

Mt. Emily Recreation Area (MERA)

Joint Advisory Committee Meeting

Tuesday, August 25, 2026

Convene at 6:00 pm – Daniel Chaplin Building Conference Room at 1001 4th Street

Committee Members: Forrest Warren, Ian Caldwell, Mark Barber, Ben Walker, John Paustian, Heather Murphy, Bill Gerst, Tyler Brooks, Chris Evens, Norm Paullis, Katrina Gains, Elaine La Rochelle,

Online : nobody

Staff: Josh Ford

Attendees Cheryl, Ron, Lea and James, Greg Gains

- Public comment- None

- Approve Minutes of last meeting May 5, 2026 Motion by Tyler, Second by Heather. Norm abstained since he wasn't there. All others in favor.

- Josh wants to make 3 changes to agenda. 1) Make Bob's Trail a discussion not action item. 2) add trail update from Forrest. 3) Future Business – Bart wants special non-motorized meeting in Sept/October for to discuss reroute a segment of Red Apple Trail, Phase 2 of Parent Trap reconstruction and make a decision on Bob's Trail. Motion by Chris to change agenda, Second by Elaine. All in favor.

Topics

- Union County Public Works Director Update – Josh Ford, Informational

Doug retired July 30th, 2026. The Commissioners are currently deciding what they want to do with the position since it covers public works and the airport. Rex Harden, assistant director is filling in for the position for now.

- Current Fire Restrictions – Josh Ford, Informational

MERA entered "extreme" fire conditions mid-July. Check Meet MERA website or a kiosk for those restrictions and updates. Currently there are no plans to close MERA due to fire danger.

We have a fire prevention agreement with ODF and are working with them closely to monitor conditions and resources. We were in Level 5 and can ride motorized until noon. Dropped to level 4 today. Mark is looking at doing another ATV youth endorsement class but need to wait until fire level drops to cut the grass.

- **Closing Parent Trap Trail, Honor Roll Trail and Teething Trail to Equestrian Use – Bart**

Barlow, Action Item (Bart unable to attend)

Ron for Parent Trap: Have 3 easy trails for kids to train on. This summer completed Phase 1 for the rideability and safety of Parent Trap with an escape trail, which allowed kids skip going to the bottom and needing to push their bikes back uphill. Need rebuilding of entrance of Red Apple to keep it separate from Parent Trap. Safety concerns about kids meeting horses on trail. Want 3 trails, Parent Trap, Honor Roll and Teething Trails to be off use for horses since there are kids riding. Want more signs at intersections. Also have issues with horses creating large holes in trail, which can be dangerous to kids with small bike wheels. Signs would state who is allowed on trails. Also some directional signs. How would it be signed? Josh. Will have stickers on carsonite posts that will say open or closed to horses. Need to show horses the trails that are open. Most horses don't want to be on trail anyways, usually end up by accident. Parent Trap has a bunch of wood features which horses don't like. **Motion by Tyler to close Parent Trap, Honor Roll and Teething Trails to Equestrian use and have more signs. Second by Chris. All in Favor.**

- **Abandonment and Reclamation of Bob's Trail – Bart Barlow, Discussion**

Forrest: Bob's trail cuts through the middle of a bunch of other trails. Several letters written to keep the trail. The direct route gets you into the trail system quickly. People still use it and provides good access to other trails. Bob maintains the trail. Need more signs. There used to be good signs but they are gone now. It is a good shortcut to avoid going to Owesley Trailhead. Several people wrote letters to keep the trail open. There is only a very short section that leads to Bob's house. Most people access it from Red Apple Trail. Can do a couple small reroutes to reduce trail crossings. There is a new jump at an intersection. Committee is generally in favor of keeping the trail with minor trail reroutes and more signs. Might need to officially designate legacy trails. Katrina wants to keep the trail open with minor changes and potentially discuss further in the future. Discussion about motion to keep open, table it or visit it again at next meeting. No action item. Will keep trail open for now and will put on agenda for Future Business.

- **Support for a Feasibility Study to Evaluate Expansion of Union County Fair Grounds –**

Bart Barlow, Action Item

Want to start looking at making the fairgrounds more of a staging area for motorized and non-motorized. Would be beneficial to motorized users who do not want to drive up Fox Hill Road. But rather park at Fairgrounds and ride ATV up the county road, which is open with county ordinance. Need to approach fairgrounds. Who is doing the feasibility study? There is some

confusion about who is doing the feasibility study. Has the fairgrounds been approached? What is the role of our advisory committee? Need more information. Tabled.

Trail Project Updates – Forest Warren, Informational Fixed several sections of trails. Closed a few sections of trails and other people reopened it. Fixed a long straight trail on Sasquatch with some more corners. Someone re-opened the old trail. Need better signs on closed trails. Parent Trap, fixed a bunch of drainages. Moved part of Red Apple from Parent trap and made it an easier way up. About 40 hours on excavator. Fixed some switchbacks by Igo Lane. Part of the proposal was to open new sections and also close the old sections. Need to add signs describing why sections are being closed. Need to think about keeping some challenges when you are making trails easier for kids. Sometimes it is nice to have easy and hard options on trails. Need to consider amount of trails that need to be maintained. During new trail proposals, the plan was to close the old section. Need to have a motion at next meeting to keep the old section since it was voted to close. Needs to be on agenda so the public can weigh in on it.

Old Business:

- **Blue Downhill Trail (Side Show) Proposal – Lea Over, Action Item**

Have talked to the trail contractors and have agreed to help as consultants and help with design. Grande Ronde Gravity volunteers will build the trail. Route is flagged. Want to work with Shire Built Trail Consultants for the design of the trail and dirt jumps. Proposing Phase one, which will be the top half of the trail and terminates at Link between Depends and Upper Dirt. Josh wants to clarify it is directional, downhill only, blue difficulty, mt bike trail. Will reroute sections of Depends by shortening a corner. Work on widening some sections of Depends. What is trail bed? Full, partial bench or just rake? Mostly raking with less bench cuts. Will be “flowy” trail. What is style of trail? There are opportunities for features. Be similar to Upper Doing Time. It will have some technical sections. Slightly soften version of Dirt Circus. Will be 24 inches wide. Not intending to have whole trail as full bench cut. There are some pin flagging, but will dial in more with contractor. County needs an MOU with volunteers since they are hiring contractors. **Motion by Tyler for conceptional approval of Side Show, Second by Heather all in favor to move forward.** Still need to pin flag. Committee has 1 week to look at. If no comments can start working on. Potential to have a public walk thru. If committee members have issues, then it would need to come back to the committee.

- **Parking Program Update – Josh Ford, Informational**

Fiscal year ended at end of June.

Revenues for 25/26 were \$26,292.00

Expenses for 25/26 were \$6,517.00:

Net profit is \$19,775.

In the 26/27 budget that money is being spent according - \$6000 for fire patrol (ODF), \$7000 non-grant maintenance, \$7000 parking program overhead, \$2,200 for bathrooms for a total expense of \$22,200. Remainder will go to contingency for future use or unforeseen expenses. Budget year is July 1 to June 30.

- **Owsley Canyon Trailhead Sub-Committee – Tyler Brooks, Informational**

Some topics of need are increase parking, signage, wood fencing, picnic tables, new kiosk. Will meet again before the December meeting. First need a list of potential improvements. Then need to prioritize list. Thinking about fund raising options. Talked about covered area with tables. Options for wooden fence (crossbuck is an option) to look nicer than barbed wire. BMST donated a bike station to hang bike and have some tools for bike maintenance.

Future Business:

- **Proposed Special MERA Advisory Meeting by Bart Barlow to discuss** Concern is there is a short window with good soil moisture conditions to build trails. Next meeting is in December. Consider September meeting to get work this fall.
 - o **Rerouting a segment of Red Apple** – Need to remove, needs more planning.
 - o **Phase 2 of Parent Trap Trail Reconstruction**
 - o **Bob's Trail Abandonment and reroute** – later meeting if needed
 - o **Short Meeting for September 22 with Zoom option to review Parent Trap**

Next Regular meeting- Tuesday, December 8, 2026

Meeting Schedule; February May, August, December