

# MOAB SUN NEWS

## "Luxury eco-retreat" proposed near 191 and 313 junction

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On Feb. 1 the Grand County Commission hosted a public hearing on a proposed "glampground" to be located near the junction of Highway 191 and State Route 313. The project is called Entrada Moab, and would require the commission to approve the application of the Overnight Accommodations Overlay to the 544-acre property. The property is currently zoned Range and Grazing and is surrounded by Bureau of Land Management property primarily used for recreation. The applicant, Entrada Camps and Conservation, is under contract to buy the property from Intrepid Potash mining company if the overlay is approved.

The staff summary of the project describes it as a "luxury eco-retreat centered on environmentally responsible tourism." It would include 16 tent sites and an activity center, spa, swimming pools, a panoramic deck, and trails. The applicant would be required to provide a public water source at a site plan review; wastewater would be treated onsite using an Orenco brand system. Stays would start at \$2,000 a night, the applicant said in a letter to the commission.

The letter, signed by ECC Managing Director Matt Kareus, also states: "I founded Entrada Camps and Conservation to bring a new model of low impact, high value sustainable tourism to the American West, beginning in Grand County, because I have seen firsthand how thoughtful, well-managed tourism can provide substantive economic benefits to local communities and people and can be a powerful force for the conservation and protection of the natural world."

The developers say they will place most of the property into a conservation easement to preserve open space in the Scenic Resource Protection District along the north Highway 191 corridor. Developed areas would be mostly hidden from view from the highway.

"Our intention is to preserve as much land as possible from development—from current development, from future development," Kareus said at the hearing.

Grand County resident John Weisheit, who is the Colorado Riverkeeper for the nonprofit Living Rivers, called in to the meeting and asked the applicants if they had spoken with staff from the National Park Service about how the development could affect the groundwater necessary for the ecosystem of the Arches National Park.

“We have been working with a hydrologist that's been involved in drilling a lot of the wells in the area, recently and in years past, and he assures us that we won't run into conflict with the Arches protection zone,” Kareus said, adding that they will address the matter with the park service at some point. Weisheit urged Kareus to contact the BLM to ask about areas of critical concern that could be affected, and also suggested that he drill a monitoring well to ensure that water withdrawals aren't affecting other water users.

“The entire Colorado River Basin is in a shortage situation right now where we don't have any more water to spare, quite frankly,” Weisheit said. “So we have to think about these things. We have to think about long term resiliency and sustainability.”

Kareus said the company is working with a hydrologist to develop a water management plan while prioritizing sustainability.

Neighboring landowner Brian Hayes called into the meeting to support the development, saying he prefers the proposal to other kinds of development that could otherwise happen on the property.

“Rather than having, in the future, potentially numerous second homes or other developments, we think this is a good opportunity to protect the land as open space, to protect the viewshed,” Hayes said.

Commissioner Kevin Walker noted that any kind of overnight accommodations development is a sensitive issue, and asked for more information on how the commission could be assured that the developer would follow through on promises about open space and conservation. Grand County Associate Planner Elissa Martin noted that the development agreement would legally confine the applicant to the 16 units requested. Because of the way ordinances are written, the conservation easement and future employee housing can't be included in the development agreement; Kareus said that if there was a way to legally bind him to those conditions, he was willing to do so.

The Grand County Planning Commission recommended that the commission approve the request with the condition that six deed-restricted employee housing units be included in the master plan—however, the language of the OAO does not allow for employee housing requirements to be included in the development agreement.

County Attorney Christina Sloan recommended that the commission deny the application because the county is undertaking a study of RV and campground zones. She recommends that the county deny all RV/Campground OAO rezone requests until amendments to that zone in the land use code can be made and a carrying capacity study can be done.

The public hearing on the proposal is open until Feb. 9; comments can be emailed to the commission at [commission@grandcountyutah.net](mailto:commission@grandcountyutah.net). The commission will vote on the application at a future meeting.

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