

Racing to the Fire!

or

An "ounce of prevention"

You were definitely the "all volunteer fire department" when it came to putting out the Hook Canyon threat. I do thank God for that! Voicing your opinion saved the day.

In our everyday lives, we seem to spend a good deal of time putting out the "fire of the day". Whether it is the kids, the car, the house or business, there is always something flaming up under our feet. A crisis can come totally out of the blue, but other situations are known fire hazards, just waiting to spontaneously combust if we don't do something to prevent it.

I don't know about you, but I don't want to be reliving a "Hook Canyon-like" episode every few years. We have learned that there are some things we can do to help protect the lake from such threats and one of them is to limit what uses will be allowed on the bed of Bear Lake.

Right now the State of Utah is in the process of formulating the parameters for this very issue as part of the Comprehensive Management Planning process. Currently the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands (FFSL) must consider any kind of application for industrial and commercial use on the sovereign land at Bear Lake. "Bear" in mind that this includes not only the beach area but also the submerged lakebed. What if someone wanted to mine or extract some rare mineral from the sediment? How about extracting mud for some exotic spa product? Or place a large structure under the surface to facilitate water exchange (can you spell Symbiotics?) Odd as any of these may

sound, certainly there are even more outlandish ideas out there.

This comp plan pertains not only to the lake in general, but also to uses for specific areas. The new management plan will establish a classification for different areas of the beach, similar to your community planning and zoning designations. These classes vary from complete preservation on one end of the scale to open for consideration of most any use on the other end.

All lakeshore is not equal; some sections have open public access and others no access, some is pure sandy beach where others consist of boggy wetland, some is important wildlife habitat and others perfect for play, some have uplands that are inhabited while others are undeveloped. And of course, these all change at different water levels. There are no simple templates that can be applied.

What might the "uses" be? Current uses are, walking, picnicking, driving, parking, boat launching, docks, anchors, buoys, private and public marinas and ATV transportation. New uses might be concession stands for refreshments, food, equipment rentals, etc or ATV recreation (think - go fast). Again, -- things we may not have thought of - a floating restaurant or bar, perhaps? What would be appropriate in the area of the beach that you use? Of particular significance is coordination with the county's interest in "opening-up" existing access easements on the south and east shore that have not been used in recent years.* Those of you who experience these areas up close and personal are the best to evaluate and comment. You are the front line fire fighters.

FFSL has done a very good job of compiling the issues submitted by BLW and individual citizens. The next step is how to address them and develop guidelines for the future.

The time is quickly passing to have input into what limits and rules we would like to see and communicate them to the State. The management plan they will create will be in direct response to the will of the people - IF it is made known to them. Your ideas may seem obvious but they still need to be expressed in writing and become part of the public record by which decisions will be made. Please contact us so we can see that your issues and ideas are addressed. A little planning now can save a lot of fire stomping later.

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