PROPOSAL

FREMONT ISLAND
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PLAN

by

Marisa Weinberg
May 16, 2022

Committee Members:
Chris Luecke, Chair
Erin Rivers
Melanie Conrad

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah
2022
PROBLEM STATEMENT

Fremont Island is the third-largest island on Great Salt Lake. Throughout its history, the island has been privately owned by various groups and individuals with plans for development. The last private owner sought a conservation buyer upon realizing the infeasibility of human settlement on Great Salt Lake. The Palladium Foundation, on behalf of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), purchased and donated Fremont Island to FFSL in 2020. While the island is now managed as public State Land, The Nature Conservancy holds a conservation easement designed to prevent future development and damage.

As the management authority of Fremont Island, the State of Utah, Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands (FFSL, Division) is tasked with developing a property management plan (PMP) under Public Trust values. The Public Trust Doctrine guides proposed navigation, recreation, conservation, and preservation uses on State Lands. Further, FFSL is required to meet the present and future needs of the people of Utah under comprehensive land management programs using multiple-use and sustained yield principles (Utah Code § 65A-2-1). FFSL must balance compatible use, address stakeholder concerns, and align with conservation easement values within the scope of a property management plan.

The Fremont Island Property Management Plan will define State Land management goals and objectives under the conservation easement. The plan will assess the current and known conditions of the ecological, cultural, historical, geological, and recreational resources on the island while outlining the need for future assessment and study. Resource concerns and values collected from Federal, State, Tribal, and non-profit partners will be integrated into the scope of the Property Management Plan. In addition, the plan will describe existing uses, potential use conflict, and appropriate future uses as consistent with established management objectives, Public Trust values, and multiple-use and sustained yield principles.

AUDIENCE

The Property Management Plan for Fremont Island is of direct benefit to Division staff in guiding management of island resources for conservation and preservation. Involved parties include the Division Director, Division Deputy Director, Division Planner, Sovereign Lands Program Administrator, Great Salt Lake Coordinator, Invasive Species Coordinator, and Sovereign Lands Analysts. The plan additionally benefits the various Federal, State, Tribal, and non-profit stakeholders on Great Salt Lake with conservation-oriented agendas. The Fremont Island Property Management Plan will guide present and future “conservation success[es]” on Great Salt Lake (Dunphey, 2021).
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Shoshone and Goshute Tribes were first to access and utilize resources on Fremont Island, prior to John C. Fremont’s exploration in 1843. At the time, sheep grazing and metal mining were primary uses (Bowen, 2020). The Union Pacific Railroad Company defaulted ownership of the island until it was sold to the Wenner Family in 1886. Uriah and Kate Wenner are the only known residents of Fremont Island. In 1960, the Richards Family purchased the island with intent to develop the land for recreation, but instead signed a lease with Barrow Land and Livestock for private hunting operations (Bowen, 2020). The land was then sold to G&G Island LLC, commonly known as the Diesel Brothers, in 2018. Inhospitable conditions on Great Salt Lake and difficulty establishing infrastructure led to the island’s ultimate fate as conserved land. Fremont Island became publicly accessible for the first time after TNC’s donation to FFSL in 2020. The island has been previously kept as open space, and will remain as such under terms of the conservation easement.

Fremont Island is located in the east-central portion of Great Salt Lake, measuring approximately six miles long and two miles wide (Bowen, 2020). Access to the island is limited to boats, small planes, bikes, and by foot. There are no established roads to the island and motorized use is prohibited on Sovereign Lands, which include the beds of navigable waters within the State of Utah managed under the Public Trust (Utah Admin. Rule R652-70-1900). As the exposed bed of Great Salt Lake between the Antelope Island causeway and Fremont Island falls under FFSL’s jurisdiction over motorized vehicles, access to Fremont Island is significantly limited. Additionally, the lack of recreational infrastructure disincentivizes many types of human use.

The Property Management Plan fulfills the essential function of defining conservation practices on Fremont Island. Present and future land managers with FFSL will turn to the plan as a guide for resource use and protection, as well as to determine allowable activities. FFSL and associated stakeholders will gain a better understanding of Fremont Island and its role in the overarching Great Salt Lake ecosystem.

PROJECT GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The overall goal in writing and implementing the Fremont Island Management Plan is to provide a framework for resource management. Internally, the plan will directly benefit FFSL’s mandated adherence to the Public Trust. Externally, the plan will enlighten FFSL’s present and future conservation measures to Great Salt Lake stakeholders, as well as the general public. The Fremont Island Management Plan will be written by completing the following objectives:
- Review the Public Trust Doctrine, TNC’s conservation easement, and Utah Code and Administrative Rule applicable to Fremont Island management and associated planning requirements
- Identify and define FFSL’s specific management goals for Fremont Island as they relate to aforementioned laws and documents
- Review management approaches from previous Comprehensive Management Plans (CMPs) for Great Salt Lake and other sovereign land bodies in Utah; assess whether previous management approaches are applicable to Fremont Island
- Collect and analyze existing ecological, cultural, historical, paleontological, geological, and recreational data concerning Fremont Island resources
- Review *Shoshone Plants of Antelope Island* by Rios Pacheco, of the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone; gather additional Tribal input on Fremont Island cultural resources
- Review historical documents from Bob Richards, former owner of Fremont Island
- Review external literature to enhance descriptions of Fremont Island resources in the management plan
- Collect and analyze visitation data from remote trail cameras and the Antelope Island Gatehouse
- Identify past and present resource uses, as well as potential conflicts, and identify appropriate future uses consistent with management goals, Public Trust values, and multiple-use and sustained yield principles
- Discuss Fremont Island management needs and concerns with pertinent FFSL and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff members
- Identify partnership opportunities and engage with Federal, State, Tribal, and non-profit partners through meetings, tours, and collaboration
  
  *Partners include the Department of Natural Resources, Utah State Historic Preservation Office, Utah Division of Recreation, Division of Wildlife Resources, Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation, Friends of Great Salt Lake, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone, The Nature Conservancy, Utah Department of Transportation Division of Aeronautics, Utah Backcountry Pilots Association, The Audubon Society, Hooper City, Weber County, Davis County Public Works, University of Utah, and Davis, Weber, and Box Elder County Weed Management*

- Synthesize and analyze all information, while drawing upon the Masters of Natural Resources Core Disciplines (ecological foundations, human dimensions, quantitative methods, policy and administration, and spatial information management), to create a robust framework for natural resource management on Fremont Island
METHODS

The Fremont Island Management Plan will be constructed according to the objectives specified above. The following reports will be analyzed and synthesized within the scope of the plan:

- Fremont Island Baseline Report (Bowen Collins & Associates)
- *A Class II Cultural Resource Inventory of Select Sections of Fremont Island* (Cannon Heritage Consultants)
- Fremont Island Conservation Easement (The Nature Conservancy)
- *Phase I Environmental Site Assessment for the Great Salt Lake (Fremont Island)* Property (The Nature Conservancy)

Additionally, multiple stakeholder scoping meetings were held in 2021 and 2022 among Federal, State, Tribal, and non-profit partners. Resource concerns, input, and expertise gathered in these meetings will be considered when constructing management plan objectives.

External literature will provide factual information to guide management objectives in the Fremont Island Management Plan. Literature sources include, but are not limited to, the following book chapters, articles, and excerpts:

- *New Mammal Record for Fremont Island* (Kenneth Cramer)
- “Fremont and Carson Leave a Mark on a Great Salt Lake Island” (Harold Schindler)
- *Great Salt Lake: A Scientific, Historical, and Economic Overview* (Wallace Gwynn)

Miscellaneous data sources include *Shoshone Plants of Antelope Island* (Rios Pacheco) and archival newspaper articles, photos, and documents from Bob Richards. In addition, the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands has been collecting visitation data from remote cameras on the island. Correspondence with Antelope Island State Park, who manages access to the causeway, will inform island visitation as well.

Data collection, analysis, and rigorous discussions of management needs internally will allow for a completion of project objectives in a robust Fremont Island Property Management Plan. Data synthesized from aforementioned sources will be utilized when constructing management protocols for the island.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The overarching result is a complete, robust, and polished Fremont Island Property Management Plan to deliver to graduate committee members, the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands, and the general public. The report will include the following elements:
A. Table of Contents
   a. Including a list of maps, tables, figures, and appendices
   b. Glossary of terms and acronyms
B. Introduction & Background
   a. Public Trust Doctrine, Utah Code and Administrative Rule, TNC Conservation Easement
   b. Purpose of the Property Management Plan
C. Fremont Island Description
   a. Historic and current land uses
   b. Access to the island
   c. Resource descriptions
   d. Adjacent land ownership
   e. Miscellaneous geologic and geographic descriptions
D. Management Goals & Objectives
   a. Recreation management
   b. Cultural resource management
   c. Ecological resource management
   d. Federal, State, Tribal and non-profit partnerships
E. Appendix
   a. Citations
   b. Correspondence

The five core areas of the Masters of Natural Resources program will be addressed and incorporated into the Fremont Island Property Management Plan.

1. Ecological Foundations
   The scope of the Property Management Plan includes detailed descriptions of plant, wildlife, geological, and water resources on Fremont Island. A holistic understanding of the island’s ecosystem will inform management objectives that pertain to ecological conservation. Management will account for ecological resources containing cultural value as well.

2. Human Dimensions
   The human dimension of Fremont Island management is unique, considering limited access to the island and the island’s lack of trails and structures (beyond the remnants of previous island owners). Additionally, management objectives must adhere to TNC’s conservation easement, which prohibits any development or new structures on the island. The Property Management Plan will consider potential human uses under multiple-use
and sustained yield principles to ensure overall protection of the Fremont Island ecosystem.

3. **Policy and Administration**  
The Fremont Island Property Management Plan will adhere to certain principles within the Public Trust Doctrine, Utah Code and Administrative rule, and TNC’s conservation easement. Each legal document represents a different level of policy applicable to managing the island. Terms of each document will be applied to management objectives. For example, the Public Trust Doctrine mandates a balance among competing uses to the benefit of the public. The management plan will integrate this balance by outlining allowable resource uses. Policy and administration intrinsically involve the ecological foundations and human dimensions core areas as well.

4. **Quantitative Methods**  
Fremont Island visitation has been roughly tracked by remote trail cameras and personnel at the Antelope Island Gatehouse, who are responsible for charging the State Park fee to any passing car. Visitation estimates are relatively easy to track quantitatively due to the island being inherently difficult to access. Data from the remote trail cameras and Antelope Island Gatehouse staff will be assessed in crafting management objectives that guide human use of the island.

5. **Spatial Information Management**  
While there are many pre-existing maps of Fremont Island, data is outdated and scattered. Spatial data pertinent to the Property Management Plan will be reworked into new maps utilizing ArcGIS Pro software. Topographical and ecological features will be mapped, as well as locations of publicly-known cultural resources (the locations of many cultural resources on the island will remain confidential.) In addition, maps will encompass access from the Antelope Island Causeway and other important island landmarks.
REFERENCES


