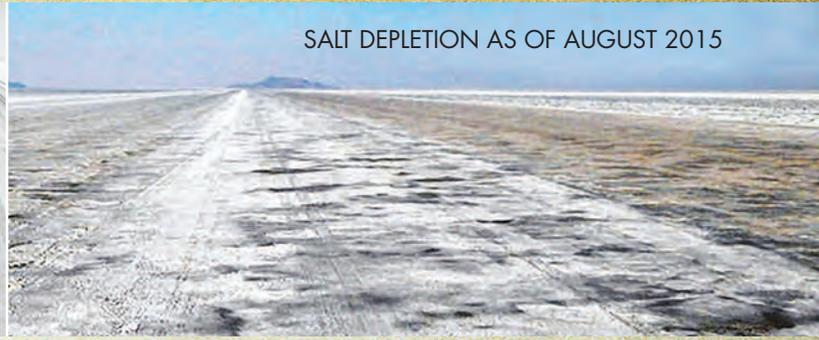


SAVING THE *Bonneville* SALT FLATS





SALT DEPLETION AS OF AUGUST 2015

SEMA'S HERITAGE

SEMA's roots are firmly planted at Bonneville. Member products and sponsored race teams have helped set scores of world records on the racetrack that nature created.

When it was formed in 1963, the "Speed Equipment Manufacturers Association" represented companies producing performance equipment for many land speed trailblazers. In subsequent years, the industry blossomed and the renamed "Specialty Equipment Market Association" now embraces the entire distribution chain, including manufacturers, distributors, retailers and marketers.

Speed equipment will always represent the heritage of SEMA. In fact, Bonneville played a crucial role in SEMA's formation. Bonneville, along with El Mirage, Muroc and other southern California dry lakes, were primary venues for

industry pioneers to try out new products in the 1930s and 40s. These pioneers would adjust their equipment when racing and then go back to the garage to create the next generation of speed equipment. Many of these inventors then started companies and helped create race sanctioning organizations.

Founding SEMA members like Ansen, B&M, Crager, Edelbrock, Eelco Manufacturing, Grant Industries, Halibrand, Hedman, ISKY Racing Cams, JE Pistons, Milodon, Mooneyes, Schiefer Manufacturing, Trans-Dapt, Weber Speed Equipment and Weiland have been joined by scores of other companies that produce high performance parts. Whether it is a 1932 hot rod, a 1960s muscle car, a streamliner or anything in-between, Bonneville is the proving ground for SEMA member companies and their customers.



*Vintage photos courtesy Hot Rod Magazine
Front/back cover photos courtesy LandSpeed Productions*

SAVING THE BONNEVILLE SALT FLATS

The Bonneville Salt Flats is a unique land formation in northwestern Utah that beckons visitors from around the world. For racers, its surface is unequaled. The hard salt crust is perfect for both speed and safety. But there is a problem. The once 13-mile race track is now less than eight miles due to salt erosion.

For more than 50 years, the land speed racing community has sounded the alarm that Bonneville is being destroyed by government mismanagement and neglect. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been the land's custodian since 1946, and the agency's traditional response to the racers' concerns has been to call for geologic studies. At least six studies have been completed over the decades and a seventh is underway. Frankly, Bonneville has been studied to death.

The Bonneville Salt Flats are over 60 miles long and divided in half by railroad tracks and highways. Land speed racing began in 1914 and since 1932 the racetracks have been located on the north side and the potash processing plant on the south side. The two activities existed in harmony until the 1960s, when the BLM began issuing leases allowing salt to be transferred south through miles of ditches north of the highway without scientific proof that there would be no damage to Bonneville. Potash is extracted from the salt through solar evaporation, and the salt is a waste product of the process.

Until 1997, the salt transfer was a one-way street. The BLM allowed an estimated 50 to 75 million tons of salt to be removed from Bonneville and not returned. In fact, much of the salt is currently located in a huge mine evaporative processing pond that sits on land controlled by the BLM.

KEY MOMENTS IN TIME

1846

Ill-fated Donner-Reed party crosses the Bonneville Salt Flats (BSF) on the way to California.

1907

Western Pacific Railroad completes tracks across BSF noting numerous construction difficulties due to the salt thickness and hardness. Salt mining begins at BSF but eventually converts to potash production.



1840s / 1900s

1910

Future Salt Lake City Mayor Ab Jenkins becomes first person to ride a motorized vehicle across BSF.

1914

First unofficial land speed record set by Teddy Tetzlaff, who notes that the salt surface coolness did not overheat tires. Tire companies begin sponsoring events as way to test tires.

1915

Salt Lake Tribune article observes destructive activities from salt mining: "The world's greatest natural speedway is being torn up and ground up and dispensed to the public in cartons and packages."

1917

Potash mining begins.

1917-1918

Brine collection ditch dug at Salduro Loop, with spoils piled up to create the dike. The dike's mud tailings will infiltrate the adjacent racing area's salt crust in future years through wind and water erosion.

1919-1925

Victory Highway (Highway 40) constructed across BSF.

1910s / 1920s

1932 - 1957

Ab Jenkins begins a three-decade career setting 56 speed and endurance records.

1935

First World Land Speed Record (300 mph) set by Britain's Sir Malcolm Campbell. New record prompts land speed racing community to move from Daytona Beach, Florida.

1946

U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) becomes BSF custodian.

1947

Britain's John Cobb runs 400 mph race car on BSF as part of Utah's Centennial. The official program declares "The salt is like concrete... Its extreme hardness gives speeding cars maximum traction..."



1930s / 1940s / 1950s

1949

First "Bonneville National Speed Trials" (precursor to modern "Speed Week").



1956

General Motors names the 1957 Pontiac model "Bonneville" after Ab and Marvin Jenkins set every American record with the new car.

The racing community and mine owner created a salt brine return program in the 1990s that was implemented with BLM approval. When pumped at average levels of 1.2 million tons/year, the program stabilized Bonneville's crust and demonstrated small increases. However, in recent years, the pumping has been severely limited.

The racing community has issued a comprehensive plan for restoring Bonneville. The community is represented by the Save the Salt Coalition, of which SEMA is a partner, and the Utah Alliance. The Coalition is an international group of businesses and organizations with a vested interest in Bonneville. The Utah Alliance has partnered with the Coalition to provide expertise and governmental connections at the state and local levels.

The Coalition/Alliance's restoration plan, if implemented, will dramatically increase the amount of salt brine being pumped every year and channel it through the Salduro Loop, an unused salt reservoir artificially segregated from

the rest of Bonneville, to increase the brine salinity as it is deposited on the salt flats. Additional pumping infrastructure will be needed but sources of salt and water have already been identified to accomplish the salt replenishment.

Since the BLM has not previously pursued a restoration plan, the Coalition/Alliance is turning to lawmakers at both the state and federal level to support the effort. To date, the Governors of both Utah and Nevada, along with U.S. Senators and Representatives, and the Utah State Legislature have called on the BLM to take action. These efforts have included plans that would direct the BLM to restore the international race track to its original 13 miles within 10 years.

Bonneville is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and deemed an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. Yet, the BLM has allowed its health to reach critical condition despite these designations.

1963

Federal government issues potassium leases covering 24,670 acres adjacent to the race venue. Fourteen miles of collection ditches allow for withdrawal of salt brine.

1965

Mining company requests permission to begin pumping from the collection ditches for potash processing.

1966

Mining company abandons Salduro Loop ditch.

1960s

Racers first notice a problem with the salt crust.

1963 – 1970

Craig Breedlove ("Spirit of America"), Art Arfons ("Green Monster") and Gary Gabelich ("The Blue Flame") focus worldwide attention on jet and rocket-powered cars. Records increase from 394 mph to 622 mph.

Late 1960s-1970s

Studies undertaken by Utah Geological and Mineralogical Survey and the U.S. Geological Survey to determine extent of salt loss at BSF.

1970

Last World Land Speed Record set at the BSF by Gary Gabelich. Salt loss forces international land speed racing community to move record-setting venue to Black Rock Desert, Nevada and other locations due to reduced length of BSF race track.

1972

Interstate 80 constructed across BSF replacing Hwy 40.

1973

BSF hydrogeology studied by Utah Geological and Mineral Survey.

1974

Utah Geological and Mineral Survey study compares salt crust thickness between 1960 and 1974, concluding there was a 100% decrease in cubic yards of salt crust over 4 feet thick during that time period.

1975

Bonneville Salt Flats Race Track added to National Register of Historic Places.

1979

U.S. Geological Survey and BLM study concludes: "Weather cycles may partly explain changes on the Bonneville salt crust. But the activities of man, such as withdrawing brine and constructing surface-drainage barriers, have altered the hydrologic environment and have had a profound effect on the salt crust."



1982

Britain's Richard Noble sets 633 mph record at Black Rock Desert.

1985

30,203 acres of BSF designated as Area of Critical Environmental Concern and identified as the Bonneville Salt Flats Special Recreation Management Area.

1989

Save the Salt Coalition founded by racers, businesses and community members with common goal of saving BSF.



Photo courtesy of LandSpeed Productions

1960s

1970s

1980s



Bonneville Salt Flats

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAVING BONNEVILLE

The following are key elements of a plan to restore the Bonneville Salt Flats and its 13-mile long track.

- **Increase Salt Brine Pumping:** Dramatically increase the amount of brine being pumped onto Bonneville to at least 1 million tons/year.
- **Reconfigure Salt Laydown:** Pump brine through the unused Salduro Loop, a large salt area artificially segregated from Bonneville. The brine would be fully saturated with salt when channeled back onto the salt flats.
- **Sources of Salt/Water:** An evaporative processing pond contains at least 100 million tons of salt that could be returned to Bonneville. New water wells could be drilled, if necessary, to dissolve and transport the salt in a brine solution.
- **Remove Salduro Loop Dirt Berms:** Carefully remove the dikes that artificially segregate the Salduro Loop from Bonneville, which have eroded over decades and caused significant salt crust contamination.

1992

Bonneville Nationals and Speed Week officials forced to change international timing procedures due to reduced speedway length, eliminating the required two-way runs within an hour. Officials focus only on setting national records. Save the Salt Foundation (nonprofit organization) is established to help raise funds to save BSF.

1995

Save the Salt, BLM, the state of Utah and the mining company negotiate a voluntary agreement for salt brine to be pumped onto BSF for five years during the winter months.

1997

Salt brine pumping begins. U.S. Geological Survey study notes that "maximum salt-crust thickness was 7 feet in 1960 and 5.5 feet in 1988" and concludes that "with an estimated net loss of salt from the shallow-brine aquifer, the dissolved-solids concentration must be maintained by dissolution of the salt crust."

2002

5-year pumping agreement expires but mining company voluntarily continues pumping operation.

2004

BLM study of the 5-year pumping program notes that the 6.2 million tons of salt transferred did not produce the anticipated 2-inch increase in salt thickness. However, replenishment of the aquifer will eventually add more salt to the existing crust.



2011

Mining company and BLM prepare draft Environmental Assessment (EA) on mining plan. Racing community urges a mandatory salt laydown component.

2012

BLM approves mining plan and final EA that requires mining company to pump at least as much salt as is removed.

2013

Racers observe continued degradation of BSF and worsening conditions. Save the Salt Coalition seeks BLM permission to experiment with a dry salt laydown as a means of extending the race track.

2014

BLM denies request for dry salt laydown absent an EA. The Coalition is permitted to deposit 2,000 tons of salt on the mud surface at the end of the access road to BSF racing area.

2015

All 2015 racing events cancelled due to rain and mud contamination from adjoining areas. Save the Salt Coalition/Utah Alliance develop a draft restoration plan. Utah Gov. Gary Herbert and other high-ranking Utah/Nevada lawmakers send letters urging BLM to pursue a restoration program.

2016

Coalition/Alliance refine the restoration plan and pursue implementation by BLM. Gov. Herbert signs a resolution passed by the Utah Legislature urging the BLM to restore BSF to safe land speed racing conditions. Save the Salt Coalition pursues federal legislation to give the BLM 10 years to restore BSF race track to 13 miles.

170 YEARS

1990s

2000s

2010s



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