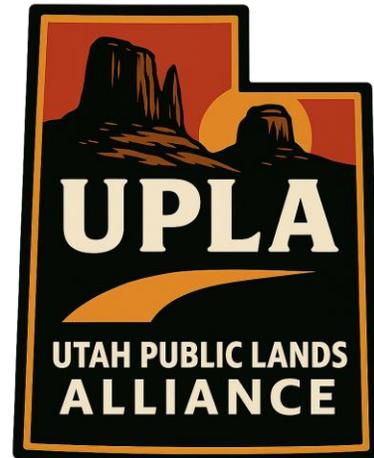


## From Local Trails to Capitol Hill

### How Utah Public Lands Alliance Became a Statewide Force for Motorized Access

Utah's public lands are among the most diverse and iconic in the nation. From red rock deserts to alpine forests, these landscapes support recreation, tourism, emergency access, and family traditions. For generations, responsible motorized users have explored these lands—yet access is never guaranteed, and has steadily declined. It must be defended through knowledge, consistency, and credibility.

The Utah Public Lands Alliance (UPLA) was formed to meet that challenge. What began as a focused effort to protect Sand Mountain from developer plans has evolved into a statewide organization actively engaged in land-use policy, technical review, public education, and litigation support.



This work was made possible by a substantial startup donation from Menlo Smith, who was famous as the real life Willy Wonka and founder of the Sunmark Companies. Menlo has been a lifelong off-roading enthusiast so he understood the importance of access from personal experience. Equally important, his background as a successful entrepreneur brought a business-minded approach to advocacy. He recognized that effective engagement requires preparation, funding stability, and disciplined execution—not reactionary responses, and at 99 years old now, his support of UPLA has been unwavering.

### Leadership and Stability in the Early Years

UPLA's formative years were defined by stability and persistence. From 2014 through 2022, Gil Meacham served as President, providing consistent leadership during a period of significant travel management planning in Washington County. His steady guidance helped establish UPLA's culture of professionalism and long-term engagement.

During this period, UPLA focused heavily on 4x4 access issues—particularly where proposed route closures threatened long-established roads used by families, visitors, and emergency responders. The organization built credibility by engaging early in planning processes and submitting substantive, well-documented comments, and engaged in many projects supporting the expansion of Sand Mountain into a world class off highway recreation destination. One Project brought together 150 4x4 and UTV users together working on 4 different projects on Sand Mountain, getting widespread media coverage including feature stories on Fox 13, AYL, and St George News.



## A Broader Vision for Motorized Recreation



In 2022, Loren Campbell became President of UPLA and led a strategic expansion of the organization’s mission. While maintaining its roots in 4x4 access, UPLA broadened its focus to include all motorized off-highway travel—ATVs, UTVs, motorcycles, and snowmobiles—reflecting the diversity of Utah’s recreation community.

The Board of Directors was intentionally expanded to include representatives from different motorized sports and from regions across Utah. To ensure full participation statewide, UPLA adopted Zoom-based meetings enhanced with a Meeting Owl camera system, allowing board members to engage meaningfully regardless of geography.

## Raising the Bar on Technical Advocacy

A major inflection point came in 2023 when UPLA received an Access Protection grant from the Utah Department of Outdoor Recreation OHV Program to fund professional natural resource consulting. This allowed the organization to retain Rose Winn, whose expertise significantly elevated the quality and effectiveness of UPLA’s advocacy.

Working closely with Loren Campbell, Winn has helped draft more than 25 detailed comment letters addressing BLM Travel Management Plans, Resource Management Plans, Congressional Reviews, and proposed rules from the BLM and U.S. Forest Service. These submissions address data gaps, challenge unsupported assumptions, and propose legally sound alternatives.



In multiple cases, UPLA’s comments have influenced final decisions in ways more favorable to responsible motorized access. Just as importantly, they establish a strong administrative record that forms the basis for litigation when agencies fail to adequately consider or respond to public input.

## Partnership in Litigation: Supporting BlueRibbon Coalition

UPLA recognizes that meaningful access protection often requires litigation. The organization has worked closely with the BlueRibbon Coalition (BRC), whose efforts to protect OHV access are critical nationwide.



Currently, BRC is engaged in seven Utah-focused litigation efforts. UPLA’s financial support has been instrumental in enabling BRC to hire in-house legal counsel, strengthening its ability to pursue complex, long-term cases.

Over the past three years, UPLA has donated \$142,500 to support BRC’s legal work and is currently fundraising to make an additional \$50,000

contribution—ensuring that Utah riders have a strong voice in court when agencies overstep or ignore the law.

## Reaching the Community Directly

By 2025, UPLA expanded its outreach capacity by securing an OHV recreation grant from the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation to support Executive Director Mike LaMar. Mike will be traveling throughout Utah meeting with clubs, organizations, land managers and attending events to provide assistance and education. If you would like to schedule Mike to attend your event, please email him at [Mike@UtahPLA.com](mailto:Mike@UtahPLA.com)



Today, the organization distributes a free monthly newsletter packed with timely information on travel plans, rulemakings, litigation, and opportunities for public involvement.

UPLA also maintains an active presence on social media, helping riders stay informed and engaged between planning cycles and public meetings. You can find our social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and X at [www.linktr.ee/utahpla](http://www.linktr.ee/utahpla)

## Looking Ahead—and How You Can Help

From its beginnings in Washington County to statewide engagement and national advocacy, the Utah Public Lands Alliance demonstrates what is possible when passion for access is matched with expertise and persistence.

Protecting responsible motorized access requires sustained effort—and sustained support. If you value Utah's public lands and the freedom to explore them responsibly, consider supporting UPLA's work. Please give as generously as you can to help protect your access to motorized off highway recreation, [www.UtahPLA.com/help/](http://www.UtahPLA.com/help/)



[www.UtahPLA.com/help](http://www.UtahPLA.com/help)

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