

SUU Mountain Ranch Recreation Development Plan

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Spring 2010 ORPT 4860 students completed a *recreation opportunity feasibility study* for the SUU Mountain Ranch and subsequently made recommendations to the SUU Mountain Ranch Resource Advisory Committee (RAC). On April 28, 2010, the RAC made final decisions regarding the recommended recreation options, all of which, to stay within the bounds of the RAC’s desired conditions statements, are classified as primitive or semi-primitive opportunities on the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. The summary below details the RAC’s priorities for developing recreation opportunities as funds and resources are available. A full report of all options presented to and resulting actions by the RAC can be found in section I. of the students’ “SUU Mountain Ranch Outdoor Recreation Feasibility Study,” which can be obtained from the SUU Office of Government Relations and Regional Services (GR&RS). A map produced by the students to supplement the Outdoor Recreation Feasibility Study can also be seen at the GR&RS office.

The approved—meaning they are identified as immediate priorities—as well as the “tabled for future consideration” recreation opportunities are listed below so as to create a plan of action and priorities. In full agreement with the feasibility study, the RAC supports elimination and restoration across the Ranch of user-created and unauthorized ATV routes as a top priority. As an addendum to this plan, the minutes of the April 28, 2010 RAC meeting, where elements of this plan were discussed and approved, is attached.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Hiking/Snowshoeing Trails.....	2
Equestrian Trails.....	2
Mountain Biking.....	4
Camping.....	4
Rock Climbing Descriptions.....	4
Options for Marketing and Promotion of SUU Mountain Ranch.....	5
Excerpt from the SUU Mountain Ranch RAC meeting minutes, April 28, 2010.....	6

Hiking/Snowshoeing Trails

Hiking/snowshoeing (“H/S”) trails are built to meet U.S. Forest Service trail standards.

H/S 2 Loop—Historic Cabins Sites Trail: Trail starts at the Shepherd’s Cabin and loops around the surrounding area for a historic cabins sites tour. Exact location of trail must be determined based on the three historic cabin sites in the area. Trail could connect to or make use of portions of H/S 3 trail as well as the E2 Loop trail.

Trail is rated for beginner and up.

Action: Develop H/S 2 Loop, and eliminate/restore unauthorized user-created ATV route along proposed trail route.

H/S 3—Mtn Center to Shepherd’s Cabin Trail: Trail starts at the Mountain Center, follows the former “Nature Trail” west to Gower Creek, and finishes at the Shepherd’s Cabin (or vice versa). Trail can be done as a shuttle or down-and-back. The trail could connect to the H/S 2 Loop (depending on the final route for this loop trail) and users can enjoy the Historic Cabins Sites Trail. Users could also take the E2 Loop.

Trail is rated for beginner and up.

Action: Develop H/S 3

H/S 4 Loop—Mtn Center Exercise Trail: Trail utilizes the existing exercise stations behind/south of the Mountain Center (and through the previously logged Stand 8). Trail partially follows H/S3 trail heading west from the Mountain Center but then loops south and back to the east of the Mountain Center, with stops at the remaining exercise stations. Aside from sharing the beginning of H/S 3, this trail is not connected to others and is only for hiking and snowshoeing.

Trail is rated for beginners and up.

Action: Develop H/S 4 Loop.

Equestrian Trails

Equestrian (“E”) trails are built to meet U.S. Forest Service equestrian trail standards.

All equestrian trails will also be considered hiking/showshoeing trails.

(Note: The selection of Stand 12 as the first unit to begin forest management work according to the Demonstration Forest Memorandum of Understanding with the Utah Division of Forestry necessitates that the proposed Equestrian Trails be reevaluated as two of the prioritized trails listed below pass through or potentially utilize the primary access route to Stand 12. A short note accompanies each trail description below explaining how they relate to Stand 12.)

E1—Demonstration Forest Stand 12 Interpretive Trail: Tail starts at Shepherd’s Cabin and could either follow the H/S 3 Trail or the E2 Loop Trail to access Stand 12 and the forest management work that will occur there. Once at Stand 12, the E1 Trail will provide a signed interpretive route—both hiking and equestrian—through the Demonstration Forest and then continue south on the repurposed user-created ATV trail (that originates from the west boundary

of the private properties). This well-defined trail, in its current form, heads into the high country on the far south end of the Mountain Ranch. A loop could be created at the south end of the trail lengthening the trail and then circling users back to the main branch to return to Shepherd's Cabin.

Trail is rated for novice and up.

Trail route can be identified after planning for the Demonstration Forest project in Stand 12 is completed, and the relationship to trails H/S 3 and the E2 Loop can be determined at that time. The E1 Trail would be constructed after all forest management work in Stand 12 is completed.

Action: Develop this trail as part of the initial Demonstration Forest project (stand 12)

E2: Trail starts at the Mountain Center and follows the old logging road immediately west of the Center south into the previously logged Stand 8. Trail passes through Stand 8, over the ridge, heading south and east somewhat parallel to Gower Creek. The trail forks near the northwest boundary corner of the USU parcel. The main E2 trail continues southeast across the USU parcel onto the high country of the far southeast and "disconnected" SUU property, almost due south of Woods Ranch. The other fork, before the USU parcel, turns west and connects with the E1 Trail. From here, the E1 Trail returns through the Demonstration Forest Stand 12 back to Shepherd's Cabin where the E2 Loop can be accessed. Users can return to the Mountain Center by staying on the main E2 Trail as a down-and-back experience.

Trail is rated for novice and up.

The main E2 trail could be constructed regardless of Stand 12 activities. The segment connecting to E1 will possibly pass through Stand 12, as will much of the E1 Trail. A larger issue for the E2 Trail is receiving permission to construct a trail through USU property to access the far southeast parcel of the Mountain Ranch.

Action: Table and revisit as an option in two years.

E2 Loop—Shepherd's Cabin Loop: Trail begins at Shepherd's Cabin and follows the old logging road immediately west of the Cabin to the south and then east, up onto the ridge immediately south of and above the Shepherd's Cabin area. Trail loops through the large meadow, offering a view of the north side of the ranch, and returns to Shepherd's Cabin on the same logging road. Users can also use trail E2, connecting to E1, and access the E2 Loop trail from the Mountain Center.

Trail is rated for novice and up.

Trail route can be identified after planning for the Demonstration Forest project in Stand 12 is completed. Most likely, Stand 12 will be accessed by the old logging road that is the proposed beginning of the E2 Loop trail. If this is the case, the E2 Loop would be constructed after forest management work in Stand 12 is completed and the logging road can be repurposed as an equestrian and hiking trail.

Action: Table and revisit as an option in two years, or when forest management in Stand 12 is completed.

Mountain Biking

The Blowhard Trail is an established route through the Mountain Ranch that was built by the Dixie National Forest with permission by the University. The Forest Service has project documentation for the construction of the trail.

MB 2—Blowhard Trail: The Blowhard Trail is a technical trail for expert riders on U.S. Forest Service land beginning at the communications towers on Blowhard Mountain (east of and higher elevation than the Mtn Ranch) and skirts the edge of Cedar Breaks National Monument and Ashdown Gorge Wilderness. The trail crosses onto the Mtn Ranch through an open meadow high above Moots Hollow and follows the ridge line down to the ranch's north side's main dirt road and then continues down Moots Hollow to S.R. 14. The Blowhard Trail can therefore be accessed at S.R. 14 (primarily a hiking access), on Blowhard Mountain (primarily Mtn Bike access), or from the ranch's main dirt road (north of Moots Hollow). Intermediate riders can walk the technical sections (primarily on USFS land), while the trail on SUU land is both rideable and hikeable.

Action: Maintain Blowhard Trail across the Mountain Ranch for both hiking and mountain biking.

Mountain biking is permitted only on the public access dirt road on the north side of the Ranch and along the entire length of the Blowhard Trail; mountain biking is not a permitted activity elsewhere on the Ranch.

Semi Primitive Camping

SP 1—Shepherd's Cabin camping: Camping is allowed at the Shepherd's Cabin site. Reservations can be made through Conference Services. It is the decision of the RAC that Shepherd's Cabin sufficiently meets the recreation opportunity of camping at the Ranch.

Action: Beyond the Shepherd's Cabin area, which is not under the purview of this Recreation Plan or of the RAC, camping is not a permitted activity across the Ranch.

SP 3—Yurt or field camp site: A yurt or field camp that can be utilized for small group camping and other education and recreation experiences.

Action: A yurt or field camp location may be identified on the south side of the Ranch, and a yurt may be further considered by the Office of Government Relations and Regional Services and/or Conference Services (as managers of the Mtn Center) if funding becomes available.

Rock Climbing Descriptions

C1—Cetacean Wall: Routes are already established and information can be found in Goss' 2006 "Rock Climbs of Southwest Utah and The Arizona Strip," pgs. 245-247. Routes are rated as follows: 1 route rated 5.10, 4 routes rated 5.11, and 5 routes rated 5.12.

C2—Moots Hollow: Routes are already established and information can be found in “Rock Climbs of Southwest Utah and The Arizona Strip,” pgs. 248-249. Routes are rated as follows: 1 route rated 5.0-5.7, 5 routes rated 5.10, 1 route rated 5.11, and 1 route rated 5.12.

C3—10 Mile Wall: Routes are already established and information can be found in “Rock Climbs of Southwest Utah and The Arizona Strip,” pgs. 251-252. Routes are rated as follows: 3 routes rated 5.10, and 1 route rated 5.11.

Action: Rock climbing is not a permitted activity on the SUU Mountain Ranch. Manage climbing as a trespass activity by posting signs at the principal access area (base of Moots Hollow, off of S.R. 14) and restoring and mitigating resource damage caused by user-created access routes to climbing areas.

Options for Marketing and Promotion of SUU Mountain Ranch

1. Create and disseminate a Mountain Ranch brochure that highlights recreation opportunities and rules.

Action: Table and revisit after priority recreation components in this plan are implemented and accessible. (The very first Mountain Ranch brochure, though not highlighting recreation, is in draft as of the writing of this document.)

2. Have a link to maps and trail information on the SUU homepage.

Action: As with option 1 above, table and revisit when recreation components are implemented and accessible. (Property maps, though lacking specific recreation information, are already available on the Mountain Ranch Website.)

3. SUU Outdoor Center offers trips and activities on the SUU Mountain Ranch.

Action: Table and revisit in two years as a priority of the RAC, though this—using the Mtn Ranch—is already an option for SUU Outdoors.

Excerpt from the SUU Mountain Ranch Resource Advisory Council meeting minutes from April 28, 2010

Recreation Plan

Briget reviewed the recreation recommendations that were presented to the RAC at the January meeting. Opportunities include hiking/snowshoeing; equestrian and mountain bike trail restoration, maintenance and new construction; rock climbing area options (restoration and stabilization); and camping. She then took the group through a prioritization exercise to determine if the proposed recreation elements were:

- 1) immediate priority for funding and implementation;
- 2) to be tabled and reconsidered at a later time; or
- 3) to not be considered.

The prioritization was guided by the policy of a direct connection to academics and/or avoidance of conflict with the sheep program

Generally, priorities included hiking trails near and originating from the Mtn Center (including attempting to restore the exercise and nature trails); a trail through the Demonstration Forest unit (Patrick and Briget will meet to map this potential new trail); a new "Historic Cabins" trail and restoration of the ATV trails from the cabin neighborhood; maintenance of the Blowhard Trail; and rock climbing area restoration and stabilization, according to guidance from the Access Fund and Mike Carter (SUU Assistant Attorney General).

Recreation elements that were *eliminated* were a new hiking trail on the west "sliver" of property of the ranch (it would require easements across private property); constructing new mountain bike trails (even from old logging roads); and camping of any type. It was discussed that Shepherd's Cabin is available for camping and therefore meets this purpose, and there are other camping options nearby (FS campground) and across the region. It was noted that the Mtn Ranch didn't need to offer every type of recreation activity, particularly if an activity could damage the resources of the Ranch or could easily be found elsewhere in the region.

Other decisions included *no ATV/snow-machine use except for university purposes* (e.g., sheep program needs) to be approved by the RAC, and the use firearms & hunting would be forwarded to the President's Council for their input. (FYI, President's Council at their May 3 meeting did not want to openly restrict hunting but they support the application for use process in place by the RAC. Essentially meaning we would need to approve hunting requests on a case-by-case basis; otherwise, like the rock climbers it is a recognized trespass use.)

Other recreation recommendations included options for marketing and promotion of the Ranch to the SUU community. The priority from this discussion was to find ways to host incoming students during orientation at the Mtn Center with time to hike a trail. Briget will look into this possibility. Also, a new Mtn Ranch brochure is soon to be created by Brian's office (hopefully by fall...), the Mtn Ranch website is up and regularly updated and added to (there is also a direct link from the SUU homepage), and SUU Outdoors is being encouraged to use the Ranch for their student trips and activities.