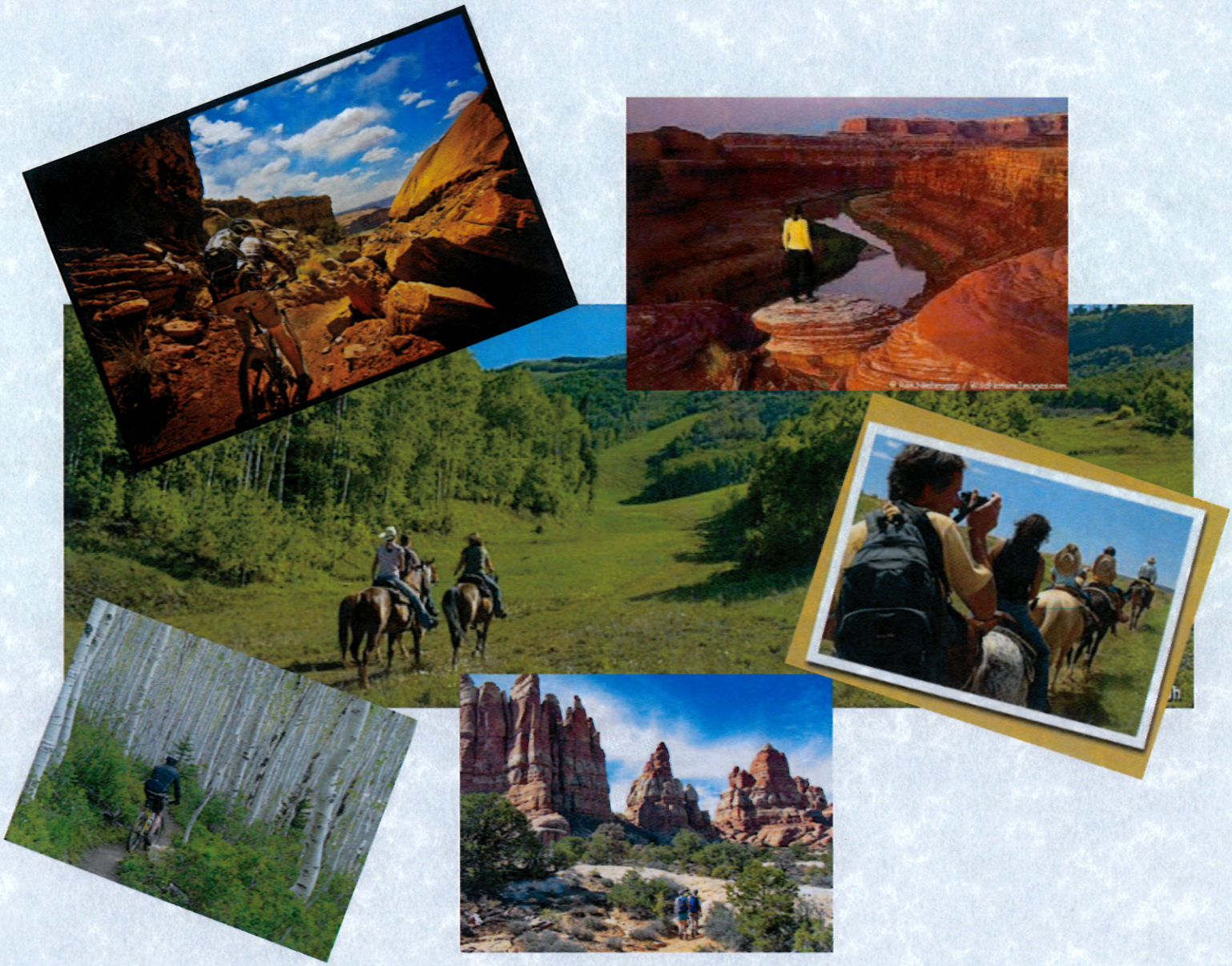
TRAIL USER FEE PERMIT STUDY

UTAH RECREATIONAL TRAIL ADVISORY COUNCIL



Utah State Parks

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November 13, 2012

Representative Roger Barrus, House Chair
Senator Ralph Okerlund, Senate Chair
Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment Committee
State Capitol
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

In May 2012, the Division of State Parks and Recreation was assigned by the NAE Committee, to form a group to review the possibility of charging fees for use on non-motorized trails. As the Off-highway Vehicle (OHV) Program Coordinator, I asked the Utah Recreational Trails Advisory Council (URTAC) to assist with the question of charging fees. URTAC is a 10-member council representing various non-motorized user groups from across the state and is appointed by the State Parks Board to advise the Division on non-motorized trail matters.

Historically, motorized users have paid for services, facilities and improvements to motorized trails in Utah and thus there is a steady funding source. In fact, motorized users have championed registration fees. Currently there is no consistent funding source for non-motorized trails. Thus no future improvements, services or facilities can be developed unless funding is available through general funds.

URTAC held several meetings at which they reviewed solicited information in regards to a cost benefit analysis, charging fees and recommendations in regards to the motion that the NAE passed in May of 2012. URTAC followed the principles that were outlined as identified from Senate Joint Resolution Three.

URTAC researched materials from other states and cities from across the country. They developed a questionnaire that was submitted to these other states and cities in order to present data in the report. In addition they collected information from various non-motorized users, within Utah, which assisted in answering the question as to whether a fee should be charged for non-motorized use.

Please review the attached report as prepared and submitted by URTAC. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely

Chris Haller
OHV Program Coordinator

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UTAH DNR STATE PARKS

A Study on Whether to Issue Trail Permits to Non-Motorized Users of Trails in Utah

Senate Joint Resolution 3 tasked the Division of Parks and Recreation to study whether to issue trail permits to non-motorized users of trails.

The Division of Parks and Recreation assigned this study to the Utah Recreational Trails Advisory Council (URTAC), a volunteer group formed by the Utah Board of Parks and Recreation as authorized by state statute 79-5-201 UCA. The 10-member advisory council consists of representatives from federal land management agencies, Utah League of Cities and Towns, Utah Association of Counties, and members representing hikers, bicyclists, equestrians, Nordic skiers, and one member-at-large representing the interests of non-motorized trail users in general.

URTAC took a three-step approach: (1) researched what other states are doing related to trail permits for non-motorized users of trails; (2) canvassed non-motorized user groups throughout the state to get their feedback on trail permits for non-motorized users of trails; and (3) held discussions among themselves to identify potential benefits and costs and volunteering options.

What Other States Are Doing Related to Trail Permits for Non-Motorized Users of Trails

URTAC conducted preliminary research to identify those states that issue trail permits to non-motorized users of trails. We found several examples of such; however, many were managed by cities or had been recently discontinued. In all we identified five states with possible applicability—Minnesota, Wisconsin, Washington, Oregon, and California. Next, we researched and brainstormed a survey to administer to these five states. We included the following questions:

1. Does the State has both a motorized and non-motorized user fee, and how does the non-motorized user fee work:
    - How much does it cost?
    - What types of non-motorized recreation does it cover (e.g., hiking, road biking, mountain biking, in-line skating, cross country skiing, canoeing, etc.)?
    - Who must purchase it (e.g., adults, in-state, out-of-state, etc.)?
    - Who administers the lands for which the fees are being charged (city, county, state, federal, or combination)?
2. How much money is generated per year from the fee and how are the funds used?
3. Of the funds generated, what percentage goes to program administration (including personnel, advertising, permit mailings, supplies associated with permits) and what percentage goes into the trail system (construction, maintenance, trailheads, etc.)?
4. How do you enforce the program? What problems, if any, do you have with enforcement?
5. How do you let users know that they much purchase a permit/pass?
6. Have you seen a reduction in trail users since you implemented the program? How about a decrease or increase in number of out-of-state users?
7. What other benefits or problems have you experienced with your permit system?

Below are the findings by state.

WISCONSIN—Rick Flaherty, State Park System, 608-266-0866

1. Ask if they have both a motorized and non-motorized user fee. How the non motorized user fee works.	Yes
A. How much does it cost?	Trail fees are $4 for daily and $20 for an annual (calendar year)
B. What types of non-motorized recreation does it cover (e.g. hiking, road biking, mountain biking, in line skating, cross-country skiing canoeing, etc...)	It covers biking, in line skating, horseback riding, cross country skiing or off highway motorcycle on certain trails. A state trail pass is not required for walking or hiking. A state trail pass is issued to the person, not the horse bicycle, etc. It is not transferable.
C. Who must purchase the pass? (e.g. adults, in-state, out of state etc..)	Everyone 16 or older. Do not differentiate between in state and out of state trail users or track the numbers.
D. Who administers the lands for which the fees are being charged (city, county, state, federal or combination)	Different Trails are managed by different entities (state, county...)
2. How much money is generated per year from your fee and how are the funds used?	No answer
3. Of the funds generated, what percentage goes to program administration (included personnel, advertising, permits mailings, supplies associated with permits) and what percentage goes into the trail system (construction, maintenance, trailheads, etc.)	Unable to gather the information due to short notice.
4. How do you enforce the program? What problems if any do you have with enforcement	No answer
5. How do you let users know that they must purchase a permit/pass?	No answer
6. Have you seen a reduction in trail users since you implemented the program? How about a decrease or increase in number of out of state users?	No answer
7. What other benefits or problems have you experienced with your permit system?	No answer

MINNESOTA—Ron Potter, Project Manager, 218-753-2180 X251

1. Ask if they have both a motorized and non-motorized user fee. How the non motorized user fee works.	Yes
A. How much does it cost?	Varies depending upon the type of users: fees: Horse daily $4.00 issued to rider 16 years of age or older
B. What types of non-motorized recreation does it cover (e.g. hiking, road biking, mountain biking, in line skating, cross-country skiing canoeing, etc...)	Horses and Cross Country Skiing – ATV. No fee for hiking, biking of any kind, or in line skating
C. Who must purchase the pass? (e.g. adults, in-state, out of state etc..)	Non Resident ATV Trail Pass $21.00; ski and horse sold to the individual so all must purchase that participate where pass is required. On canoe/kayak out of state registration is honored, but must be registered.
D. Who administers the lands for which the fees are being charged (city, county, state, federal or combination)	For the most part our division administers the recreational activities that are occurring on state lands. Other sites that require the pass are administered by a local government unit, county, City or Township.
2. How much money is generated per year from your fee and how are the funds used?	a. Horse - $110,000 annually b. Ski - $300,000 annually c. Canoe/kayak - $150,000 annually. Horse funding 100% back on the ground for projects. Ski currently has 100% going back to the clubs that are providing opportunities through local government units
3. Of the funds generated, what percentage goes to program administration (included personnel, advertising, permits mailings, supplies associated with permits) and what percentage goes into the trail system (construction, maintenance, trailheads etc.)	See answer to #2.
4. How do you enforce the program? What problems if any do you have with enforcement	Ski and horse primarily enforced by Parks staff at state parks and forestry day use sites. Canoe/kayak enforced by conservation officers and sheriff

	officers as part of enforcing the boat registration program. Could use more enforcement help with horse and ski pass but no extra funding to put towards that effort.
5. How do you let users know that they must purchase a permit/pass?	This information is posted at the trailheads, posted on the web site and we do a press release at the start of each season. Also attend some early season events to help get the word out.
6. Have you seen a reduction in trail users since you implemented the program? How about a decrease or increase in number of out of state users?	No, participation remains high in all of these programs, compliance drops off from time to time but enforcement fixes that issue. Other issue is these programs have been around a long time so hard to say if participation is being impacted by the fee. Ski and canoe/kayak participation is going up in recent years. Horse pass has only been around about eight years but number has remained constant.
7. What other benefits or problems have you experienced with your permit system?	Benefit is that although these programs do not provide a lot of funding it is something that helps leverage additional funding and it is a steady source that allows for work planning and a way to deal with on the ground issues. A broader approach, like a tax would generate more funding but would also require the funds to be split more ways. May not net any more money in the long run.

WASHINGTON–Tom Oliva, 360-891-5000

1. Ask if they have both a motorized and non-motorized user fee. How the non motorized user fee works.	Only charge to get into the parks of $10.00 or $30.00 a year
A. How much does it cost?	Only a motorized to get into the parks. As of 7/2011 all day use visitors entering a park in a

	vehicle had to have a pass to enter state park property (campers exempted)
B. What types of non-motorized recreation does it cover (e.g. hiking, road biking, mountain biking, in line skating, cross-country skiing canoeing, etc...)	No charge for any non motorized activity all rail-trails are non-motorized only. However visitors need to the Discover Pass to park at the trail head.
C. Who must purchase the pass? (e.g. adults, in-state, out of state etc..)	Everyone. The pass is $30/vehicle per year (good on either of two cars, one at a time) or $10/vehicle per day.
D. Who administers the lands for which the fees are being charged (city, county, state, federal or combination)	State parks get 84% of either pass fee, the other 16% is split between DRW and DNR. Snowmobile trails are managed by our Winter Rec program.
2. How much money is generated per year from your fee and how are the funds used?	Sno-park permit revenue and thousands of volunteer hours. Snowmobile reg. fees annual registration fee with DOL is $30 for non-vintage snowmobile Amount unknown, needs to be researched. A percentage of the state fuel tax amount unknown needs to be researched. Sno-Park permit revenue was approx $700,000 in FY 12 (ending June this year) come from One day permits ($20 allows one-day parking at all winter sports Snow Parks including special groomed trails areas). Seasonal permits $40 Allows parking at all winter sports Snow-Parks. A seasonal permit is not-transferable between vehicles. Some Sno-Parks require only a seasonal permit for season parks. Others require both the seasonal permit and the special groomed trails permit (sticker) in order to use the designated sno parks.
3. Of the funds generated, what percentage goes to program administration (included personnel, advertising, permits mailings, supplies associated with permits) and what percentage goes into the trail system (construction, maintenance, trailheads etc.)	Program cost (snow removal, trail grooming, sanitation facilities, mapping, trail signs, safety education, enforcement and program administration) are paid for solely by user fees from snowmobile registration, a

	percentage of the state fuel tax,
4. How do you enforce the program? What problems if any do you have with enforcement	Rangers are fully commissioned, armed law enforcement. They write tickets of vehicles parked without payment.
5. How do you let users know that they must purchase a permit/pass?	We have a massive publicity campaign about the new Discover Pass, primarily social median and news releases. People are told about the Sno park program when they purchase their snowmobile or call about where to use.
6. Have you seen a reduction in trail users since you implemented the program? How about a decrease or increase in number of out of state users?	We have not seen a large reduction in park use under the Discover Pass program, possibly a small reduction but hard to know whether cause is Discover Pass or the economy. The Sno-Park program has been in effect for a long time.
7. What other benefits or problems have you experienced with your permit system?	Passes and permits keep the gates open. We do not have the luxury of other funding to support recreation lands. People paying fees may feel more ownership of their parks and special programs and take better care of or volunteer for lands. The public at large benefits from having recreation lands available whether they use them in any particular year or never. Society benefits from the environmental benefits of forests, from a healthy citizenry, from wildlife habitat and from places for social interaction and bonding. all Citizens should contribute to the general care of publicly owned natural resources. Some method should

	be provided for enabling low-income families to have access to state lands.

CALIFORNIA—Balenda Gray, bgray@parks.ca.gov

California responded that they have vehicle and per person day use fees at their State Parks.

OREGON

1. Ask if they have both a motorized and non-motorized user fee. How the non motorized user fee works.	State law liable recreation immunity parking only
A. How much does it cost?	They have only a Parking fee
B. What types of non-motorized recreation does it cover (e.g. hiking, road biking, mountain biking, in line skating, cross-country skiing canoeing, etc...)	don't charge for any non-motorized fees
C. Who must purchase the pass? (e.g. adults, in-state, out of state etc..)	Everyone for parking only
D. Who administers the lands for which the fees are being charged (city, county, state, federal or combination)	The entity that collects the fees uses and administers the fees.
2. How much money is generated per year from your fee and how are the funds used?	No answer
3. Of the funds generated, what percentage goes to program administration (included personnel, advertising, permits mailings, supplies associated with permits) and what percentage goes into the trail system (construction, maintenance, trailheads etc.)	No answer
4. How do you enforce the program? What problems if any do you have with enforcement	No answer
5. How do you let users know that they must purchase a permit/pass?	No answer
6. Have you seen a reduction in trail users since you implemented the program? How about a decrease or increase in number of out of state users?	No answer
7. What other benefits or problems have you experienced with your permit system?	No answer

From this input, we concluded the following:

1. No state issues trail permits to all non-motorized users.

2. Two of the five states we covered issue state park permits as is now the case in Utah—Washington and California.

3. One state—Oregon—issues permits for parking at trailheads.

4. Only two states issue trail permits to some non-motorized users—Wisconsin and Minnesota. There is one major difference between these two states and Utah, however. Neither Wisconsin nor Minnesota has the multiple jurisdictions that are the case in Utah. Utah jurisdictions include city, county, state, STLA, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and National Park Service. Accordingly, Wisconsin and Minnesota do not have the complexities of coordinating efforts and dividing the funding and costs among many different jurisdictions.

How Local Groups and Individuals in Utah Respond to Trail Use Permits for Non-Motorized Users

We canvassed Utah non-motorized user groups and individuals on their opinions about trail use permits. The vast majority of user groups and individuals are against trail use permits for non-motorized users of trails.

Benefits and Costs

Other states with a trail permit program, specifically Minnesota, indicate that benefits may include: (1) a steady source of income that program managers can count on for planning purposes; and (2) a source of funds that the state can use to leverage for additional funds.

Costs include those associated with setting up and administering the program, publicizing the need for trail permits, and enforcing the requirement.

Regarding costs, a study should be done to determine what the administrative cost of setting up such a complicated system will be. There will be a large fixed cost component to this that includes issuing permits, enforcement, and overall system management. In the cycling arena, anecdotal input indicates that the true cost of bicycle permits is in the area of $5 to $7 per registration for one-time registration. In this case, the cost may be higher here due to the annual nature of registration. So, to provide any meaningful funds, the cost of trail permits would need to be higher.

In the case of Utah, all of the cost elements will be complicated due to the need to coordinate all activities with multiple jurisdictions. This will make the "true cost" of permits that much higher.

Volunteering Options

Options for volunteering include two basic approaches: (1) using volunteers to administer, publicize, and/or enforce trail permits for non-motorized users of trails; and (2) making a system of trail permits for non-motorized users of trails voluntary.

It is not practical to use volunteers to enforce trail permits due to safety issues. In the states we covered, state law enforcement enforces the requirement. It is also not practical to use volunteers to administer the system; i.e., sell and issue permits. It may be of some use to have volunteers publicize the need for permits, though; this is likely the least costly element of the system's costs.

Regarding making trail permits voluntary, the state could use one or more approaches. One would be to add the option to state income tax forms to donate funds for non-motorized trails. Another would be to set up a system for donations at trail heads. A third option would be to add a voluntary amount to licensing and permit fees.

Conclusion

Based on our findings, URTAC does not support issuing trail permits to non-motorized users of trails.