

REDROCK

W I L D E R N E S S

The Newsletter of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Volume 33, Number 3 • Autumn/Winter 2016

The Post-Election Outlook for Utah Wilderness
and the Dystopian Vision of a Land Grab

Cover Photo: Dramatic storm clouds build above Factory Butte in Utah's San Rafael Swell. Photo copyright Chris Noble.



The mission of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA) is the preservation of the outstanding wilderness at the heart of the Colorado Plateau, and the management of these lands in their natural state for the benefit of all Americans.

SUWA promotes local and national recognition of the region's unique character through research and public education; supports both administrative and legislative initiatives to permanently protect Colorado Plateau wild places within the National Park and National Wilderness Preservation Systems or by other protective designations where appropriate; builds support for such initiatives on both the local and national level; and provides leadership within the conservation movement through uncompromising advocacy for wilderness preservation.

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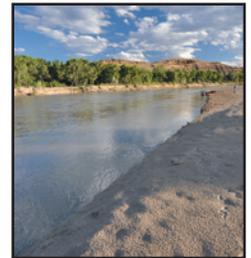
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This issue of *Redrock Wilderness* was written by the following staff and outside contributors: Steve Bloch, Ray Bloxham, Joe Bushyhead, Neal Clark, Clayton Daughenbaugh, Karin Duncker, Jordan Giaconia, Scott Groene, Travis Hammill, Luke Henry, Tom Kenworthy, Kya Marienfeld, Terri Martin, Landon Newell, Dave Pacheco, and Jen Ujifusa. It was laid out by Diane Kelly.

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Contributions of photographs (especially of areas within the citizens' proposal for Utah wilderness) and original art (such as pen-and-ink sketches) are greatly appreciated! Please send with SASE to Editor, SUWA, 425 East 100 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84111.

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wilderness notes



Election 2016: What It Means for the Redrock

To say the Nov. 8th election was unalloyed bad news for the Redrock is flogging the obvious.

What is at stake? Just about everything you and SUWA care about here. The state will redouble its efforts to wrest millions of acres of public land from the American people and it will press its nightmarish RS 2477 road claims even harder—but now with a compliant White House. Any trend by the BLM toward reasoned judgements in its stewardship will be throttled in infancy. The wretched Bundy clan and other militia types will be emboldened in their defiance of the law—in everything from criminal trespass to armed confrontation with public employees. We'll face both administrative and legislative efforts to roll back America's legal protections for our air, water, land and our public land managers.

Any hope we had of quickly driving a stake through the sclerotic heart of Rep. Rob Bishop's Public Lands Initiative (PLI) is dashed. The fates of both the PLI and the Bears Ears monument are now unclear. The Utah congressional delegation will likely try to move the PLI legislation, or a new variant, in the new Congress; the Obama administration will assess the election before making its next move on designating the Bears Ears.

That dismal list is enough to make the point that needs to be made here. This is not a drill. The threats I delineate here are not hyperbolic. Neither, though, are we powerless. It is true that Bishop's infernal House Natural Resources Committee will continue to spew ridiculous anti-public lands legislation. It is also true that our House sponsor of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, Alan Lowenthal, won his re-election. He is a stalwart. Another is Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois. He was not up for re-election this time around and he remains our Senate champion. If the Utah delegation intends to take either of them on in an effort to dismantle redrock wilderness, it will be in for a fight.

In significant ways, there is little new in any of this. From the beginning of SUWA and the campaign for redrock wilderness, the challenge has been difficult. Faced with intransigent Utah politicians, we have rarely NOT been on the defense. That is the nature of what we do. We have ensured that millions of acres of Utah lands are still wild. We have done it by holding the line, by fighting acre by acre to keep it wild.

When the 1994 election flipped control of the Senate and House to the Republican Party, the Utah delegation sought to enact statewide anti-wilderness legislation. We stopped them in both chambers. And we faced the same unified Republican control after the 2004 election during George W. Bush's tenure. We fought back and beat the "drill baby bill" tidal wave through fights in both the courts and the Congress. We have faced overwhelming odds before, and with your help, prevailed. We will again.

The experience of defending the canyon country over three decades has taught us that even the friendliest administrations are never as good as we hoped they'd be. And the most hostile were never quite as ugly as we feared.

Donald Trump's misogynistic and racist campaign dragged our nation further down the road to Stephen Colbert's "truthiness." We now live in a country of fact-free "truth," where any information inconsistent with blind ideology is rejected.

If there is an antidote to this mess, it is wilderness. The rain and snow fall, the sun rises, and muddy rivers flow with a murmur, not a twitter. We need the natural world more than ever. And it needs us to protect it.

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The things that matter are not fleeting and are not lost in a single night's election. We can still protect the places and values that matter. Together, we will.

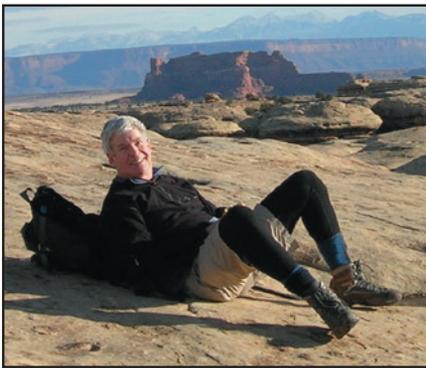
Get ready for the fight. The Redrock needs us all.

For the Redrock,



Scott Groene
Executive Director

Meet Tom Kenworthy, SUWA's New Board Chairman



Almost 25 years ago, I was sitting at my desk in the newsroom of *The Washington Post*—where I had recently left (make that fled) the congressional beat to cover public lands and natural resource issues—when a phone call came in from Utah. On the line was Heidi McIntosh, an attorney with SUWA. She was peddling a story on RS 2477.

New to the beat, I was pretty clueless. I didn't know Heidi. I don't think at that point I'd ever heard of SUWA. And for sure I didn't have the foggiest idea what RS 2477 was.

But Heidi was a persuasive saleswoman, and pretty soon I was being shown around the phantom roads of southern Utah by

Scott Groene, at the time a SUWA staff attorney working out of the Moab office who is now our executive director. So began a long association with what I would come to see as the best land conservation group in America.

A quarter century later, and a decade removed from newspapering, I'm starting a term as SUWA's new board chairman. You, our members and staunch defenders of the redrock, deserve to know a little bit about me. That is especially true because of what has happened since the board voted to make me chairman: the election of Donald Trump.

At critical junctures in SUWA's history we've been able to thwart attacks on wilderness and land conservation by having an ally in the White House, or by having an effective defense in Congress. Obviously, we no longer have the former and the latter will be difficult to mobilize with Republicans in charge of both the House and Senate.

At this writing, nobody can say with any certainty what the November 8th political earthquake will mean for SUWA's issues, including the possible designation of a Bears Ears National Monument and the ongoing efforts by Utah members of Congress to pass a very bad Public Lands Initiative. But it's almost a given that we're going to face some of the greatest threats in our history.

Having said that, the first thing you should know about me is that I've been asked to fill some very big shoes worn by Darrell Knuffke, our outgoing chairman. I knew Darrell a bit before I joined the SUWA board several years ago, but serving with him I've come to appreciate what a giant he is. He's a fierce and passionate advocate for wilderness, his advocacy is informed by a deep knowledge and appreciation for the history

(Continued next page)

wilderness notes

of the conservation movement in the U.S., he's collegial as can be, and a very funny guy on top of all that. Lucky for us, Darrell is staying on the board, where we will continue to be grateful for his guidance, his wisdom, and his sure hand on the SUWA tiller the past few years.

I also should confess that I'm an easterner by birth and upbringing. I spent my childhood and teen years in Washington, D.C., where I was lucky enough to have something of a ringside seat on some important moments in our history. But callow as I was, my idea of public lands didn't extend much beyond Rock Creek Park.

That changed right after I graduated high school and spent the first of two summers working on backcountry trail crews in Glacier National Park in northwest Montana, my first delicious taste of the West. It was a transformative experience, introducing me to the vast, magnificent landscapes that make up a system of protected lands unmatched in the world. And it taught me a bit about why it is so vital to defend them.

Writing about public lands for *The Washington Post* and then for *USA Today* took me on a journey of discovery and delight all across the West. Based out of Colorado, my home now for 21 years, I camped and hiked in the Sierras with Bruce Babbitt, Martin Litton and David Brower—could there be a better threesome to learn from? I got an education in national forest issues from Arnold Bolle, the distinguished former dean of the forestry school at the University of Montana. I covered big wildfires in almost every western state. I witnessed the re-introduction of gray wolves in Idaho and condors in Arizona. I saw firsthand how runaway energy development in Alberta offered a cautionary tale for us here in the western U.S. I learned how water, or the lack of it, defines life in the West and affects nearly every western land use issue.

And I returned regularly to Utah, where Scott and other patient and dedicated SUWA staff members introduced me to some of its wonders, including the Escalante, the Kaiparowits, the San Rafael Swell, and the Grand Staircase. They taught me that the desert lands of redrock country are as vital to our public lands inheritance as the big alpine places with which I was more familiar.

They also showed me how a relatively small conservation group, backed up by 13,000 or so loyal and engaged members, can take on some very big fights against an entrenched, powerful and hostile political class—and win.

That record is about to be tested anew, and for me it's an honor to be a part of it.

—Tom Kenworthy

(Tom can be reached at kenworthytom@gmail.com)

features

A Modest Proposal: The State of Utah ~~Devours~~ Manages Your Public Lands

The grievous consequences of the 2016 election have yet to unfold, but there's one thing we can be sure of: Utah politicians will not give up their quest to seize federal public lands—in fact, their fervor and bravado are certain to increase. As we steel ourselves for what lies ahead, let's take a look at how the State of Utah manages lands currently under its care (warning: the view isn't pretty).

It's not in your guidebook, but west of Arches National Park is a portal to another universe. It's called Klonzo, a name that somehow conveys the disorder therein with sci-fi prescience. Klonzo is a chunk of land given to the State of Utah in a land exchange. There, Utah is providing us an extraordinary peek into its management ideals. Or more aptly, its lack thereof.

In the Klonzoverse, RVs and ATVs spill across the desert without rule. Their sheer size and muscular labels—Vengeance, Apex—leave one wondering if they are truly vehicles, or perhaps aspiring planets. Every overhang, dry wash, and loop is an unregu-

lated campsite. Klonzo Descartes says: "I trample, therefore I am." And solitude? Beside the point.

Stubborn rabbitbrush and blackbrush cling to existence across the pummeled shale, but their wan efforts only underscore the devastation. "Denuded" is my friend's diagnosis, and this name is both accurate and insufficient. It's indeed a land made nude, and raw. But the disgrace is both what is taken and what is added. The "Mad Max" reality at Klonzo—part campsite, part car lot—is an affront to nature. And if Utah were to ever have its way, and steal from us all the millions of acres of public lands in the state, Klonzo is the universe to which we'd all be transported.

Since the state passed legislation to advance the goal of seizing for itself an American birthright (see Spring 2016 issue, p. 19), conversations about the land grab trend to high-minded pooh-poohing of the legality of the quest, or chesty screeds about the tyranny of the federal government. Utah's own legislative counsel (whose good counsel was ignored), and



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Oil and gas development on state (SITLA) land within the Canyon Rims Recreation Area on Hatch Point.

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the Conference of Western Attorneys General all see little chance of success in the courts. Still, Utah has already allocated some \$14 million to the cause.

The essential point is not that the state probably can't succeed; it is that the state must not succeed. American public lands are the tangible symbols of some of our highest ideals. In a season when those ideals have been battered beyond recognition, a weary public requires space to remember our greatness—and perhaps to rediscover our humility. Public lands have always served as that venue.

After all, it's not enough to say, "That won't happen." We just witnessed a damaged reality TV star ascend to the U.S. presidency. Our imaginations have lately failed us. But in Utah, we don't need imagination. We have boatloads of evidence about what the state does with precious land. It neither begins nor ends at Klonzo.

The Fallacy of "It's for the Children"

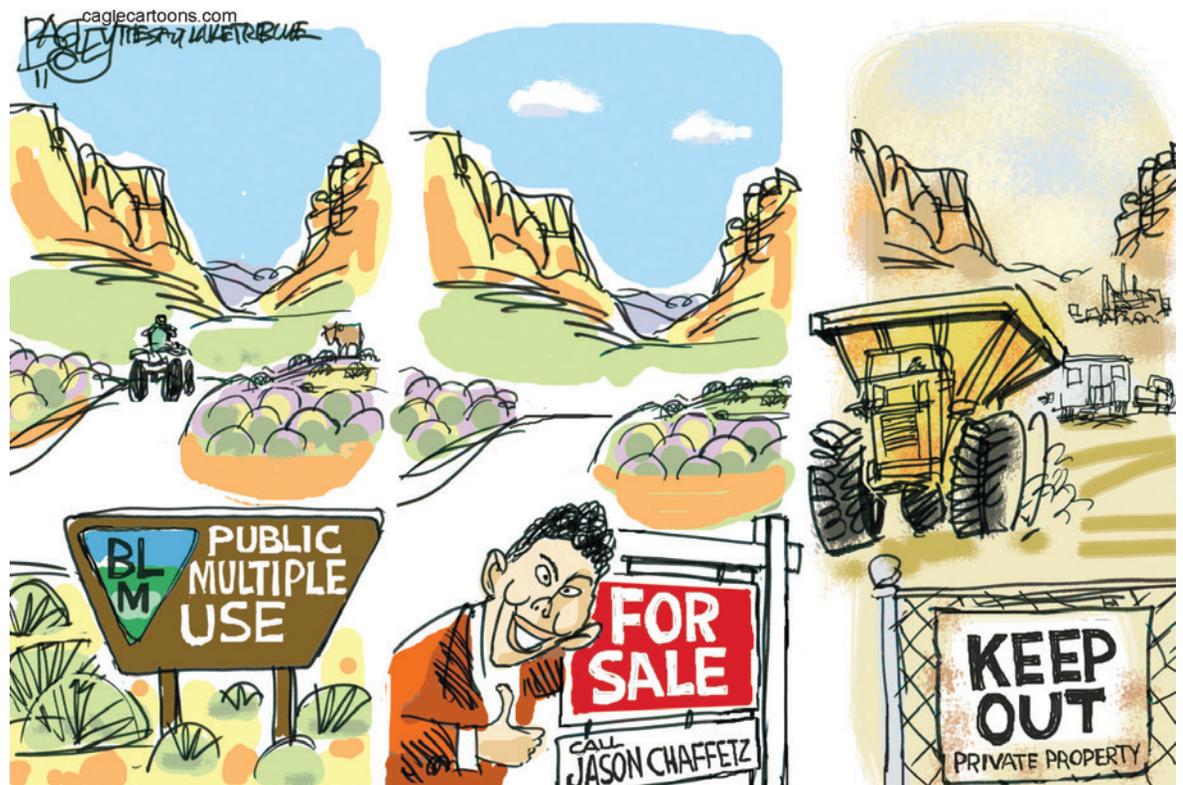
The drawing of lines on maps is consequential. Wars have begun, and rage now, over exactly this. In Utah, we have no war, per se. But we have bitter disputes over bad land policy that often stems from arbitrary map lines. One such set of lines deline-

ates the lands managed by the state's School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA).

Utah's enabling act for statehood "forever disclaim[ed] all right and title to the unappropriated public lands lying within the boundaries thereof." Basically, Utah gave up what wasn't already claimed by white settlers. Pioneers chose not to settle in the disclaimed lands, for reasons of water, arability, and logistics. Those early settlement patterns only distill the irony: the ignored lands are the ones battled over today.

At statehood, it was agreed that Utah should get additional land for further growth—those random lines on a map. The system devised was arbitrary: every 36-square-mile township got certain square parcels of land to use in support of public schools. The result was a haphazard scattering of lands, with no thought given to their suitability for the cause.

Today, school holdings are in river beds, on canyon walls, and in the most remote and wild parts of the state—certainly a heck of a bus ride. SITLA is in charge of maximizing returns from those parcels in any way imaginable.



features

Desert Riddles

So, what's any way imaginable? Sometimes, looking over the vast expanse of pinyon-juniper forests near Cedar Mesa, you might see a shaved, precisely square plot of land. That's where the highest revenue-generating swindle to be gleaned was chaining these forests to improve "forage" for cows. Or you might drive down Highway 191 out of Moab and wonder just what that wacky, lonesome subdivision is doing there. The answer to desert riddles like these is often SITLA.

Perhaps the worst project of all is the PR Springs tar sands development near the Book Cliffs—a climate nightmare for which the agency blithely unrolled the red carpet. SITLA routinely leases land for oil and gas, oil shale and mining, but tar sands may be the single worst energy option humans have ever conceived. And the borderland of Utah's Grand and Uintah counties will be the first fiefdom of the Lord of Dirty Fuels in the United States. The Canadian company behind the project estimates it will need two barrels of water for every barrel of oil produced—water pumped from aquifers under the nation's second driest state. But remember, it's for the children!

Nonsense. In 2015, Utah ranked 51st (including the District of Columbia) on per-pupil spending for education. Despite boasts of largesse, SITLA's contribution was just 1 to 2 percent of Utah's education budget. Clearly, this system isn't for kids. To "fund our schools" we steal their wilderness and neglect to fund our schools.

Utah politicians claim schools are poorly funded because the state is burdened by too much federal land—land beyond the reach of taxation. Again, nonsense. Of 50 states, Utah is ranked 24th in non-federal land per capita—dead typical, a C student. Twenty-six states are working with less. The key word here is "working." New York, New Jersey, Maryland, and Rhode Island all fund their schools better than Utah does—despite having less non-federal land per capita upon which to rely. Correlation does not equal causation.

And it's not that the money isn't there. Since its inception, SITLA has sold off more than half of its original 7.4 million acres and amassed a nest egg of \$2 billion—with a "b." In 2009, SITLA outraged even the lapdog state legislature with news it had given its top executives bonuses totaling \$269,000.



© Ray Bloxham/SUWA

Gas wells on SITLA lands within the White River proposed wilderness.

They gave the bonuses early to limbo beneath a statewide budget bar.

The current director has vowed he'll grow the trust to \$3 billion during his tenure—cha-ching! (That's more than the gross domestic product of many small countries, including Belize, Lesotho and Bhutan.) The agency certainly seems motivated. In mid-October SITLA sold drop-dead gorgeous parcels adjacent to Canyonlands and Zion national parks, and on culturally significant Comb Ridge, for a paltry total of \$5.5 million dollars.

Speaking of Money

The SITLA example is instructive because that agency is forced to make money from its lands. If Utah ever succeeded in taking over federal lands, it would find itself in a similar position. Managing land is actually really expensive, and to do it, Utah would need to somehow come up with the money.

Researchers at the University of Utah, Utah State University and Weber State University studied the matter. Their 2014 report found that just maintaining federal land in Utah costs the U.S. about \$8 an acre, or \$247 million. It's hard to say how much of that cost would carry over to the state, since it would depend on—ahem—how much land it sells off, as well as how it manages the remainder. The state also must account for the money the feds pump in beyond basic management. Federal land management creates 2,100 jobs (often in Utah's most rural outposts). That means the loss of roughly 2,100 jobs federal land management creates, the

features

5,000 jobs supported in turn, and the infusions of cash that slough off to state, county and municipal coffers as a result. All told, the researchers put the full cost to Utah at about \$280 million. Put another way, \$280 million would pay the salaries of this season's Utah Jazz roster for three-and-a-half seasons. It's a lot of cash for Utah taxpayers to absorb.

There are also catastrophic outlays for things like firefighting to tally. 2015 was the most expensive fire season ever in the U.S. Federal agencies' combined suppression costs were \$2.1 billion nationwide—not counting hidden expenses like insurance payouts. Nearly 9 million acres of wildlands burned. So, if Utah wants responsibility for 30 million acres of public lands, it needs to absorb firefighting duties as well. Can Utah taxpayers really afford to carry the water?

The 2014 study does say Utah could take over and theoretically stay in the black, but only if it sells off lands, and if the price of oil stays at \$92 a barrel. At the time of writing, a barrel of oil is \$50. Even at \$62, the study says, the state can't make it work. And here's the thing about the sell-off: Utah's own legal theory says it will net only 5 percent of proceeds from any land sale and will give the rest to Uncle Sam. That means a \$20 parcel will yield the state a crisp dollar.

For Utah to afford public lands, it will have to do everything it can to exploit them, sell tons of them, and defeat the realities of an international economy—and it may burn the house down.

Adrenaline, Man

Maybe you've seen the video on YouTube? A camera pans across a redrock nirvana. A climber, ascendant, bold, regards the view. And then? Ska horns AND rap. Duuuuude! We're in for something, and it may not even be a Citi ad.

It's not. It's 27-million-and-counting YouTube views of kids using Corona Arch, a short hike just outside of Moab, as a giant rope swing. Who cares that the forces that made that arch are the chance union of porous rock and water's resolve? Who cares that there's a nice view, except the cameraman? The camera seeks something beyond beauty, better than wildness. The point of the wild places is the taming of them. What elephants can you bag, Teddy? In the 21st century, manifest destiny is the

dominion of the rope-swingers, the dirt bikers, the "freeriders" sponsored by Red Bull.

What wasn't in the video were the complaints of other visitors, or the sandstone's rope scars, or the lost potential of the man who died imitating the stunt. And it missed SITLA's subsequent fret about liability. The agency ditched Corona Arch, one of its holdings, in a trade with BLM. The feds then banned the swinging. We don't always say the BLM is courageous. But sometimes it is.

There is more to public lands than adrenaline. At SUWA, we recreate, too—we've got climbers, bikers, boaters, hikers, hunters. Recreation is part of what public lands mean to everyone, but it can't be the justification for the maintenance of nature. Mature land management requires accommodating human recreation—in its endless forms—to the basic dignity and essence of the land itself. The beauty of wilderness is its nonhumanity—neither with us nor against us, but us-adjacent, and us-reflective. A place to see oneself, and something apart. That's the final piece lost if Utah seizes our lands. In that new universe, there's no greater cause than money and festival. Welcome to Chuck E. Cheese's.

Where Does It End?

Utah is suing the feds for ownership of more than 30,000 miles of "routes" it deems essential to get anywhere (see sidebar on page 16). More nonsense. The issue isn't travel, it is control. Utah's highest and best use is the highest profit margin. The website for Utah's state parks highlights three programs, two of which require buzzing around on ATVs or buzzing around on boats. And at Dead Horse Point or Kodachrome Basin state parks, bike trails spread like lies across a candid land. They were built in desperation to fund those same parks.

Utah yearns for the economy of the 1800s. And Utah believes it owns the land of the American people, who have, until now, saved it. In a land of rocks: Money, oil, adrenaline! What else could be out there? The answer is everything. We measure value differently. And despite our scuffles with the BLM, we are so glad they, and the federal government, are in charge. They're the only thing standing between us and the Klonzoverse. Utah must never succeed in taking us there.

—Jen Ujifusa

DC news

Public Lands Initiative Flounders through House Natural Resources Committee

With the congressional recess looming and a Bears Ears national monument building steam, Utah Reps. Rob Bishop and Jason Chaffetz hastily introduced their Public Lands Initiative on July 14th.

The bill does little to protect Utah's magnificent redrock country. Its provisions aim instead at rolling back existing protection for wild places, furthering the state's attempted land grab, and accelerating fossil fuel development. It doesn't come close to protecting the Bears Ears region, but then it wouldn't: the measure's real goal is to thwart proclamation of a Bear Ears national monument.

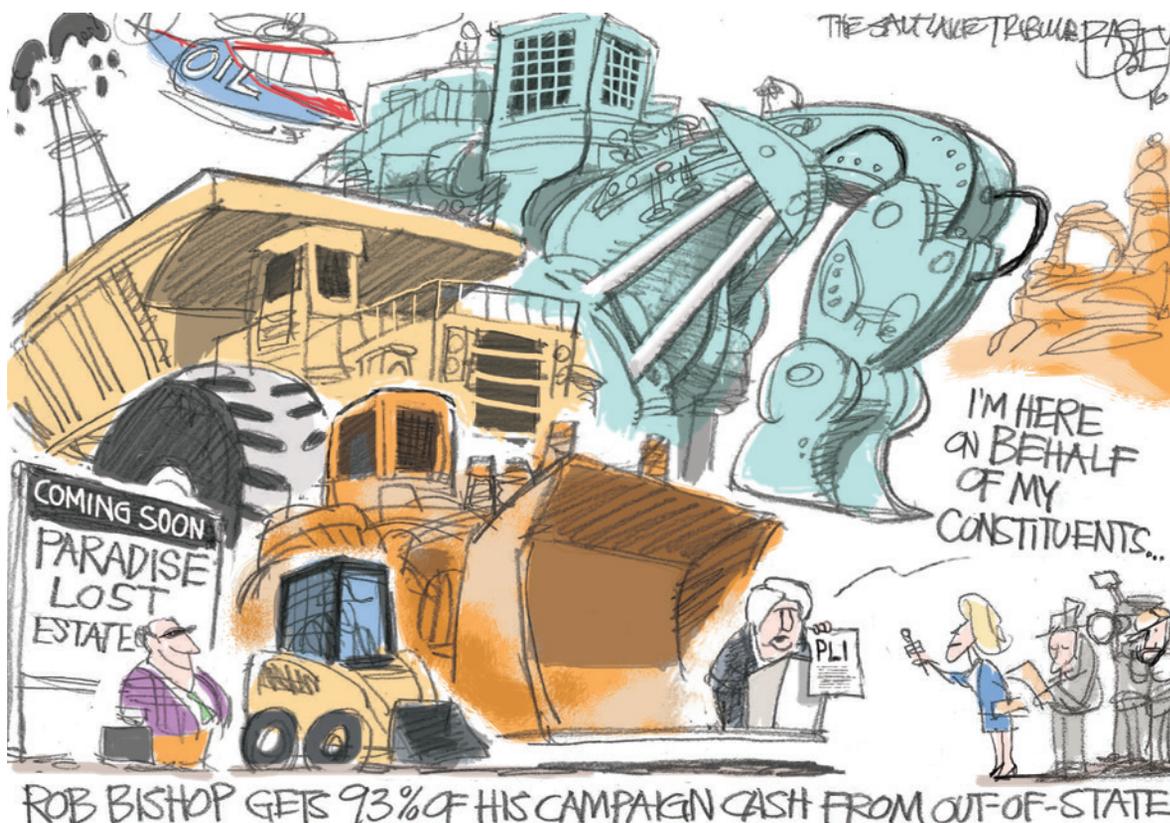
Before the duo could return to action on their bill after the recess, the conservation community turned out in force for a packed public meeting with Interior Secretary Sally Jewell on Bears Ears protection (see article on page 13).

At a hearing before the House Subcommittee on Federal Lands in September, the sponsors touted the bill as conservation-friendly, born of compromise and widely supported by local elected officials, motorized recreationists, industry groups, and other stakeholders.

Reps. Bishop and Chaffetz cast opponents, including SUWA and the rest of the conservation community, as "shrill voices out there realizing that if we actually bring finality on this issue, they'll be out of work."

Not Buying the Blather

The Obama administration didn't buy the spurious claims; neither did our redrock champions on the committee. The Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition all testified against the measure.



DC news

Reps. Niki Tsongas (MA), Raul Grijalva (AZ), Alan Lowenthal (CA), and Jared Polis (CO) voiced their own staunch opposition. Tsongas, the subcommittee's ranking Democrat and longtime redrock advocate, dismissed the bill as "a wolf in sheep's clothing."

"All told," she added, "despite the many years of effort, this is not a legislative proposal that has a realistic chance of being passed by the Senate or signed into law by President Obama."

Grijalva, ranking minority member of the Natural Resources Committee, termed the bill a "non-starter" that "tilts the scales dramatically in favor of development and motorized use and away from responsible conservation."

Judging by the full committee markup the following week, Bishop was unmoved by his colleagues' concerns. Grijalva, Tsongas, Lowenthal, Polis, and Raul Ruiz (CA) all offered reasonable amendments to remedy some of the bill's worst flaws. Bishop's majority rejected them all, and Bishop himself offered the only amendment the committee accepted, a routine fix of technical changes—typos, grammatical errors, etc.

The PLI passed the stacked committee on a party line vote. Still, the fact that legislators from across the country so stoutly resisted the bill must have been sobering to its sponsors. The PLI was correctly seen as a measure that fixes nothing and breaks quite a lot. The hearing was a reminder that these lands belong to all Americans and that there is a growing national constituency for protecting them. This will serve us well should the bill reach the House floor during the lame-duck session.

As Rep. Lowenthal said in the first legislative hearing, "We've had a long history of vigorously debating the future of our public lands, but the arc has been bent toward the long-term preservation of our public lands to be used by the many instead of the privatization or development for the profits of the few." The PLI represents a significant departure from this proud legacy.

We'll let you know if and when this legislation raises its ugly head again—and what you can do to help stop it.

—Jordan Giaconia

UTTR Remains in House and Senate Defense Bills

As we reported in our last issue, Rep. Bishop and Sen. Hatch managed to attach language to the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would withdraw 650,000 acres of BLM land to expand the Utah Test and Training Range (UTTR). Unfortunately, it would also trade away 14,500 acres of proposed wilderness in a misguided land exchange with the Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration, circumvent the National Environmental Policy Act, and in the House version of the bill, hand over thousands of miles of contested RS 2477 rights-of-way from the federal government to three counties adjacent to the Range.

The NDAA annually sets the budget for the United States Department of Defense and is one of the few pieces of "must-pass legislation" on the congressional to-do list for the November lame duck session.

House and Senate Armed Services Committee members and their staff convened during the July-August recess to reconcile many of the key discrepancies between the two competing versions of the bill but were unable to forge a compromise version before Congress adjourned in September. Purportedly, one of the major sticking points was the contentious issue of how and whether the government will protect the endangered greater sage grouse. This means both chambers will need to reconvene in November to hash out the final version of the bill before sending it to the floor.

There remains a reasonable chance that President Obama will veto the conference version of the NDAA when it's finally crafted during the lame duck session. Still, the NDAA has been signed into law each Congress for more than 50 consecutive years, so it's safe to say that after some intense negotiation and horse-trading it will ultimately be enacted before the close of the lame duck. It's hard to know which version will prevail, but given the administration's opposition to Bishop's RS 2477 giveaway, the Senate version seems more likely. Either way, SUWA's DC staff will watch closely and work to remedy the most egregious flaws.

—Jordan Giaconia

DC news



© Terri Martin/SUWA

Over 1,000 Bears Ears supporters braved 100-degree July heat to attend a public meeting with Sec. Jewell in Bluff, Utah.

Bears Ears Supporters Dominate Bluff Meeting

In a dramatic demonstration of enthusiasm for the proposed Bears Ears National Monument, over 1,000 supporters poured into the tiny southeastern town of Bluff in mid-July for a public meeting hosted by Interior Secretary Sally Jewell.

The overwhelming presence of Bears Ears supporters in the 100-degree heat was clearly visible from the people wearing light blue “Protect Bears Ears” t-shirts. For three and a half hours, Jewell and a panel of other high-ranking Obama administration officials listened as person after person spoke passionately about the future of the Bears Ears region.

Top leaders of the Navajo, Hopi, Ute Mountain Ute, Zuni and Ute Tribes made powerful statements about the need for a monument proclamation to protect their ancestral homelands from looting and other destructive activities. They emphasized that co-management authority offers a rich opportunity to bring the wisdom of traditional Native American knowledge together with western science.

Tribal leaders also stressed that Rep. Rob Bishop’s Public Lands Initiative failed to incorporate their

voices and address their concerns. Malcolm Lehi, Ute Mountain Ute Councilman, said, “For far too long, native people have not been at the table. We are not invited to the table. So we are here today inviting our own selves to the table.”

Before the meeting, Sec. Jewell took a firsthand look at Bears Ears, hiking to several cultural sites, meeting with local community leaders, and talking directly with tribal leaders at the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Summer Gathering.

The huge crowd in Bluff underscores the growing support for a Bears Ears National Monument. With letters, resolutions, petitions, videos, emails, tweets and more, multiple affinity groups—including archaeologists, paleontologists, veterans, communities of faith, students, artists, night sky enthusiasts, and others—have made it clear they stand with the Tribes in calling on President Obama to act.

SUWA thanks everyone who was able to carve out the time to make it to Bluff or who has encouraged the President to take action in other ways. With the end of the Obama presidency drawing near, it is critical that we keep up the drumbeat for Bears Ears protection!

—Terri Martin

canyon country updates

Good
News!

Federal Court Rejects Drilling Program in Upper Desolation Canyon

A federal judge has issued an order rejecting a plan by Gasco Energy to drill 16 natural gas wells on public lands along the Upper Desolation Canyon stretch of the Green River in eastern Utah.

The plan is part of the highly controversial Gasco Natural Gas Development Project, which the BLM approved in 2012. The agency's approval cleared the way for nearly 1,300 new oil and gas wells in the greater Desolation Canyon region, including 215 new wells and associated roads, pipelines, and other industrial clutter in what conservationists and federal officials agree is a wilderness-caliber landscape. The project of 16 wells was one of the first site-specific authorizations to follow.

The 2012 Gasco project earned heavy criticism in editorials across the country, including the *New York Times* and *Akron Beacon Journal*. Congressional leaders, the outdoor industry, and environmental

leaders all denounced the project and called on the Interior Department to modify it to protect Desolation Canyon.

The wells at issue in the judge's ruling would have been drilled from three drilling pads along a stretch of river that offers opportunities for families and boaters to enjoy solitude between high canyon walls, sandy beaches, and groves of cottonwood trees.

The BLM approved both the original Gasco project and its 16-well offshoot at a time when eastern Utah had experienced several years of record high wintertime ozone levels which are largely the result of oil and gas development (see sidebar, opposite). The judge's October decision held that the BLM's evaluation of air pollution, and in particular ozone pollution, was inaccurate and inadequate. The judge also agreed with us that the agency did not seriously



© Ray Bloxham/SUWA

The Upper Desolation Canyon stretch of the Green River offers excellent opportunities for solitude, flatwater boating, and camping for families and river runners alike.

Ozone Pollution in Uinta Basin Reaches Milestone

The State of Utah has finally acknowledged what SUWA and other public health advocates have been saying for several years: consistently high levels of ozone pollution in eastern Utah's Uinta Basin have pushed the area into "nonattainment" under the Clean Air Act's ozone standard.

A nonattainment designation will force the state, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the BLM to develop a plan to ensure compliance with the ozone standard. In particular, nonattainment status will trigger a suite of federal requirements which will prohibit the BLM from approving projects without documenting that they would cause no exceedances of the ozone standard.

In a September letter to the EPA, Utah Gov. Gary Herbert formally recommended that the Uinta Basin be designated a nonattainment area for ozone. Ozone pollution has been documented to impair human health and to cause environmental damage.

The spike in ozone pollution is closely linked to the dramatic increase in oil and gas development that has occurred in eastern Utah over the past decade. The Uinta Basin has more than 4,000 existing wells; the BLM estimates that number may increase to more than 28,000 wells by 2027.

consider the noise from drilling these wells and how that would affect river runners and families.

We thank all our members who submitted comments on the Gasco project, wrote letters to the editor opposing the project, or otherwise supported our efforts to send this one back to the drawing board. We couldn't have done it without you!

This case was brought by SUWA, Natural Resources Defense Council and The Wilderness Society. A team of SUWA attorneys staffed this case, led by our former colleague David Garbett.

—Steve Bloch

BLM Wraps Up Moab Master Leasing Plan

This past summer the Bureau of Land Management released a long-awaited plan that will guide energy and mineral development away from sensitive lands near Canyonlands and Arches national parks and many outstanding proposed wilderness areas in southeastern Utah. The plan will only take formal effect when a so-called "record of decision" is signed. We expect that to happen before the year is out.

The BLM's Moab Master Leasing Plan (MLP) protects sensitive places that are currently under threat from oil and gas leasing and development, including Fisher Towers, Porcupine Rim, Six-Shooter Peaks and Goldbar Canyon. These landscapes are either closed to future leasing or subject to "no surface occupancy" stipulations that prohibit physical development on the lease. The MLP also provides strong protections for Arches and Canyonlands national parks' classic southern Utah vistas, dark night skies, and clean water.

Finally, the MLP requires that the majority of any future leases issued in the planning area be subject to common-sense stipulations controlling surface use. These are essential to give both the public and industry certainty about the ground rules for future development.

While it's not all roses—the Moab MLP leaves the door open for potash leasing and development close to the Green River, as well as oil and gas development on edges of the Labyrinth Canyon proposed wilderness—on balance the plan represents a significant step forward in the protection of Utah's redrock wilderness.

In related news, the BLM has begun work on the San Rafael Desert MLP. That plan will cover more than 525,000 acres immediately west of the

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Labyrinth Canyon stretch of the Green River and south of Interstate 70.

Look for alerts from us this winter for opportunities to get involved and urge the BLM to protect this wild region from indiscriminate oil and gas leasing and development.

—*Steve Bloch*

Recapture Canyon May Yet Be Surrendered to ATV Destruction

For nearly a decade, ATV users have sought to gain access to Recapture Canyon. Conservationists have fought hard to protect it from them. Now, in a move that would be both tragic and farcical, the BLM's Monticello field office may be on the brink of simply capitulating to motorized users.

Formally, the agency is considering six alternatives ranging from “no action,” which would keep the canyon closed, to allowing an extensive ATV network both within the canyon and on its western rim.

The conflict dates back to 2005 with the illegal modification of a trail inside Recapture Canyon to gain ATV access. The illegal work resulted in significant damage to cultural resources. Those responsible were convicted and earned themselves a \$35,000 fine. Under pressure from conservationists, the BLM closed Recapture Canyon to motorized use in 2007 in order to “protect cultural resources that have been adversely impacted, or are at risk of being adversely impacted, by unauthorized trail construction and OHV uses.” The agency said it would not lift the closure order until the adverse impacts to cultural resources were eliminated.

Those very cultural resources were further damaged in 2014 when San Juan County Commissioner Phil Lyman organized an illegal ATV ride into the canyon. Lyman's Bundy-esque stunt resulted in his conviction for trespass and conspiracy.

Recapture Canyon contains a year-round stream that supports a riparian ecosystem rare in the high desert—reason enough to protect it from churning ATV wheels. But it is the canyon's cultural resources that command the most attention. According to the BLM, the canyon contains 148 identified cultural sites, such as cliff ruins, large rubble mounds, and artifact scatters. Time and time again the Hopi

High Court Decision Due on SUWA's RS 2477 Challenge

We expect a decision any day from the Utah Supreme Court in our lawsuit which argues that the state and a number of its counties filed their RS 2477 lawsuits too late and thus should be dismissed. (For those new to the issue, RS 2477 is a Civil War-era statute used to assert rights-of-way across federal public lands mainly for the purpose of disqualifying those lands from wilderness designation.)

A federal court asked the Utah high court to answer a so-called “certified question.” The answer will matter on two fronts: in the federal court, where SUWA is opposing the road claims, and in state court, where we allege that Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes exceeded his authority by filing the suite of cases decades after Utah law allowed.

SUWA attorneys continue to crisscross the state to participate in the claimants' “preservation depositions” which seek to “preserve” the testimony of old or infirm RS 2477 witnesses. This fall and winter, our attorneys will be in Kane, San Juan, Sevier, Tooele, Washington, and Wayne counties.

Finally, our team of SUWA attorneys and pro bono attorneys are preparing for the first of two “bellwether” trials—mini-trials focused on a subset of issues and RS 2477 claims with the goal of further defining RS 2477 case law.

canyon country updates

Tribe has called for Recapture Canyon to remain closed to ATV use and for its archaeological sites to be stabilized and protected. We agree.

SUWA has submitted comments on the project proposal, urging the BLM to choose an alternative that permanently protects natural and cultural resources by keeping Recapture Canyon and the surrounding rim closed to ATV use. We'll keep you posted as the process unfolds.

—Neal Clark

Good
News!

Judge Rules in Favor of Protecting Imperiled Wildflowers

A federal judge has rejected a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) decision to deny Endangered Species Act (ESA) protection to two imperiled wildflowers that live only on oil shale formations in Utah and Colorado.

SUWA and a coalition of conservation groups brought the legal challenge to the FWS decision. Oil shale and tar sands mining and traditional oil and gas drilling threaten 100 percent of known White River beardtongue populations and over 85 percent of the known Graham's beardtongue populations.

In the late October ruling, the judge rejected the agency's reliance on a 15-year conservation agreement negotiated with pro-industry stakeholders behind closed doors. In 2013, the FWS proposed to extend ESA protection to the wildflowers and nearly 76,000 acres of their essential habitat, recognizing the threat posed by mining and drilling. One year later—after lobbying by industry and its supporters, including the Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration and Uintah County—the agency reversed course and denied ESA protections.

The judge faulted the FWS for failing to explain why the agreement would not simply leave the beardtongues in the same "precarious state" in 15 years as they were in when the agency proposed listing. The court also found that the agency did not base its decision solely on the best available science, as required by the ESA.



© Susan Mever

Thanks to a federal judge's ruling, the imperiled Graham's beardtongue may yet receive protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The judge vacated the decision not to list the species, concluded that the FWS could not reasonably rely on the agreement in denying ESA protections, and reinstated the proposed rule to list the species.

SUWA has played an important role in previous efforts to obtain protection for the Graham's beardtongue. In 2002, we and others petitioned the FWS to list the species under the ESA. The parties reached an agreement by which the agency initially proposed listing in 2006. Later that year, it withdrew the proposed rule, citing Bureau of Land Management assurances that it would protect the species from energy development. SUWA, the Center for Native Ecosystems (now Rocky Mountain Wild), and the Utah and Colorado Native Plant Societies successfully challenged that decision and obtained a ruling requiring the FWS to make a new listing decision by 2013.

Earthjustice's Rocky Mountain Office filed the lawsuit on behalf of SUWA and other conservation groups. We're particularly grateful to Earthjustice attorneys Robin Cooley and Chris Eaton for their work on this important case.

—Steve Bloch

canyon country updates

Pushing BLM to Recognize Wilderness for What It Is

As part of our ongoing work to gain protections for wilderness-quality landscapes across Utah, SUWA has recently focused on submitting new wilderness character (WC) information to Utah Bureau of Land Management (BLM) field offices in the western part of the state.

First, working within the ongoing Cedar City Resource Management Plan (RMP) process, SUWA has submitted fifteen new WC informational packets—including maps, photos, and detailed descriptions of the resources in question—to the Cedar City field office. To date, Cedar City BLM staff have received our data on just over 300,000 additional acres of public land outside previously identified WC and wilderness study areas (WSAs).

Out of these acres submitted, the BLM has agreed that over 200,000 acres (which were either excluded or dropped in the past for political reasons) today retain wilderness values.

The Cedar City field office continues to struggle with implementing the correct approach for identifying wilderness characteristics as required under federal regulations. SUWA staff will keep working with the BLM to adequately identify wilder-

ness-quality lands and ensure that Cedar City's RMP revision process results in the preservation of these wild and remote areas' wilderness characteristics.

Also this year, SUWA staff has sent an additional ten new WC submissions to the BLM's Fillmore field office, totaling over 230,000 acres of BLM lands in this part of Utah's West Desert that the agency has not yet reviewed for wilderness characteristics. We hope the BLM will carefully analyze our submissions and agree that these critical and breathtaking portions of the West Desert's basin and range ecosystem are wilderness-quality and therefore should be brought under protective management.

—Ray Bloxham and Kya Marienfeld

BLM Caves to County, Guts Wildlife Protection in NCA Plan

BLM kowtowing is once again on display in southern Utah, and SUWA and our conservation partners are once again forced to challenge the agency's actions.

The latest outrage involves wildlife protections in southwestern Utah's Washington County. The BLM has approved a resource management plan for the Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash national conservation areas (NCAs). But in the process, it eliminated a proposed 87,000-acre special management area aimed at wildlife protection outside of the NCAs. SUWA has joined The Wilderness Society, Conserve Southwest Utah, and the Wildlands Network in formally protesting the decision to the Interior Secretary.

The area, known as the Bull Valley Mountains Multi-Species Management Area, is located in northwestern Washington County. It provides crucial habitat for mule deer and other wildlife species, including large predators. The Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009, which established the Beaver Dam Wash and Red Cliffs NCAs, also directed the BLM to "identify areas located in [Washington] County where biological conservation is a priority" and subsequently to "undertake activities to conserve and restore plant and animal species and natural communities within such areas."



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Until recently, the BLM had failed to recognize the exceptional wilderness character of Steamboat Mountain in Utah's West Desert.

canyon country updates

The BLM's draft management plan correctly acknowledged that the legislation's conservation mandates would be satisfied through special management prescriptions for this 87,000-acre area. All seemed well in the world.

Not for long. Once the draft management plan was released, Washington County commissioners—one of whom had signed off on the 2009 legislation—began the tired theatrics of whining and the dismal chorus of “federal overreach” that has become standard fare for southern Utah politicians. Why? Because it always works. Instead of standing strong for habitat conservation, the final management plan showed that the BLM had caved to the county's bullying and harassment, ultimately pushing wildlife connectivity aside as hysterical Washington County officials demanded.

Our protest to the Interior Secretary argues that the BLM's decision was arbitrary and inconsistent with the 2009 legislation. We're awaiting the Secretary's decision on our protest and will keep you informed.

—Neal Clark

Gold Project Threatens Wild Lands Near St. George

The BLM is working with a gold prospecting company to analyze the environmental impacts of a major project in the wild Bull Valley northwest of St. George, Utah. If the project advances, gold or no gold, the wilderness will lose.

The company, Cadillac South Explorations, is a subsidiary of a Canadian mining company (see sidebar.) The project proposes exploratory drilling across 16,000 acres, much of it within roadless areas and on wilderness-quality lands. The scheme includes construction of 2,100-square-foot “working areas” at each of what could be hundreds of drill sites. From them the company would bore holes up to 1,500 feet deep. To reach all of the proposed sites, the company plans to build roads over old, now reclaimed, routes and potentially construct new roads where none previously existed.

Of the 16,000-acre project area, the BLM has recognized wilderness characteristics on 11,369 acres. What's more, 11,604 acres within the project area

Free Gold, Eh?

Canadian companies moiling for gold on our western public lands aren't here to escape Canadian winters: they're here to avoid paying royalties on the publicly owned minerals they dig up.

Canada imposes royalties on hardrock minerals taken from its public lands. Not us. We give the stuff away under the 1872 Mining Law. It is still on the books nearly 150 years later.

Congress, unable to comprehend that the frontier is closed, steadfastly refuses to repeal the ancient law. That's scandalous. And the blame is thoroughly bipartisan.

have been proposed for wilderness designation. The project would likely damage a portion of the Upper Beaver Dam Wash Area of Critical Environmental Concern, or ACEC, some of which is included in the project area. This ACEC was designated to preserve watershed integrity and water quality as well as to maintain or improve riparian resources and potential habitats; mining activity could damage all of these resources.

The proposed project area also encompasses a portion of the proposed 87,000-acre Bull Valley Mountains Multi-Species Management Area, which the BLM recently removed from a proposed resource management plan after Washington County commissioners bullied them into it (see previous article). Prospecting on the scale proposed could harm this important area, too.

This project has the potential to cause serious and lasting damage to wilderness-quality lands. Worse, the prospecting could be just the destructive first step. You can bet that if the prospecting hints at gold deposits, the company will demand the right to dig for them. We'll keep you informed as the project moves through the planning process and let you know of opportunities for public comment.

—Luke Henry

inside SUWA

A Fond Farewell to Associate Director Deeda Seed

At the end of summer SUWA said goodbye to our colleague Deeda Seed. A ten-year veteran of SUWA, Deeda served most recently as our associate director and before that as grassroots outreach director. Those titles, however, don't do justice to Deeda's role at SUWA. She was our utility infielder, drumming up political support for Utah wilderness, strategizing on political issues, and building financial and membership strength for the organization.

She was also a force of nature. Deeda's infectious laughter (or howls of protest) echoed throughout the building as she rode the wave that is working to protect Utah wilderness: one day cursing Utah's short-sighted politicians and the next singing the praises of SUWA's tireless volunteers. She made the organization stronger in many direct and intangible ways. We were fortunate to call her a colleague and are lucky to call her our friend.

A Chicago native who long ago made Salt Lake City her home, Deeda is committed to making the world a better place through political action and social change. Through the years, she has championed a multitude of progressive causes in her adopted state through roles as varied as city councilwoman, the mayor's chief of staff, and director of a nonprofit dedicated to improving the lives of low-income women. Deeda is now working on police issues and was recently appointed to the Salt Lake City Library Board of Directors. We wish her the best!



SUWA thanks Deeda for 10 years of redrock advocacy!

SUWA Welcomes Karin Duncker and Luke Henry



Karin Duncker

SUWA welcomes two new staff members to our Salt Lake City office: Associate Director Karin Duncker and Field Advocate Luke Henry.

Karin first fell in love with southern Utah's redrock country during a family cross-country camping trip in 1976 (complete with VW camper), but it was the week in a raft on the San Juan River in 2007 that sealed the deal. Born and raised in and around New York City, Karin has a B.A. in biology and a graduate fellowship in marine biology from Hofstra University. Her career path veers from high school biology teacher, to non-profit executive director, business development executive for a law firm, pastry chef, and happily back to the nonprofit world as SUWA's new associate director. She brings to SUWA the passion of a lover of the redrock with the tenacity and accent of a life-long New Yorker.



Luke Henry

Luke was born and mostly grew up in northern Idaho. He earned a B.S. from the University of Idaho, double majoring in biology and philosophy, and later attended law school in New Orleans at Tulane University. In law school, Luke focused on environmental law courses while also serving as the editor in chief of the Tulane Environmental Law Journal and working as a student attorney in the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic. After law school he spent a little over a year living and working on the Navajo Nation where he provided legal services to people living in the rural areas around Monument Valley. He is excited to be back at SUWA, where he interned during law school.

Autumn Ends Great SUWA Service Project Season

SUWA has finished a productive 2016 season of field service projects in southern Utah. Through summer and into fall, our volunteers worked in the Henry Mountains, the San Rafael Desert, the Deep Creek Mountains, and along the Colorado River. We've removed fences, reclaimed motorized routes and rerouted designated trail access.

All our work focused on the health and integrity of wilderness-quality lands and it has helped build the foundation of our still-young volunteer program.

With the engaged support of our members, we have provided an enthusiastic, disciplined workforce to help BLM field offices (Hanksville, Price, Moab, and Salt Lake) to help meet needs that would otherwise go unmet. The relationships we've built will help with the growth of the program.

It doesn't detract from the value of the service program to confess it wasn't all hot, dusty toil. We also had a lot of fun out there sharing wilderness stories, good food, and good company to boot!

SUWA will continue to offer our members opportunities to join field service projects. This work is really at the core of our mission: to preserve the wilderness heart of the Colorado Plateau in its natural state for the benefit of all Americans.

Big thanks to everyone who participated! We look forward to seeing you out in the field again next year. There is plenty more work to be done.



Last trip of the season: field volunteers at a project site west of Moab.

SUWA by the Numbers

Our staff tracks such annual metrics as how many days we spend in the field, how many comments we file on proposed projects, how many grassroots presentations we give across the country, etc. Here is just a sampling of what we've accomplished with your help in 2016.

RS 2477 legal depositions taken (for statewide federal lawsuit) — **54**

Appeals filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals — **9**

Days spent conducting fieldwork — **73**

Field visits with the BLM — **8**

In-person meetings with the BLM — **22**

Wilderness Character submissions filed with the BLM — **11**

Scoping/Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Statement comments submitted — **21**

Organizer presentations and tabling events — **>100**

New grassroots contacts made — **>4,000**

Strategic planning meetings or conference calls with local activists — **69**

Postcards submitted to the president or congressional offices — **4,343**

Activist meetings with congressional offices — **191**

“Protect Wild Utah” lawn signs delivered in Salt Lake City — **425**

Action Alerts sent to supporters nationwide (via email) — **38**

Activist comments submitted electronically to decision-makers — **27,933**

New email subscribers — **1,837**

New Facebook Followers — **27,750**

inside SUWA

Midwesterners and Mainers Turn Out to Support the Redrock

SUWA's Midwest slideshow tour kicked off in October with a visit to Unity Church of Garden Park in Cincinnati. Also welcoming us and supporting the cause were the Petoskey and Staits Area Audubon Societies along the shores of Lakes Michigan and Huron, the Iowa City Sierra Club, and a happy crew at T-Bock's Bar & Grill in Decorah. Dayspring Native American United Methodist Church in Peoria and the Midwest SOARRING Foundation in Lockport, Illinois round out the list.

Attendees are now busy signing postcards to President Obama urging him to designate a Bears Ears National Monument and sending words of appreciation to the supporting Senators in Illinois and Michigan: Richard Durbin, Debbie Stabenow, and Gary Peters.

We felt the redrock love in Maine this fall as well. Each year, SUWA's eastern organizer heads up to Unity, ME for the Common Ground Fair, which attracts folks from all over the northeast. The Fair is one of the largest events in Maine for farming, gardening, environmental advocacy, and green building.



© Clayton Daughenbaugh/SUWA

Members of Unity Church of Garden Park in Cincinnati.

This year was our best year yet as we collected hundreds of postcards to President Obama asking him to protect Bears Ears (many people were excited about the recently designated Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument). We also spoke with dozens of students from colleges and universities throughout the region (and Georgia too!). It may be a long way from Utah, but New Englanders certainly love our public lands!

Big thanks to our good friend Ed Riggs who hosts us every year, opening his home to us and working the table at the fair. We're also grateful to Stan and Michelle Moody who staffed the SUWA table for an entire day. Our supporters are the best!

Gift Memberships and other Holiday Giving Ideas on Our Website

Searching for the perfect holiday gift for that wilderness lover on your list? Posters, hats, *Wild Utah* DVDs, and gift memberships are available for purchase on our website (limited quantity on some items). To view our online product catalogue, go to suwa.org/goodies.

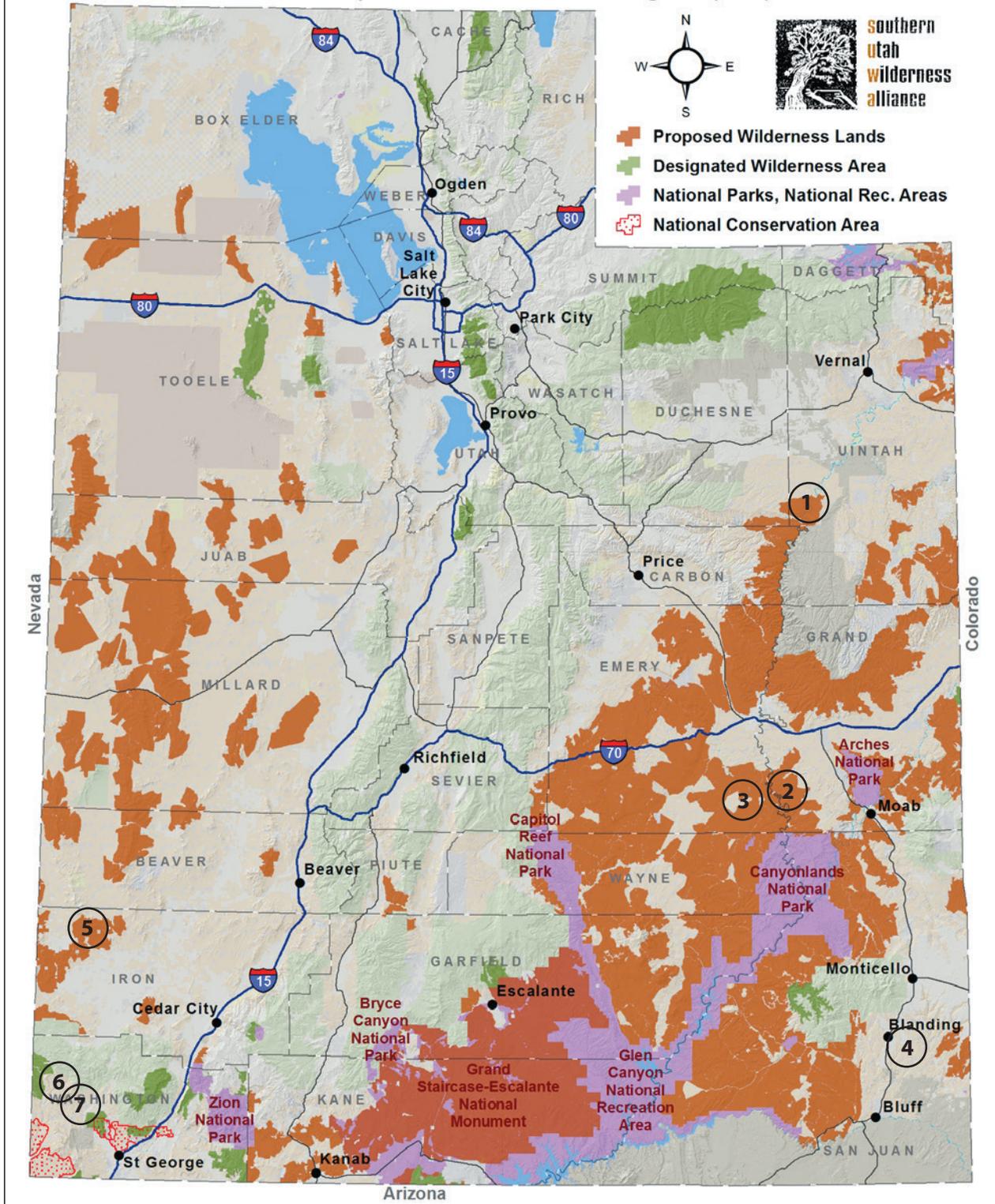
Leave a Legacy for the Redrock

Please consider leaving a gift to SUWA in your will or trust. Bequests are a simple, effective way for those of us who love the redrock to ensure that when we're gone, the work to protect these amazing landscapes continues.

A bequest for SUWA (or any other charitable organization) is very simple to establish. Just name the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance in your will, trust, retirement plan, or life insurance policy, along with our contact information and tax I.D. number and the dollar amount or percent of your estate you wish to contribute. If you'd like to make a gift to SUWA or have already included a gift to SUWA in your estate, please contact Karin Duncker at karin@suwa.org or (801) 428-3971. You can also visit us online at suwa.org/plannedgiving.

America's Red Rock Wilderness Act

A Citizen's Wilderness Proposal for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands in Utah



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| ③ San Rafael Desert (p. 15) | ⑥ Bull Valley Mountains (p. 18) | |



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“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”
—Martin Luther King Jr.