



Ride with Respect  
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The prevailing theme for Ride with Respect (RwR) in 2018 was partnerships. With help from near and far, we contributed nearly another thousand hours of trail work, as well as participating in planning that should pay dividends for diverse recreation opportunities on public lands.

This year's outstanding contributors included the Recreational Trails Program administered by Utah State Parks, the Yamaha Outdoor Access Initiative, the Trails Preservation Alliance, Grand County, and the Off-Road Business Association. As usual, we put every dollar to good use, and then some.

It's not too late to make your tax-deductible donation for 2018 (by sending a check to Ride with Respect, 395 McGill Avenue, Moab, UT 84532). If you're one of the proud few to contribute for the past sixteen years, please encourage others to chip in, as trail use around Moab has steadily grown.

Of course we've done basic maintenance of off-highway vehicle (OHV) trail systems in the Abajo Mountains, Sovereign Trail, and Dubinky (see uppermost and lowermost photo's in 2018 collage). Additionally, below are highlights of new projects and partnerships for the year.

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### Sand Flats Recreation Area

Famous for mountain biking and motorcycling alike, the Slickrock Trail is a loop marked with white-paint dashes. Somewhat hidden from the main loop, a greater challenge can be found on routes that are marked with white-paint dots, which are aptly referred to as the Dot Routes. These secondary routes were actually slated for closure by the BLM in 2012 but, after RwR intervened, the agency displayed the utmost professionalism by voluntarily remanding its decision. Even better, the BLM performed an environmental assessment for two new miles of additional Dot Routes to be named Above Abyss. With help from David Olsen and

Tom Dillon, both of whom are past bicycling representatives for Trail Mix, RWR marked Above Abyss and blocked potential trail braids in this spectacular setting (see middle photo in 2018 collage). We hope to avoid increasing the workload of Grand County staff, who were supportive of the project, and do a tremendous job maintaining Sand Flats Recreation Area in the face of over a hundred-thousand user days on Slickrock and Hell's Revenge each year. Many thanks to the BLM for this privilege of expanding the trail system that solidified Moab as a tourist destination.

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### La Sal Mountains

Below the SITLA trail system of Upper Twomile Canyon is a USFS trail in Lower Twomile Canyon called the Hideout Mesa ATV Loop. This 50"-wide trail is generally rated as more difficult, but its north side is actually most difficult, which prevents intermediate riders from completing the loop. With a generous loan of equipment and staff from the OHV Program of Utah State Parks, RWR improved the northern hill climb by reestablishing drainage and flow to the trail so that water stays off and riders stay on (see upper-middle photo of 2018 collage). The three steepest segments may ultimately need realignment, which we'll monitor with the USFS, but the rest of the hill climb should finally sustain itself. We also used the Utah State Parks equipment to barricade a nearby route that's closed to conserve prime wildlife habitat. Finally we cleared dozens of lead-out ditches on a nearby 4WD route.

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### Utah OHV grant program expansion

All year long, RWR has taken the opportunity to advise Utah State Parks on establishing the foundation of an expanded grant program for trail work and other benefits to responsible OHV riding. It actually began with House Bill 143 to reallocate revenue derived from the registration of OHVs. Let's say that you as an OHV-owning Utah resident were paying about one-hundred dollars each year. About 20% of that amount was actual "registration" going mostly to Utah State Parks for OHV-related expenses. The other 80% was "fee in lieu of property taxes"

going to non-OHV expenses, mostly county governments (and mostly counties that provide virtually no OHV riding opportunities). H.B. 143 basically flips this ratio so that the bulk of your money will go to a grant program administered by Utah State Parks (and will ultimately reach the counties where OHVs are ridden, not just where they're stored). In addition to RWR, several entities played a role in passing H.B. 143, including UTV Utah, the Utah OHV Association, Brett Stewart of Utah OHV Advocates, and the late Fred Hayes of Utah State Parks. The expanded grant program is just part of Fred's legacy for future generations.

The Utah State Parks OHV Program Manager, Chris Haller, renamed this state funding as the OHV Fiscal Incentive Grant (FIG) program to emphasize its intent of incentivizing land managers to provide quality OHV opportunities and pitch in some of their own resources along with volunteerism from OHV clubs, donations from related businesses, etc. Chris wisely formed a committee including RWR to advise him and the State Parks board on any new rules, policies, and procedures to ensure that the funding is readily available for beneficial projects while also being protected from waste.

While the majority of funding must go to trail work (whether construction of new trails or maintenance of old trails), the types of eligible projects will be expanded to include access protection, search and rescue, tourism, education, and other uses. Particularly for projects in which OHV riding is not the only use, applicants should offer significant matching funds, such as 50% of the total project cost. Applicants may be nonprofit organizations and government (whether local, state, or federal). Utah State Parks anticipates starting to accept applications for smaller requests (under \$12,500) in the second half of 2019, and then for larger requests in May of 2020. By then, total funding will accumulate to several-million dollars, so RWR hopes they receive many competitive applications for a robust program. Chris and Utah State Parks have earned our trust in preventing the FIG program from becoming a mere handout, and in shepherding the efficient and effective funding of projects to directly benefit OHV riders, the public at large, and natural resources across Utah.

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American Motorcyclist Association

This year the American Motorcyclist Association (AMA) presented me with its annual Outstanding Off-Road Rider award. Having received it due to my work through RWR, I am happy to accept the award on behalf of the nearly one-thousand individuals and organizations that have contributed volunteer time or money since 2002, when Dale Parriott assembled a board to establish RWR. Since then we've come a long way thanks to that widespread support, which has included the AMA itself. Most recently the AMA provided RWR with an OHV sound-measurement kit to demonstrate one way of addressing noise concerns in the community of Moab.

In October, the AMA's Government Affairs Manager for Off-Highway Issues, Steve Salisbury, visited Moab to see western issues firsthand. To sample different kinds of trail, we rode the White Rim in Canyonlands and Sovereign Singletrack. We met with NPS regarding day-use permits on White Rim and discussed refining their rules and education to best accommodate motorized access along this iconic route and yet preserve the heart of Canyonlands. We also met with the USFS regarding their Forest Plan revision and discussed enhancing the connectivity and diversity of their travel plan in the Abajo and especially La Sal mountains. Finally we met with BLM regarding the reevaluation of its travel plan in certain areas required by the settlement agreement with SUWA. After Steve's whirlwind tour, RWR commented on a draft management plan for the downsized Bears Ears National Monument, which the BLM is dutifully developing while the monument's downsizing is debated in court.

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## Emery County Public Land Management Act of 2018

While most of RWR's resources go toward trail work in Grand and San Juan counties, we have participated in Emery County travel planning for over a decade, as the San Rafael Swell offers world-class riding (see lower-middle photo in 2018 collage). This year we spent several-hundred hours assisting OHV groups in Emery and Carbon counties to engage with their representatives. In the 1990s and again in the 2000s, Emery County wisely invited its citizens to develop a bill that would partially resolve debates on the management of federal land that dominates their county. By 2012, they developed a balanced bill that didn't pass Congress for a few reasons. For example, in 2016 the executive branch insisted on proclaiming a

million-acre Bears Ears National Monument in San Juan County unless legislation were passed to cover an area that's equally large and equally restrictive. Addressing most of eastern Utah, the Public Lands Initiative apparently fell short of that mark, although it probably had less to do with a lack of preservation benefits and more to do with the PLI attempting to address too many counties at once.

Since then, the executive branch has changed its stance on monuments like Bears Ears, and the Emery County bill was back to being a single-county bill. The time seemed ripe for Emery County to pass its bill without many more concessions, otherwise with more public involvement. Unfortunately they did neither, instead introducing a bill this past May that conceded many OHV interests, all of this without having consulted a single OHV group. RwR quickly worked with the Castle Country OHV Association and Sage Riders Motorcycle Club to identify ten major OHV benefits that were in previous Emery County bills but went missing in the 2018 bill. With guidance from Michael Swenson of Swenson Strategies, by August we reduced our request to four feasible amendments, which were then endorsed by a dozen national OHV groups (including ARRA, MIC, SEMA, ORBA, AMA, and BRC). Although the bill's sponsors did switch proposing to designate the San Rafael Swell from a National Conservation Area to a Recreation Area, which is a significant gain, they didn't adopt any of our actual requests (despite Representative Bishop's courageous attempt to do so).

By November the Sage Riders, Castle Country, and RwR were compelled to oppose the bill with a total of thirty Utah-based OHV groups, which was again echoed by a dozen national groups. In contrast to the grassroots effort of OHV groups, the bill itself appeared to be top-down, as the Emery County Public Lands Council passed the buck to the county consultant and staff, then to the county commission, then to Representative Curtis, then to Senator Hatch, then to the Senate, itself. In fact, each of these entities granted veto power to the ones below it, so each entity is actually responsible for the final product. In December, the Senate did partially-adopt one of our requests, which was to continue allowing for the relocation of motorized trails (including e-bike trails). Previously the bill would have prevented any rerouting even though this management tool (a) has been done dozens of times by RwR alone for the benefit of safety and conservation, (b) has not been prohibited in other recreation areas, conservation areas, or even monuments, and (c) was requested by the BLM as a continued option for the agency in its

comments on the Emery County bill this past summer.

With this single issue resolved, we are now being asked to adopt a neutral position on the bill without being shown a map. Compared to the previous month's version, the bill's text that is now in an "omnibus" package of other bills indicates an additional hundred-and-fifty-thousand acres of wilderness (including several new wilderness areas and the doubling of other wilderness areas like Muddy Creek and Labyrinth Canyon). We are told that this wilderness expansion doesn't concern us because boundaries are being drawn around any routes that are currently-designated for OHV use. However, the current travel plan around Labyrinth Canyon is incomplete, missing many routes that are well-established. The BLM tried to fix this problem after approving its current plan in 2008, but this fix got held up by SUWA's lawsuit, although the settlement does agree to reevaluate the San Rafael Desert travel plan by the end of 2019. Further, if the doubled Labyrinth Canyon wilderness proposal extends north or east beyond the Recreation Area boundary, then we're talking about permanently prohibiting mechanized use in places where the Emery County bill had never proposed to automatically ban the planning of new trail. This is the kind of complexity and compromise that we remain willing to navigate, if only the county and federal officials would recognize that we have an equal stake in the matter.

The way that things transpired in this session of Congress, we can hardly blame Senator Lee for single-handedly blocking the public-lands package of bills. He's trying to put in check the executive powers to proclaim monuments that have increasingly drifted away from what Congress intended when passing the Antiquities Act of 1906. However the next session of Congress will be even tougher in some regards. Hopefully they'll realize that, if not reforming the Antiquities Act directly, their alternatives to mega-monument proclamations need to have clear and lasting benefits for OHV riding. We called them on it this year, and we'll be even more prepared to do so again if necessary. By the same token, we recognize the inherent difficulty of passing a comprehensive public-lands bill, and sincerely appreciate efforts to find win-win solutions. Most of all we thank the dozens of OHV groups for coordinating their efforts. We survived another round, but for the long game ahead, it's critical for all OHV riders to support their local, state, and national groups.

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## OHV management training events

Save the date for a few 2019 events that will be worth your while. On September 10th-12th and again on the 24th-26th, the OHV Program of Utah State Parks will host a couple Great Trails workshops presented by the National OHV Conservation Council (NOHVCC). For OHV enthusiasts and land managers across Utah, both workshops will begin with one day of classroom introduction to state-of-the-art trail design, construction, and maintenance. The second and third days will apply these concepts to actual problems and solutions in the field. Whether you are an enduro racer, ecologist, or engineer, trail building is such an interdisciplinary job that you are bound to learn a lot.

Likewise NOHVCC's annual conference always offers something for everyone. I have attended eight annual conferences, and continue to find them inspiring, as the team of NOHVCC staff is stronger than ever. The 2019 conference will be an easy drive from Utah to downtown Reno. Land managers should likely attend from October 16th through the 18th, while OHV enthusiasts should likely attend from October 17th through the 19th. Both groups will get two days of presentations, one day of riding, and a lot of networking opportunities.

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In many respects, RWR has adopted NOHVCC's model of "creating a positive future for OHV recreation" through partnerships, many of which go unrecognized. We give thanks for all of them, and hope to build on them in the years to come. In the meantime, happy holidays.



Clif Koontz  
Executive Director





repairing fences near Sevenmile Rim



reshaping ATV trail near Lower Twomile Canyon



constructing singletracks in Sand Flats Recreation Area



groundtruthing legislative map in San Rafael Swell



delineating intersection near Tenmile Point

caution - consideration - conservation 2018

