

Press Release

“Restoring Connections: Forest Road 085 in American Fork Canyon Secures Full Funding”

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 21, 2024

After more than three years of closure, Forest Road 085 (FR 085) in American Fork Canyon—a vital corridor for recreation, safety, and economic connection—is set for restoration. The \$870,000 project, fully funded through collaborative efforts by state and local leaders, advocacy groups, and community members, is scheduled to begin in early 2025.

The restoration of FR 085 is a testament to what can be achieved when citizens and government unite for a common purpose, ensuring access to cherished public lands and safeguarding essential infrastructure.



Historical Background

Forest Road 085, known as *The Narrows*, has long been a critical link between Utah and Wasatch Counties, providing access to recreational destinations like Mineral Basin, Mary Ellen Gulch, and Forest Lake. The road also serves as a crucial route for search and rescue operations, wildfire response, and law enforcement.

In 2021, severe erosion left FR 085 impassable, narrowing sections of the road to a single motorcycle track with steep cliffs on both sides. Its closure disrupted access to cherished destinations and hampered search and rescue and wildfire response operations. Initially overlooked as a Forest Service priority, the road's importance was championed by citizens and local officials who refused to let it be forgotten.

Field Trip and Leadership Efforts

Organized by Mark Allen, the trip brought together local elected officials to observe the disrepair not only of FR 085, but also fencing needing repairs and washed-out roads in Mineral Basin. Kurt Williams from Expedition Utah, adoptee of Miller Hill, served as the trail guide and provided an informative historical overview of the canyon. His insights were instrumental in helping elected officials understand the importance of taking a leadership role in protecting Class D roads in the county that traverse federal forest lands.

Following this field trip, Utah County officials entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (Schedule A) with the Forest Service. This agreement empowered the county to prioritize and execute road repairs. With the MOU in place, Brett Stewart and others worked tirelessly behind the scenes to secure funding.

Mark Allen reflected:

"This collaboration between citizens and local leaders has been critical in making this project a reality. We all look forward to seeing the canyon restored for safe passage. Additionally, this funding will aid land lease holders of the American Fork Canyon Alliance in regaining access from the Utah County side to Miller Hill, further enhancing collective efforts to protect and enjoy this remarkable canyon."

Securing the Funding

The restoration of FR 085 was funded in two stages:

- October 2024: \$350,000 was allocated by the Utah OHV Fund.
- November 19, 2024: The Outdoor Adventure Commission approved an additional \$518,000, completing the funding package.

The Schedule A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) played a pivotal role in enabling Utah County to repair Class D roads on Forest Service land, addressing issues not prioritized or funded by federal resources.

Advocates and Contributions

This effort would not have been possible without the dedication of key individuals, including:

- **Brett Stewart**, President of Utah OHV Advocates, whose leadership in securing funding and connecting stakeholders was vital. This project would not have come to fruition without Brett's leadership role and project advocacy. Visit [Utah OHV Advocates](https://utahohvadvocates.org/) <https://utahohvadvocates.org/> for more information.
- **Chase Pili** and **Jason Curry** from the Division of Outdoor Recreation (DNR), who championed the project and prioritized funding within months. Learn more at the Utah Division of Natural Resources. <https://recreation.utah.gov/utahs-outdoor-adventure-commission>
- **Kurt Williams**, Trailmaster and historian, who guided the field trip and provided elected officials with a deeper understanding of the canyon's significance. Visit [Expedition Utah](https://expeditionutah.com/) <https://expeditionutah.com/> to explore their preservation efforts.
- **David Whittekiend**, Forest Supervisor of the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest, who facilitated alignment between federal and local priorities. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/uwcnf>
- **Mark Allen**, Executive Director of the American Fork Canyon Alliance and Founder of Protect and Preserve American Fork Canyon. Learn more about their work at [AFCA's website](http://www.americanforkcanyonalliance.org/) www.americanforkcanyonalliance.org/ and www.americanforkcanyon.com
- **Brian Twyman** and the volunteers at BOAR (Backcountry Offroad Adventure Rally), who have dedicated countless hours to trail repairs and fencing projects in American Fork Canyon. Visit [BOAR](https://boaroffroad.com/) to join their efforts <https://boaroffroad.com/>.
- **Richard Nielson**, Utah County Public Works Director and Utah County Assistant Public Works Director **Glen Tanner** for their concerted efforts to submit the grant application for OHV funding support.

Mayor Brad Frost of American Fork City praised the effort:

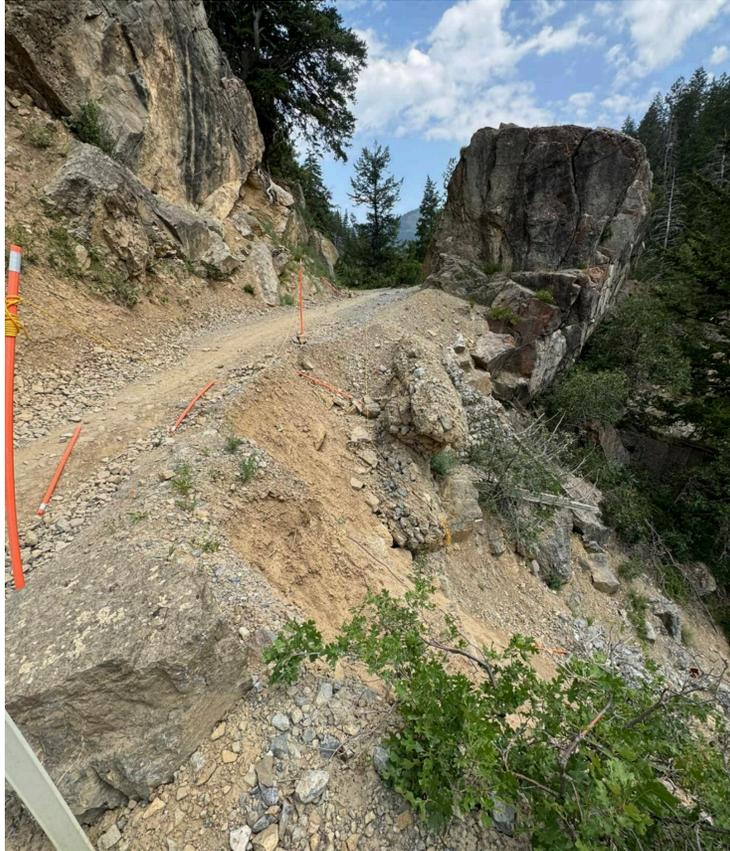
"As Mayor of American Fork, I'm grateful to learn that funding has been secured for repairing the road to Mineral Basin. Our city's namesake canyon plays an important role in the watershed. We passed an ordinance years ago giving us extra-territorial jurisdiction to help ensure canyon projects do not negatively affect the watershed. We look forward to collaboration with Utah County as the road repair projects get underway and express gratitude to those behind the scenes who secured the funding for this important project."

Utah County Sheriff Mike Smith added:

"I am deeply grateful for the unwavering commitment of our community to preserving and maintaining American Fork Canyon. The dedication of motorized

groups, especially those who have adopted and cared for roads and trails such as Miller Hill, Mary Ellen Gulch, Forest Lake, and notably FR 085 through the efforts of the Backcountry Offroad Adventure Rally (B.O.A.R.), is truly commendable. Their hard work ensures that these vital access points remain safe and navigable, which is crucial for our Search and Rescue teams, fire protection services, and the general public. The collaboration between committee members and organizations to prioritize road reconstruction and secure funding for maintenance reflects a shared commitment to public safety and the preservation of our natural resources. Thank you for your continued support and dedication to keeping our canyons accessible and safe for all."

For more information on the Utah County Sheriff's Office and their initiatives, please visit their official website. <https://sheriff.utahcounty.gov/>



Looking Ahead

The restoration of FR 085 will reopen access to cherished destinations, improve safety for canyon visitors, and strengthen connections between Utah and Wasatch Counties. Construction is set to begin in early 2025, with Utah County Public Works leading the effort.

Commissioner Brandon Gordon noted:

"This project is a shining example of how citizens and government can work together to solve real problems. It's not just about fixing a road—it's about preserving access, enhancing safety, and ensuring our natural resources remain a treasure for all to enjoy."

As the project begins, it stands as a model for what can be accomplished when communities and leaders unite for a shared purpose.

About Utah County Public Works Department

The Utah County Public Works Department is dedicated to maintaining and improving the county's infrastructure, ensuring the safety, accessibility, and quality of life for its residents. Led by **Public Works Director Richard Nielson** and **Assistant Director Glen Tanner**, the department oversees critical functions such as road maintenance, flood control, and public utilities.

With a commitment to sustainability and collaboration, the department works closely with local, state, and federal agencies to manage public resources effectively. Projects like the restoration of Forest Road 085 exemplify their dedication to addressing community needs and preserving access to Utah's natural and recreational areas. For more information, visit Utah County Public Works. <https://www.utahcounty.gov/Dept/PubWrks/Index.asp>.

About B.O.A.R. and Brian Twyman

The **Backcountry Offroad Adventure Rally (B.O.A.R.)** is the official trail adoptee of **Forest Road 085 (FR 085)** in American Fork Canyon. Since its inception in 2013, B.O.A.R. has been committed to fostering responsible recreation, training outdoor enthusiasts in 4x4 and backcountry skills, and maintaining Utah's public trails.

Under the leadership of **Brian Twyman**, B.O.A.R. members volunteer countless hours to repair and maintain trails, including fencing projects and erosion control on FR 085. The group's dedication to stewardship and sustainability has made it a vital partner of the Utah 4-Wheel Drive Association (www.u4wda.org) and the Forest Service.

Mark Allen expressed gratitude for the funding announcement that will restore FR 085, noting: *"This funding is a game-changer for B.O.A.R and other volunteer teams. It means they can continue their work in the canyon without the long detours caused by the road closure. Forest Road 085 is more than just a trail; it's a vital connection for recreation and conservation, and I'm thrilled to see this investment in its future."*



Each fall, B.O.A.R. hosts its signature **Backcountry Offroad Adventure Rally**, a multi-day event that brings together offroad enthusiasts and promotes sustainable recreation. Many B.O.A.R. members are also trained Trail Hosts for the Utah Division of Natural Resources, furthering their commitment to Utah's outdoor heritage.

Brian Twyman book ends this press release with this thought: *"As the adopting group of FR085, Backcountry Offroad Adventure Rally(BOAR) is ecstatic to see this project being funded, and want to give a special thanks to our states OHV grant program which has been great to work with over the years and makes projects like this possible along with those who frontlined the efforts to secure funding and drive progress on the trails repair. In addition to restoring recreation access to these areas, we look forward to once again being able to easily, and promptly, respond to service needs along our adopted trail that have been hampered these past few years."*

To learn more about B.O.A.R. or volunteer with their trail projects, visit [B.O.A.R.](https://boaroffroad.com/).
<https://boaroffroad.com/>



Special thanks to the following and the public in general:

Utah County Commissioner-Brandon Gordon, Utah County Public Works Director - Richard Nelson, Associate Public Works Director -Glenn Tanner, Utah County Sheriff - Mike Smith, Utah County Surveyor Anthony Canto Travis Anderson-Chief Deputy County Surveyor and all of the individuals on the funding committees who work diligently behind the scenes to obtain funding and to improve OHV trails and recreational access across Utah.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to all members of the public who take pride in preserving the beauty of our canyon. By practicing 'Pack it in, Pack it out' and leaving the canyon better than you found it, you play a vital role in protecting this cherished natural treasure for future generations.

Learn More

For additional details, including American Fork Canyon related FOIA requests and to review the grant application, photos and more can be found at the project's [Google Drive Folder](https://tinyurl.com/AFCanyonFR085). <https://tinyurl.com/AFCanyonFR085>