

REDROCK

W I L D E R N E S S

The Newsletter of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Volume 29, Number 2 • Summer 2012

Utah Wilderness
Protection Grows



Cover Photo: Rock formations in the Butler Wash Wilderness Study Area—part of the Greater Canyonlands region. Photo copyright Scott Braden.



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.

SUWA is qualified as a non-profit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code. Therefore, all contributions to SUWA are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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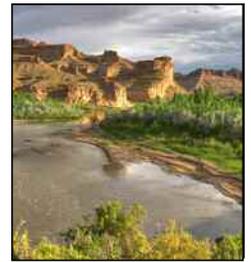
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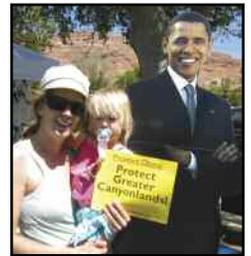
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This issue of *Redrock Wilderness* was written by the following staff and outside contributors: Jen Beasley, Steve Bloch, Neal Clark, Jackie Feinberg, Scott Groene, Mathew Gross, Darrell Knuffke, Terri Martin, Heidi McIntosh, Richard Peterson-Cremer, and Liz Thomas. It was edited by Darrell Knuffke and laid out by Diane Kelly.

Newsletter design by Leslie Scopes Garcia.

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

Progress in Crazy Land

These are challenging times for wilderness advocates across the nation. Due to a Congress wracked by partisanship, we're suffering the longest drought in wilderness legislation since 1964, when the Wilderness Act itself was passed. House Republicans launch repeated—and, to date, futile—attacks on our public lands and the laws that protect them.

Here in Utah, Gov. Gary Herbert seemingly intends to leave his mark on the state with bulldozer tread and ATV tires. Seeking the dumbest possible solution to a nonexistent problem, Herbert has declared war on the public lands of the United States. In May, his lawyers filed 22 lawsuits on over 27,000 pages of paper and involving 12,000 “road” claims. And he signed legislation demanding that the United States hand over 30 million acres of public land “on or before December 31, 2014,” thank you very much. (Not even Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer, no slouch herself when it comes to loony-tunes governance, could go quite that far. She vetoed comparable legislation in her state.)

Past “sagebrush rebellions,” most recently in the late 70s and the mid 90s, crashed with little effect beyond bombast and goofy pronouncements. For despite the rhetoric, western states like Utah benefit mightily from all the subsidies we reap from public lands, including the \$300 million management bill. And no price tag can adequately express what these lands do for our quality of life. We enjoy a backyard that others travel halfway around the planet to visit.

To many of us living here in the Beehive state, it's a tooth-grinding frustration to see Herbert burn our tax dollars on his idiotic quest. We share the concern of canyon country fans everywhere that Herbert has gone far beyond past sagebrush rebellions with his record-setting litigation. If successful, he would rip apart millions of acres of wilderness on behalf of a few dozen anti-wilderness county commissioners.

Have no doubt: we'll stop him. We have to. For starters, we're pulling the rug of public support out from under him by knocking on the doors of 25,000 Utahns and launching an electronic and print education campaign.

There is no shortage of challenges on the wilderness front. But as our lead article discusses, today's challenges shouldn't obscure the enormous progress we've made and continue to make in protecting the Redrock. Most recently, we've concluded a series of agreements with the energy industry that have brought some measure of protection to both Desolation Canyon and the White River.

The canyon country remains wild only because of the thousands of citizens in Utah and across the country who have joined us in this fight. Thank you!

For the wild,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Scott Groene', written in a cursive style.

Scott Groene
Executive Director

features

Utah Wilderness Protection Grows Despite Fierce Antagonism from Local Officials

Utah is awash with politicians hostile to our nation's long history of conservation and shared public lands. There are two ways to view civic leadership in the state: a cup barely half full or one bone dry.

For all of that, wilderness protection has come a fair way over the past 30 years. With our members and friends, SUWA has successfully defended nearly 10 million acres of redrock landscape for three decades. And we've gained some form of protection for almost 5.5 million acres of the same canyon country—more than the original redrock wilderness bill sought to protect.

From about 1930 to 1980, wilderness vanished from nearly 14 million of Utah's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) acres. The greatest single loss was the drowning of Glen Canyon, but extensive river and canyon landscapes were whittled and fragmented elsewhere as well.

In the 30 years since, for the over 9 million acres that remain wild, we've stopped this horrendous rate of loss. Far less than 1 percent of our wilderness proposal has been damaged in this time, despite two oil and gas booms, a pair of Bush administrations, and the explosive rise in off-road vehicle use.

Cross-Country ORV Use Curtailed

Millions of acres have gained some form of protection through two wilderness bills, three land exchange bills, a national monument proclamation, and countless agency planning decisions. Once, our wilderness proposal was wide open to off-road vehicles. Dirt bikers could head off cross-country and legally create a new trail anywhere their knobby tires could carry them. Now, almost our entire proposal is closed to this abuse and the fight has moved to another front: the hundreds of routes the BLM has designated in these areas.

In 1989, when Utah Congressman Wayne Owens introduced legislation to protect 5.1 million acres of Utah BLM wilderness, it was a quixotic quest.



© Stephen Trimble

SUWA litigation resulted in a BLM travel plan for the San Rafael Swell that ended damaging ORV use along this scenic stretch of Muddy Creek.

Today, in many ways, we've surpassed Wayne's goal. Congress has enacted two Utah wilderness bills in the past six years, both with the full support of the Utah congressional delegation. Both protected more wilderness than Wayne's original proposal sought for those areas.

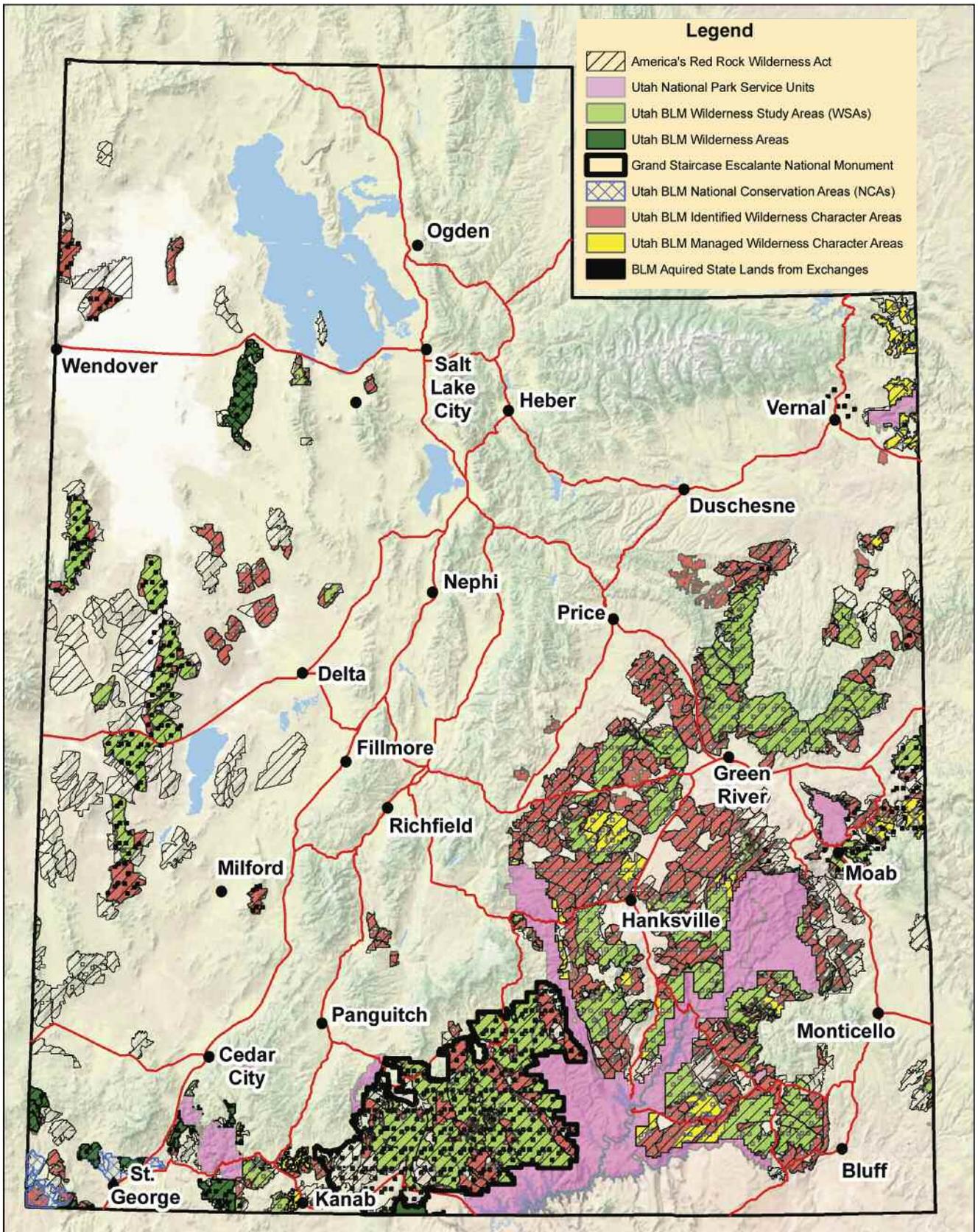
Back then, 80 percent of Utahns who'd made up their minds opposed that much wilderness. Now, 60 percent of decided Utahns support 9 million acres or more of Utah BLM wilderness.

None of this came easily. With our conservation partners and congressional champions, we killed 13 bad bills introduced by Utah's congressional delegation, each of which would have harmed the redrock. We've marched to federal and state court dozens of times, and filed hundreds of administrative appeals to stop drilling, chaining, off-road vehicles, dams, road construction, and mining. We've traveled the nation building support. In the last five years alone

(Continued on page 7)

features

Progress Made in Protecting America's Redrock Wilderness



features

(Continued from page 5)

we've spoken to nearly 13,000 people at 391 public gatherings. Time and time again we've brought extraordinary citizens from across the country to Washington, DC to give a voice to the redrock.

Wilderness Endures

Back in Utah, field staff traveled the desert to first create and then shepherd the best-documented wilderness proposal ever. We've endured insults and death threats. And we've embraced Ed Abbey's advice to "outlive the bastards." Dozens of opposing senators, governors, administrations and representatives have come and gone.

Nearly 30 years of relentless advocacy for the vision of protecting the redrock on a landscape scale has prevented loss and put meaningful protections in place. If thousands of people had not spoken up, the canyon country would be much diminished. There would be trinket shops on Cedar Mesa, coal trucks rumbling across the Kaiparowits Plateau, and missiles fired from near the town of Green River. A great citizens' movement has prevented a thousand wounds to the land. Together, we've protected real places like the Cedar Mountains, Muddy Creek, Beaver Dam Narrows and Salt Creek Canyon.

Many years ago, working among geologists to measure beaches in the Grand Canyon (I even got paid), I heard the comment "if you want to see geologic processes, just look: it's happening right now." The same is true with the steady progress for Utah wilderness. In court rooms, agency offices, congressional corridors, and along dusty dirt roads our work continues. And though the pace often seems geologic, conservation gains continue to mount.

The article that follows offers several very good examples of this. It details the progress we've made for Desolation Canyon, the Price River, and White River, each threatened by a surge in natural gas exploration.

The threats from climate change, rampant ORV use, and the lack of a sound national energy policy are real. But with your help we'll keep pushing and pushing until the redrock is designated wilderness. We still have far to go, but we've come far as well.

—Scott Groene



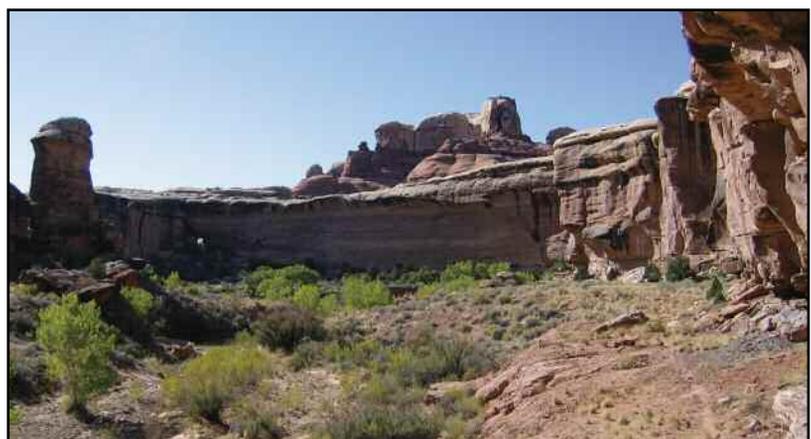
© Ray Bloxham/SUWA

SUWA's advocacy helped shape the Omnibus Public Lands Act of 2009, which protected the Red Butte proposed wilderness and other Zion-Mojave wild lands.



© Ray Bloxham/SUWA

Negotiations with Rep. Rob Bishop resulted in 100,000 acres of designated wilderness in the Cedar Mountains west of Salt Lake City (enacted in 2006).



© Liz Thomas/SUWA

The work of our legal staff has allowed Salt Creek Canyon within Canyonlands National Park to recover from past ORV abuse while remaining ORV-free.

features

Blunting the Impacts of Energy Development

Over the past three years, SUWA's work on energy projects, including a series of unprecedented agreements with oil and gas operators, has led to real, on-the-ground conservation gains for the Desolation Canyon and White River proposed wilderness areas.

Editorials and articles from across the country, including those in the *The New York Times*, *Akron Beacon Journal*, and *Salt Lake Tribune*, have lauded these agreements. Underlying this work is SUWA's record of successfully challenging leasing and development proposals in federal court and through administrative appeals. This proven track record gives companies an incentive to talk.

In each of these cases, we've found it worth the effort to reach across the table. We've learned several things in the process: it takes time to build trust between the parties, SUWA's staff knows the land and the places at risk better than anyone, and there

is no one-size-fits-all approach. There's no guarantee of success, either. Litigation is sometimes the last and best course.

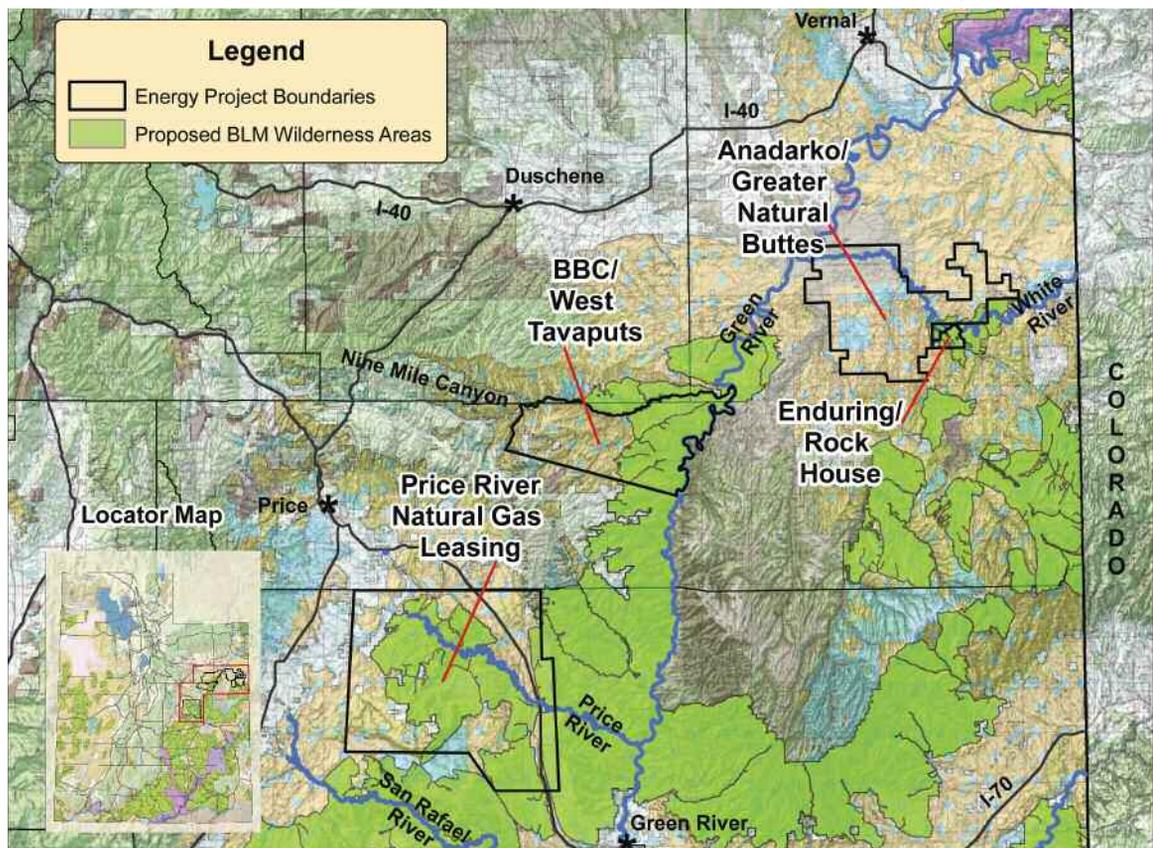
Desolation Canyon

Desolation Canyon is one of the largest roadless areas in the lower 48 states, and was one of the last to be charted. The canyon, with abundant wildlife, numerous cultural sites and rugged beauty, draws thousands of hunters and river runners annually.

SUWA's 2010 groundbreaking agreement with the Bill Barrett Corp. vastly reduced the company's drilling footprint on its existing leases and reduced the areas leased in the Desolation Canyon and Jack Canyon proposed wilderness areas.

Conservation gains: 8,945 acres of the Jack Canyon proposed wilderness and 56,432 acres of the Desolation Canyon proposed wilderness are no longer under lease.

Conservation Gains in the Greater Uinta Basin/Price River Regions



features

White River Canyon (south side)

The White River canyon is a visually stunning sandstone corridor sculpted into buttes, pinnacles, and towers that loom above wide beaches shaded by groves of statuesque cottonwoods.

SUWA successfully challenged in federal district court Enduring Resources' plans to drill 65 wells from 24 well pads in the White River proposed wilderness area. In the spring of 2011, SUWA, the company and the BLM announced that the parties had reached an agreement limiting the company to no more than nine new surface locations on existing leases. BLM also marked as "closed" two controversial routes in the White River proposed wilderness areas (something it was supposed to have done years ago but just hadn't gotten around to). The Interior Board of Land Appeals recently upheld the agency's decision to sign those routes as closed.

Conservation gains: 15 new well-pad locations in proposed wilderness have been eliminated and two vehicle routes are now closed that otherwise would allow motorized recreational access within proposed wilderness down to the White River.

White River Canyon (north side)

Under a 2012 agreement with SUWA, Anadarko Petroleum Corp. agreed to acquire private land within the White River proposed wilderness and turn it over to a third party land trust for conservation. It also agreed to a significantly reduced footprint on the company's existing leases in the White River proposed wilderness and to mitigation of visual impacts from existing facilities.

Conservation gains: acquisition of 640 acres now under conservation easements along two to three miles of White River frontage within proposed wilderness, elimination of 17 new drill locations in proposed wilderness, and mitigation of visual impacts from drilling (reducing tank sizes or relocating them).

Price River/Natural Gas Leasing

The Price River on the eastern flank of the San Rafael Swell is a small stream winding through a colorful high desert landscape. Since 2002, SUWA has actively challenged the Utah BLM's efforts to sell oil and gas leases in the Price River and Lost Spring Wash proposed wilderness areas (areas the BLM agrees are wilderness caliber). As a result of



© Ray Bloxham/SUWA

As a result of two recent agreements, the White River proposed wilderness will be largely free from the sights and sounds of oil and gas development.



© Ray Bloxham/SUWA

Contemplating a part of the Desolation Canyon proposed wilderness that's been spared from development thanks to SUWA's agreement with Bill Barrett Corp.

our work over the last 10 years, the overwhelming majority of leases in the region have been relinquished.

Conservation gains: Over 80 percent of roughly 100,000 acres of the existing leases on the wild lands in the Price River region have been relinquished.

—Steve Bloch

DC news

How Low Can They Go? Better Not to Ask

The House Natural Resources Committee has bent over backwards recently for the energy industry, approving bill after bill to expedite ravaging the American West for short-term profits. The committee has stooped so low, so often, Chubby Checker's "Limbo Rock" should be its official theme song.

So when six representatives stood tall for our public lands, demanding that Desolation Canyon be spared from a natural gas project needlessly destructive in scope, it was a refreshing change from the House's broken record of anti-conservation rhetoric.

Reps. Maurice Hinchey, Ed Markey, Rush Holt, Raul Grijalva, Jim Moran, and Diana DeGette urged the Interior Department to reconsider a pro-

posal by Gasco Energy to drill over 200 wells in the Desolation Canyon proposed wilderness, instead endorsing a "win-win" alternative that allows 1,100 wells elsewhere and preserves the wildness of a canyon beloved by backcountry river-runners. "Protecting this area is a matter of preeminent importance to us," they wrote to Secretary Ken Salazar.

The win-win ideal contrasts sharply with an ugly trio of bills from Colorado congressmen that passed the committee in May, myopically focused on lining industry pockets at the expense of everyone else:

- Rep. Scott Tipton's H.R. 4381 requires the DOI and Forest Service to formulate a plan to dramatically increase energy development and to essentially meet a quota.
- Rep. Mike Coffman's H.R. 4382 mandates that the BLM lease at least 25 percent of parcels nomi-

Uintah County's Phantom Pain

Testifying before congressional committees can be scary. It can be downright terrifying if you show up to defend the indefensible and encounter a congressman who knows your subject better than you do. That's like showing up at a gun fight with only a knife.

Uintah County Commissioner Mike McKee learned all about that during a late May hearing before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee on Technology. The panel convened the hearing to mau-mau the BLM over proposed rules for hydraulic fracturing. (This technique involves pumping fluid deep underground to break up rock formations, releasing gas trapped in it. What the fluids may be doing to water quality is a major controversy across the country. That prompted the regulations.)

Uintah County is Utah's largest natural gas producer (and it has correspondingly high winter ozone levels too). McKee's role was to inveigh against the rules as yet another onerous federal regulation of the kind already driving jobs out of his little county in northeastern Utah and causing, purportedly, just all sorts of economic pain.

Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) wanted to better understand the pain. What's the unemployment rate in Uintah County, say? McKee wasn't sure; he'd have to check. Rep. Connolly, on the other hand, was quite sure; he'd already checked. It is 4.1 percent, lowest among Utah counties. (For the sake of comparison, it's less than half the U.S. rate.)

Them blasted federal regulations . . .

nated by industry in any state annually, regardless of the nomination's suitability. So if a company nominates four parcels in, say, Greater Canyonlands, they'd automatically get one (fox, henhouse, anyone?).

- Rep. Doug Lamborn's H.R. 4383 sets an arbitrary time limit for permits to be automatically approved, and, in an affront to Americans' constitutional rights, sets a series of punitive hurdles on anyone seeking to protest the leases.

With such extremism becoming standard, it's wonderful to see a few principled House members standing up for the wild places so irreplaceable in our world and in our hearts. Thank you, Reps. Hinchey, Markey, Holt, Grijalva, Degette, and Moran. Keep standing tall.

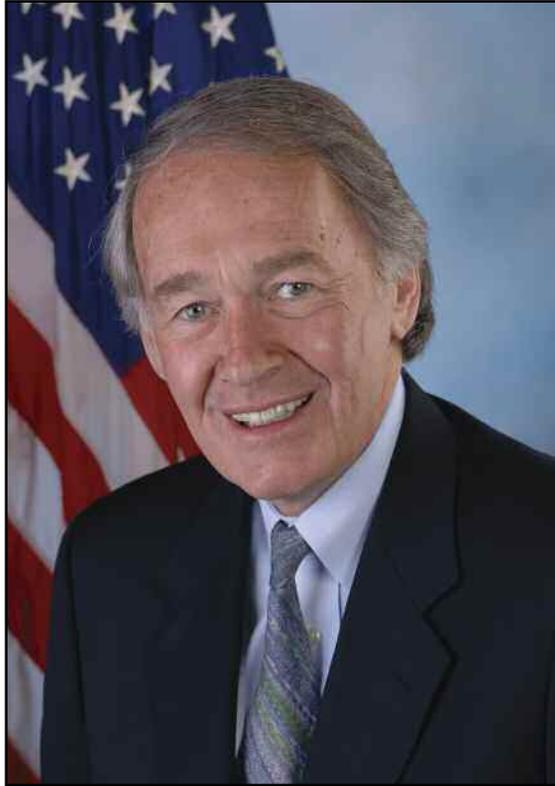
—Jen Beasley

Red Rock Champion Rep. Ed Markey Holds the Line

His party may remain in the minority, but Massachusetts Rep. Ed Markey has not rolled over when it comes to defending what he believes in. As the top Democrat on the House Committee on Natural Resources, Markey has fought at every turn as majority committee members push one outrageous bill after another. One monstrosity would remove protections from 60 million acres of protected wilderness study areas and roadless areas. Another would open designated wilderness areas to motorized and commercial uses and return us to the Bush administration's drilling policies.

Ed Markey is no newcomer to public land protection. He has cosponsored America's Red Rock Wilderness Act since 1990, a year after Utah Rep. Wayne Owens first introduced it. Since 2001, he has been the lead sponsor of the Udall-Eisenhower Wilderness Act, which would designate the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as wilderness. His new role at the top of the Natural Resources Committee makes his role in defense of America's public lands even more influential.

Debates in that committee have run the gamut from simple authorizations to the truly absurd. Throughout, Mr. Markey has used his quick wit, sharp



Rep. Ed Markey (public domain photo).

tongue and clear understanding of the issues (aided in this by a superb staff) to oppose a barrage of the most harshly anti-environmental legislation seen in a very long time.

While the passage of many—or any—bills from the Natural Resources Committee might seem unfortunate in the current climate, Mr. Markey can take credit for keeping most of the committee's proposals off of the House floor and keeping any of them from reaching the President's desk.

We should all be thankful for the leadership and support that champions like Congressman Ed Markey provide.

—Richard Peterson-Cremer

Even if you don't live in Rep. Markey's district, please thank him for supporting Utah wilderness by calling his office at (202) 225-2836!

canyon country updates

State of Utah Drops RS 2477 Litigation Bomb

May was an extraordinarily busy month for the State of Utah. In the span of about two weeks, it filed 21 lawsuits—over 27,000 pages of written complaints (the document that initiates the suit), not including thousands of pages of exhibits. In all, the state and its county partners are seeking about 12,000 RS 2477 claims (see sidebar, opposite page) in national parks, two wilderness areas, two national wildlife refuges, proposed wilderness areas and wilderness study areas, and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. (Closer review of the original 25,000 claims led the state to drop about 5,000 of them and renumber the remainder.)

It looks like about 2,000 of these claims are the so-called Class B roads, a state classification for roads that counties have graded and maintained. The Burr Trail and Buckhorn Wash roads are examples of Class Bs. Most of these are not controversial and no one is trying to close them (although their scope can be an issue).

On the other hand, the remaining 10,000 routes are Class D routes that are not mechanically maintained by the counties. They are largely rough two-tracks and primitive trails that are, at best, infrequently used and lead to no identifiable destination.

How the federal court in Utah will handle this massive litigation is anyone's guess; there's virtually no precedent for using the courts to launch such a sweeping attack against federal public lands.

And it is sure to be an onerous and expensive slog through the courts. As the federal Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals emphasized in its landmark decision in *SUWA v. BLM*, “desultory” or occasional use is simply not enough to establish a valid RS 2477 right-of-way. The state and counties also have to prove that the statute of limitations has not yet run, that the land was not already reserved at the time of 10 years' use, and that the route is a highway, serving the public need to reach some destination.



© Ray Bloxham/SUWA

On April 24th, Deputy Attorney General (and AG candidate) John Swallow told KSL News: “At the end of every one of these roads there’s something important.” We’re guessing he hasn’t been to the end of the many dry stream beds, faint trails and cow paths he calls “roads,” like this one in the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

canyon country updates

. . . [The litigation] is not needed, as they say, to keep vital transportation open and businesses operating. The intent is to formalize the status of all kinds of trails and paths as roads to keep wilderness study areas open to future development and foreclose the possibility of more wilderness designations of lands valuable for their scenic beauty, cultural importance and allure for quiet recreation.

. . . The 19th century federal law RS 2477 was intended to encourage mineral development by handing routes across public lands to local jurisdictions. That law was repealed in 1976 when Congress decided to retain most remaining public lands going forward and created a multiple-use mission for the Bureau of Land Management. Roads that predated 1976 were considered valid through a “grandfathering” provision. Courts have ruled that counties and states must claim roads through federal lands separately by proving continuous use prior to 1976.

Environmental groups and the outdoor recreation industry leader Black Diamond are contesting Utah’s claims, saying many of the routes are the result of only recent use by all-terrain vehicles and others are merely wildlife trails.

Utahns want wilderness areas protected. Their money should not be used to pave the way for development.

—April 27, 2012 *Salt Lake Tribune* editorial

In their failed attempt to make such a case in Salt Creek in Canyonlands National Park, the state and San Juan County have already spent over \$1 million. That is for one claim. Multiply that by 12,000 and it becomes clear what a huge financial boondoggle this is.

Imagine how many teachers the state could hire with that money?

We’re still tabulating the numbers and waiting for final mapping data from the state, but we do know based on our initial review that thousands of these claims slice through lands proposed for wilderness designation in America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act.

SUWA has expanded its legal capacity and will actively engage in the state’s use of the courts in its latest attack on our public lands.

—Heidi McIntosh

[See more examples of state “road” claims on our website at suwa.org/StateClaims. To learn more about RS 2477 and the state’s litigation, go to suwa.org/rs2477.]

ORVs More Important than Clean Water?

Arch Canyon is a rare and beautiful oasis tucked among southeastern Utah’s slickrock canyons and juniper-spotted mesas. Spring runoff from the Abajo Mountains flows down the canyon, nurturing cottonwoods, willows and other riparian vegetation, including Mexican-spotted owl habitat. In addition to mule deer and other wildlife, two sensitive fish species, beavers, toads and frogs depend on the stream as it flows down the canyon to Comb Wash, nearly eight miles below the boundary between BLM and higher elevation Forest Service land.

Recently, Comb Wash and all its tributaries (including Arch Canyon) were included on the state’s list of “impaired” waters under the federal Clean Water Act: streams, lakes or springs that are not achieving or are not expected to achieve state water quality standards.

Incredibly, after the stream was added to the unhappy list of impaired Utah waters, the BLM approved a five-year permit for the Jeep Jamboree. The permit allows hordes of jeeps to churn up the stream, all the way to the “closed” sign at the Forest Service

canyon country updates



© Kathlene Audette

The BLM has approved a five-year Jeep Jamboree permit for Arch Canyon, though its stream is already on the state's list of "impaired" waters.

boundary, then head back down the canyon, driving through the stream nearly 120 times.

The workings of the bureaucratic mind are terrible to contemplate. Does the BLM think that because Arch Canyon is already a troubled water course we might as well finish it off with ORVs? Or can the agency possibly believe that giving the Jeep Jamboree a five-year permit will improve the water quality in the canyon? Well, we don't think it will. We have appealed the BLM's decision permitting the event and we'll keep you updated.

—Liz Thomas

BLM Concedes Failure to Protect Artifacts

The Bureau of Land Management has agreed with SUWA that it failed to comply with federal law when it issued a permit for an all terrain vehicle "safari," a three-day affair in which as many as 400 ATVs travel over 500 miles of routes on public land in southeastern Utah's San Juan County.

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), requires federal agencies to identify and protect

prehistoric artifacts. However, the BLM did not conduct cultural surveys before issuing the permit. Worse, it didn't even bother to review existing cultural inventories, conducted over the years for various energy and other developments, that could shed light on cultural sites that routes might endanger.

SUWA appealed that decision. In the course of the appeal, the agency agreed that it had failed to comply with the NHPA and pledged to conduct appropriate cultural resource reviews and environmental analyses before issuing any new safari permits.

Sadly, the BLM's behavior in this instance is not an isolated example but part of a pattern of neglect of Utah's rich archaeological resources. The extraordinary density of these sites, many eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, makes this region among the most significant anywhere. Yet, BLM archaeologists and others agree that they've surveyed less than 10 percent of these public lands to identify and record their cultural resources. The agency's pledge to follow the law in the future is welcome and SUWA will be watching to make sure it does.

—Liz Thomas

canyon country updates

Agencies Revising Land Use Plans across West to Protect Greater Sage Grouse

The greater sage grouse is often described as a “chicken-like” bird that was once prolific in the sagebrush steppe of the Interior West but whose numbers have fallen precipitously in recent years. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) agrees that the bird, largest of our grouse, is in trouble west-wide and should be protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

But, as is often the case, the FWS announced a few years ago that listing was “precluded” by the need to address other, higher priority species first. Following litigation by some conservation groups, a federal judge has directed the service to decide by 2015 whether or not to list the greater sage grouse as a threatened or endangered species.

One of the reasons the FWS says the bird should be listed is that BLM and U.S. Forest Service land use plans authorize unacceptable and downright harmful levels of things like oil and gas leasing and development, grazing, coal mining and off-road vehicle use—all of which threaten the grouse. In an effort to forestall a listing decision, the BLM and Forest Service have kicked off a west-wide effort to consider revising these plans and some of the land use allocation decisions made in them by 2014. Included in the mix are several Utah BLM field



Photo by Jeremy R. Roberts

A male greater sage grouse in mating display.

offices, including Vernal, Price, Richfield, Cedar City, Kanab, Fillmore and Salt Lake.

SUWA has worked with our partners at WildEarth Guardians, Wild Utah Project, Grand Canyon Trust, and others to submit a first round of comments on the proposal. The next round of public input should be in the fall of 2012 when the BLM releases its draft Utah environmental impact statement for public review. You’ll find the most current information about this initiative at our website at suwa.org.

—Steve Bloch

State of Utah Has Its Own Ideas about the Greater Sage Grouse

While the BLM and Forest Service are working to revise their plans to do a better job at protecting the bird, the state of Utah is working to come up with its own plans and maps of which greater sage grouse populations are important to protect.

As you might expect, this process is a bit dicey. The group making these decisions is comprised of industry representatives, local and state officials, a handful of federal officials, and a grand total of one “environmentalist.” At a recent meeting, Public Land Policy Coordination Office Director and former Gale Norton-era BLM Director Kathleen Clarke urged the state to come with its own science to “refute” federal officials: “I think we should try and come up with some science that is honest and true and refutes it [federal findings].”

canyon country updates

Clamor for Greater Canyonlands Protection Continues

If not yet quite a roar, our campaign to protect the Greater Canyonlands region is no longer just a murmur, either. President Obama has heard from thousands of people so far asking him to use his power under the Antiquities Act to protect the area.

Greater Canyonlands—the 1.4 million acres of BLM lands surrounding Canyonlands National Park—remains one of the last untouched frontiers of the West. It is one of the largest roadless areas in the lower 48 states. And the Green, Dirty Devil and San Rafael Rivers make it one of the Colorado Plateau's most critical watersheds.

But it's also a region under imminent threat from rampant off-road vehicle abuse, oil, gas and potash mining, and even proposed tar sands strip mining.

That's why people all over the country are speaking up, urging President Obama to show his environmental leadership by protecting this incredible landscape for future generations. And that's why SUWA and its coalition partners, including the Sierra Club,

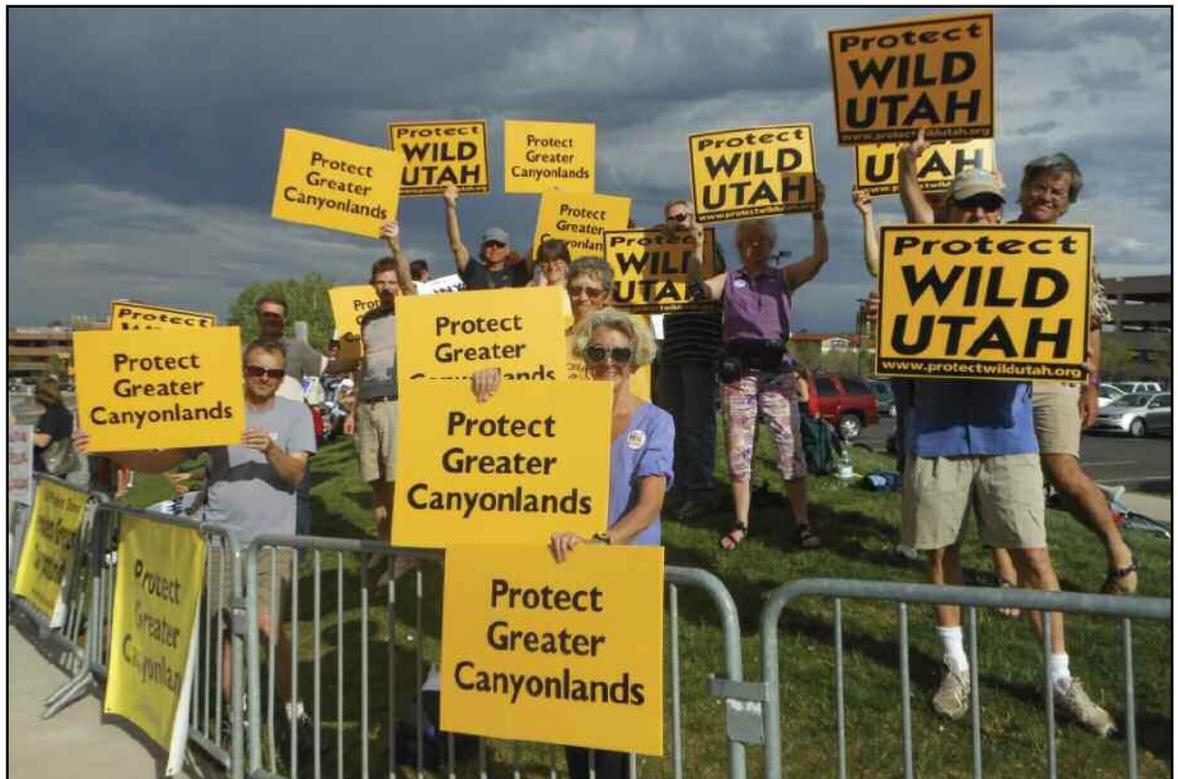
the Grand Canyon Trust, and NRDC, are working every day to make sure people understand the threats facing the heart of the Colorado Plateau and organizing support for its protection.

Utah

SUWA has joined with Canyon Country Rising Tide, part of a national activists' network, and other coalition partners to organize local support for monument designation among business owners, mountain bikers, climbers, rafters and others. This partnership led to the first Moab Earth Day Bazaar (see "Moab Celebrates Greater Canyonlands at Earth Day Event" on page 20).

Colorado

Colorado looms large in the 2012 presidential race, and President Obama has visited five times since September 2011. That gives Coloradans, many of whom are passionate about the canyon country, an important opportunity to show regional support for Greater Canyonlands protection. It's an opportunity that they've seized enthusiastically.



Activists await Obama's motorcade in Boulder, CO.

Photo by Gina Ianelli

canyon country updates



Attendees of our "Cliffs, Canyons and Climbers" event show their support for protecting Greater Canyonlands.

Photo by Fran Bagenal

SUWA organizers Terri Martin and Jackie Feinberg spent much of the spring on the ground in Colorado, helping to develop a strong network of advocates for Greater Canyonlands. In addition to dozens of events on college campuses and in communities across the Front Range, highlights included:

- **Banner Brigades:** Local activists holding bright yellow "Protect Greater Canyonlands" signs have greeted President Obama on each of his Colorado visits. During an April visit, his motorcade passed the signs twice, thanks to two enterprising activists who loaded their signs onto their bicycles and intercepted the caravan on its way to the airport.
- **Aron Ralston in Boulder:** March 8 saw an extraordinary evening of action for Greater Canyonlands when 800 people packed the Boulder Theatre to hear Aron Ralston (subject of the film "127 Hours") tell his remarkable story of the entrapment and freedom he experienced in the Greater Canyonlands area. He asked the audience to give back to the landscape that transformed his life. "When you die and get your life back, you know what's important to you," Aron said. "It's not enough to go out in places like Greater Canyonlands and have fun. You also need to give back."
- **Climbers for Greater Canyonlands:** On May 17, renowned climbers Lynn Hill and Steve "Crusher" Bartlett headlined an event to a packed crowd of about 150 people at Neptune Mountaineering in Boulder, highlighting why climbers and other outdoor recreationists should care about protecting Greater Canyonlands. The event was cosponsored by the Boulder Climbing Community and Coloradans for Utah Wilderness, with generous support from Patagonia, Avery Brewing Company, and Sharp End Publishing.

(Continued next page)

Take Action for Greater Canyonlands!

Here are some actions you can take to help us protect this exceptional place:

- ✓ "Like" Protect Greater Canyonlands on Facebook: [facebook.com/greatercanyonlands](https://www.facebook.com/greatercanyonlands)
- ✓ Join our photo campaign. Visit [greatercanyonlands.org](https://www.greatercanyonlands.org) to print out a "President Obama: Protect Greater Canyonlands!" sign and upload your photo message.
- ✓ Tweet: @whitehouse President Obama: Protect #GreaterCanyonlands!
- ✓ Volunteer for a "Banner Brigade" and hold up Protect Greater Canyonlands signs when President Obama comes to your area.
- ✓ Go to [greatercanyonlands.org](https://www.greatercanyonlands.org) to request a stack of Protect Greater Canyonlands postcards that you and your friends can sign. (Send them back to us and we'll forward them to President Obama)
- ✓ Join the group of artists and photographers who support protecting Greater Canyonlands by emailing jackie@suwa.org. Visit [suwa.org/artists](https://www.suwa.org/artists) for more information.
- ✓ Visit [greatercanyonlands.org](https://www.greatercanyonlands.org) for more ways to get involved and to send an email to President Obama today!
- ✓ If you're not already on our email list, sign up at [suwa.org](https://www.suwa.org).

canyon country updates

(Continued from page 17)

Nationwide

Thanks to the support of activists like you, President Obama has received nearly 12,000 postcards from all 50 states urging him to protect Greater Canyonlands. And thanks to the efforts of SUWA's midwest field organizer, Clayton Daughenbaugh, the Wisconsin Friends of Utah Wilderness brought the message to Canoeopia (the largest quiet water-sports outdoor retailer event in the country). These volunteers collected several hundred additional postcards from outdoor lovers throughout the region.

Want to help the effort to Protect Greater Canyonlands? See sidebar on page 17 for actions you can take. Together, we can convince President Obama to use his authority to protect this treasured heart of the Colorado Plateau.

—*Mathew Gross, Terri Martin, Jackie Feinberg*

Another Attempt to Dam Long Canyon

We can't think of anything that has a longer shelf life than a truly stupid idea in Utah. A California-based (and ironically named) company, Utah Independent Power, is again out to prove it with its scheme to dam Long Canyon just outside Moab. It has filed a preliminary permit application for the project with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

Long Canyon is a magnificent redrock canyon that flows directly into the Colorado River. It is known for fantastic recreational opportunities including hiking, rock climbing, mountain biking and photography. The canyon also provides critical habitat for species such as desert bighorn sheep.

It is worth noting that this new proposal is virtually identical to the same company's 2008 proposal in

Resource Management Plan Litigation Starts Rolling

After some fits, starts and failed negotiations, litigation challenging the BLM's dreadful Utah resource management plans (RMPs) appears likely to move forward.

As we've previously reported, in the fall of 2008 the Utah BLM issued six final RMPs, the plans that guide its on-the-ground management decisions for public lands. The six at issue here govern agency decisions for almost all of southeastern Utah (excluding the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument). The plans were disastrous. They designated over 20,000 miles of off-road vehicle trails, enough to drive from New York to Los Angeles seven times. And they offered an all-you-can eat feast to the oil and gas industry: one field office opened 90 percent of its land to oil and gas leasing and development.

These RMPs are a vestige of the waning days of the Bush administration. Unfortunately, the Obama administration has picked up where its predecessor left off and is actively defending the plans.

SUWA and a coalition of partners filed a lawsuit against three of the RMPs early on. We succeeded in getting a temporary restraining order in federal court in the District of Columbia to stop an oil and gas lease sale based on the three plans (see Spring 2009 issue, page 10). With that crisis averted, our lawsuit was expanded to encompass the remaining three RMPs.

Unfortunately, the lawsuit then became stuck in the DC federal court due to a combination of failed negotiations with the BLM and judicial inaction. Finally, the clouds parted and the case was transferred to federal district court in Utah at the end of April and assigned to Judge Dale Kimball. Judge Kimball has proved to be active and engaged in this litigation and we trust that this case will now move forward. We will keep you up to date.

canyon country updates



Scenic Long Canyon is no place for a dam.

© Tim Peterson (timpetersonphotography.com)

both general objectives and ridiculous particulars. In addition to myriad piping and transmission lines, the proposed Long Canyon Pumped Storage Project would include construction of upper and lower reservoirs within the canyon. The system would pump water from the Colorado River uphill into the upper reservoir at night when electricity is less expensive, then release it downhill through turbines to generate electricity during the daytime. A preliminary permit from FERC grants the project proponent a three-year window to study the feasibility of the proposed hydroelectric project and a first-in-time right to file a license application with the commission.

Like the earlier version, this one is little more than the pipe dream of a project proponent with a shaky grip on reality. The last proposal fell flat on its face when the proponent failed to take any meaningful action towards determining the project's feasibility. We expect the same for this similarly nonsensical plan, but this is, after all, Utah. So we have submitted comments to FERC, urging the commission to deny the application.

—Neal Clark

BLM Continues to Chip Away at Remoteness

Although the Utah BLM can't seem to say no to a bad idea, it is getting better at bullet-proofing its environmental analyses in order to squeak by the legal requirements imposed by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Prime examples include the BLM's recent decisions to allow Garfield County to pave a portion of the

Notom Road, and to allow very large groups to camp along the Hole-in-the-Rock Road in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (See our Spring 2012 and Summer 2011 issues, respectively, for more information). In both cases, after reviewing public comments, the BLM tweaked its environmental analyses so they would minimally comply with the law. But they still stink.

BLM's short-sighted Notom Road decision placates county officials at the expense of the growing number of visitors who are trying to get away from the crowds, and who cherish the experience of traveling via a lonely dirt road bordered by scenic wildlands to explore and experience quiet and solitude.

Similarly, the BLM caved to local pressure with its decision to permit large-group use along the Hole-in-the-Rock road. Some Mormon Church groups want large-group experiences when visiting the area that Mormon pioneers traveled on their journey from Escalante to the Colorado River. It is unlikely that most monument visitors will feel the same. They come to experience what the presidential proclamation called this "rugged and remote region . . . [an] unspoiled natural area that remains a frontier." For them, encountering 145 people at Dance Hall Rock and tent cities strewn along the Hole-in-the-Rock road will be a rude awakening.

Caving in to local pressures and papering over bad decisions to make them pass legal muster is not unique to the Utah BLM. But the agency here has mastered the game. All in all, it is a poor way to manage some of the most scenic, wild and remote lands in the nation.

—Liz Thomas

inside SUWA

Moab Celebrates Greater Canyonlands at Earth Day Event

Hundreds of people came out to Moab's Swanny City Park on April 21 for the first Moab Earth Day Bazaar: An Ode to Greater Canyonlands. The day-long event featured local art, craft and food vendors, performances by local musicians, and educational opportunities on topics such as the proposed Green River nuclear power plant, tar sands and oil shale development, and SUWA's Greater Canyonlands campaign. Organizers SUWA and Canyon Country Rising Tide intend the bazaar to become an annual event. (Check out the Canyon Country Rising Tide website at <http://moabcanyon-countryrisingtide.wordpress.com>.)

SUWA staff spent the day discussing with residents the values of the region as well as present and foreseeable threats to its integrity—including



© Liz Thomas/SUWA

Even President Obama made an appearance at the Moab Earth Day Bazaar.

oil, natural gas and potash exploration, mineral leasing and off-road vehicle use. We explained SUWA's campaign to increase protection for the region and how citizens can help, particularly in raising visibility of the issue both locally and nationally.

Our message was well received and strong expressions of support were encouraging. Our goal is to make sure that President Obama continues to hear a swelling drum-beat of support for protecting the Greater Canyonlands. Speaking of President Obama, he showed up at the event and graciously allowed residents to be photographed with him all afternoon. (Skeptics think that it wasn't Mr. Obama at all but a really lifelike cardboard cut-out . . .)

Join Us for the SUWA Roundup this September!

Calling all desert rats: SUWA's 2012 membership gathering at Hidden Splendor is scheduled for **September 21-23**.

The Roundup offers SUWA members, activists and staff the opportunity to get to know each other while relaxing in the beautiful San Rafael Swell. Activities include a discussion of Utah wilderness issues with SUWA staff, a potluck dinner, evening music around the campfire, and—best of all—guided day-hikes in the Muddy Creek proposed wilderness. Sunday morning you'll awake to freshly brewed coffee and breakfast prepared by the SUWA staff in thanks for all your support and dedication.

If you plan to attend this year's Roundup, here's what you should bring: a potluck dish serving five people for Saturday evening (if you plan to eat with the group), your own food for Friday evening and Saturday breakfast, lunch, and snacks, camping gear, plenty of drinking water (1-2 gallons per person/day), eating utensils, and folding chairs. Feel free to bring your own musical instruments and favorite libations, too.

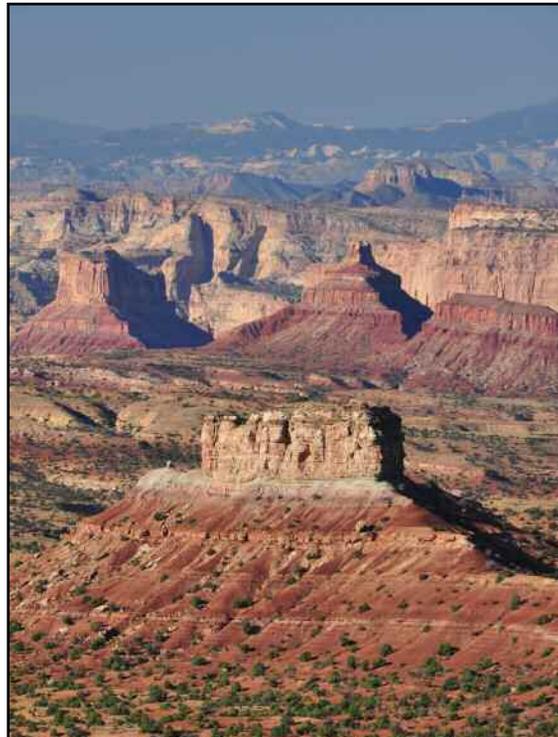
To RSVP or for more information please visit suwa.org/roundup2012 or contact Kathlene Audette at kathlene@suwa.org, (801) 236-3763.

Goodbye to Tom Gnojek, One of the Good Guys

We take a moment to mourn the passing of our friend, Tom Gnojek, who worked for more than two decades in the BLM's Price field office as a wilderness and recreation specialist.

Tom was passionate about the public lands in his charge, which included the incomparable San Rafael Swell and greater Desolation Canyon region. He also served as a co-team lead in the BLM's 1998 Utah wilderness inventory effort (which was overseen by recently retired BLM Director Bob Abbey). Tom did not pull punches and often pressed his managers, co-workers, and us to do better by the land.

He worked with all comers. You would be just as likely to run into him overseeing a service project sponsored by an ORV group as you would to see him with SUWA's Ray Bloxham building buck-and-rail fencing in the Swell. Tom left big shoes (very big shoes: he was a bear of a man) to fill. We will miss him.



© Ray Bloxham/SUWA

The San Rafael Swell was one of Tom's favorite places to work.



© Kathlene Audette/SUWA

Thanks for Opening Your Doors . . .

SUWA's awesome canvass team, led by Mike Schultz of Fieldworks, has been knocking on over 25,000 doors in the Salt Lake City area, educating Utahns about the threats to redrock wilderness and engaging them in our work to protect wild Utah.

Our thanks go out to the Fieldworks crew for their hard work and professionalism, and to everyone who has joined, renewed their membership, or signed postcards at the door.

Canvassers from front to back, left to right: Dave Hoza, Travis Jennings, Rachel Carter, Andrea Glade, Tom Becnel, Maxx Cohen, Winston Brinkerhoff, Mike Schultz, Adrian Conkling, John Blume.

inside SUWA

Thank You SUWA Business Members!

SUWA's Business Membership Program is a great way for your small business or company to support the protection of Utah's redrock country. If you own a business and care deeply about protecting Utah's magnificent wilderness lands for future generations, please consider joining today. For a donation of \$150 or more, we'll send you a business member window decal and print your company's name in our newsletter (once a year) and on our website (with a link) at suwa.org/businessmembers. At higher levels of support we offer additional benefits, such as a featured spot in our monthly e-newsletter. For more information, please contact Kathlene Audette at (801) 236-3763 or kathlene@suwa.org.

Listed below are businesses from Utah and across the country that currently support Utah wilderness through SUWA's business member program.

Entrada Members

(\$5,000+)

Bret Webster Images, UT
Patagonia, CA
Treasure Mountain Inn, UT

Kayenta Members

(\$1,000-\$4,999)

Powderhound Marketing, UT
Stone Forest Inc, NM

Wingate Members

(\$500-\$999)

A Wanderlust Adventure, CO
Boulder Mountain Lodge, UT
Charles Cramer Photography, CA
Glenn Randall Writing and
Photography, CO
Imlay Canyon Gear, UT
Medical Plaza Pharmacy, UT
Red Rock Brewing Company, UT
Rocking V Cafe, UT

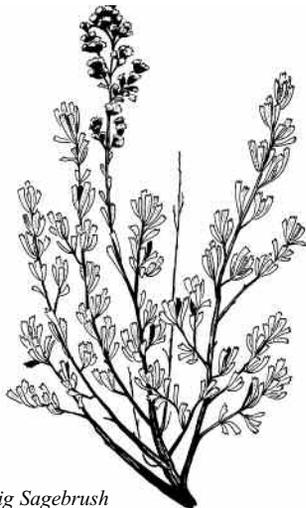
Trio Restaurant Group, UT
Ultralight Adventure Equipment, UT
With Gaia Design, UT
Workspace Installations LLC

Moenkopi Members

(\$150-\$499)

Advanced Media Strategies, WA
Alta Lodge, UT
American Image Photography, MI
Avenues Yoga, UT
Baked In Telluride, CO
Brown Bag Farms, CA
Canyon Voyages Adventure Company,
UT
Canyonlands Field Institute, UT
Capitola Book Cafe, CA
Charles Wood Photography, UT
Community Builders Cooperative, MA
Consulting Psychologists, AZ
Deanna Rosen LCSW, UT
Deer Hill Expeditions, CO
Dennis Chavez Development
Corporation, NM
Desert Highlights, UT
Faceplant, UT
Githens Properties, LLC, CO
Gospel Flat Farm, CA
Haymaker Construction, CA
High Country Appraisal, CO
Highway 89 Media, UT
Horsethief Ranch, CO
Hyperspod Sports, ID
Injoy Productions, CO
Institute of Taoist Education and
Acupuncture, Inc, CO
James Kay Photography, UT
Law Office of Robert Miller, AZ
Lazy Lizard International Hostel, UT

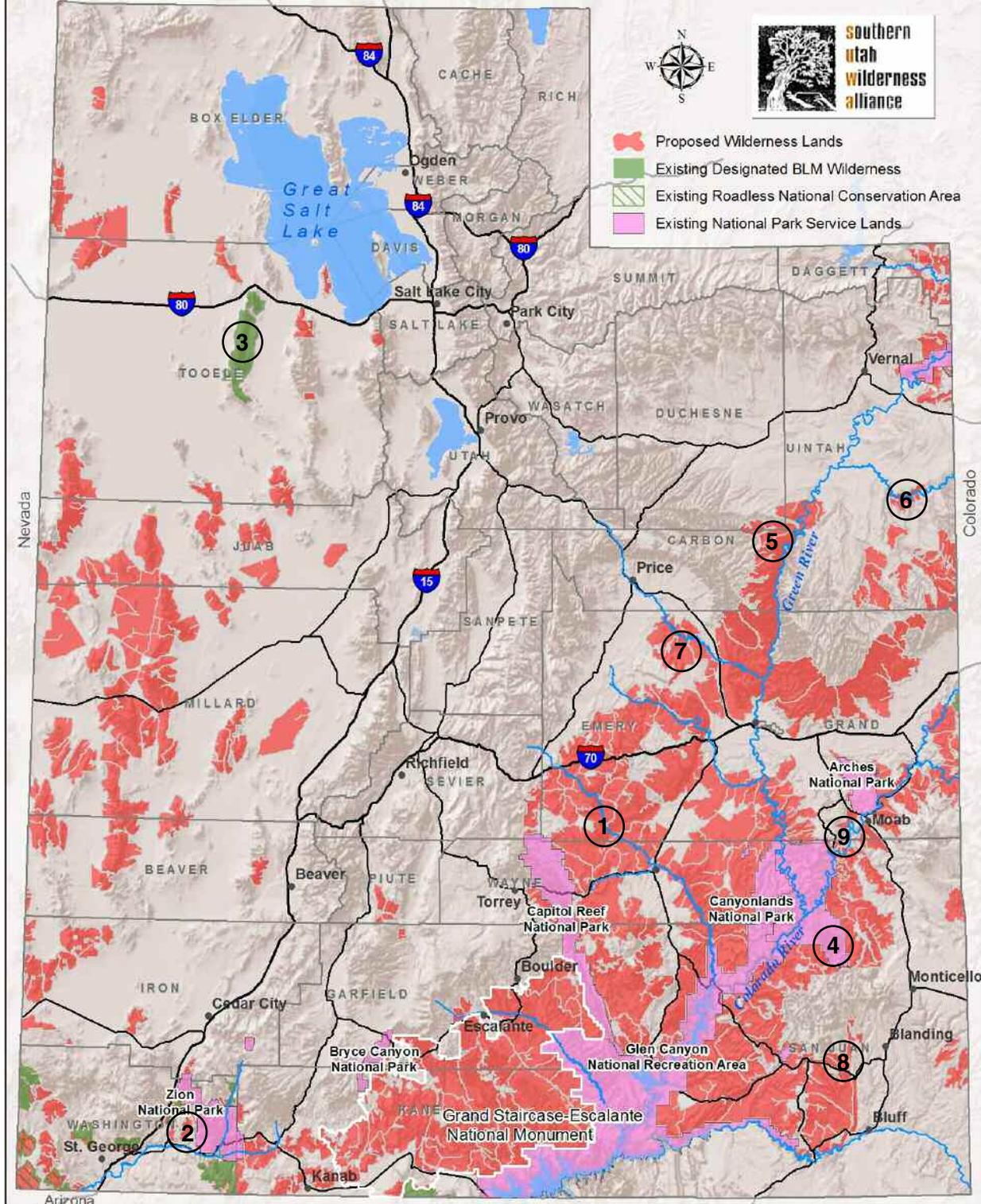
Leslie T Gray, Appraisal and
Consulting, CO
Lucky Dog Communications, UT
Manning Curtis Bradshaw & Bednar,
UT
Matheson Design, OR
Maui Mountain Environmentally
Friendly Coffee, HI
Mesa Farm Market, UT
Moab Cliffs and Canyons, UT
Mountain Chalet, CO
Muench Photography Inc, NM
Neiman Wealth Management, LLC, FL
Nichols Expeditions, UT
Oasis Cafe, UT
Ody Brook Enterprises, MI
Pack Rat Outdoor Center, AR
Page Speiser LCSW, UT
Petzl America, UT
Phillips Gallery, UT
Polar Equipment, CA
Richard Farrell CPA, CO
Rocky Collins Construction, UT
Ruby Canyon Engineering, CO
San Juan Constructors, AZ
Select Stone, Inc, MT
Selinda Research Associates, IL
Sharp End Publishing, CO
Squatters Pub Brewery, UT
Stephen L. Gilsdorf CPA, AZ
Steven Lamb Attorney At Law, KY
Streamline Industries Inc., UT
Tom Till Gallery, UT
Uinta Brewing Company, UT
Underwood Environmental, Inc, UT
Urban Utah Homes & Estates, UT
Words and Photographs by Stephen
Trimble, UT
ZAK Construction, OR



Big Sagebrush
©1999-2011 Zackery Zdinak

America's Red Rock Wilderness Act

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



Reference Map for Articles in this Issue

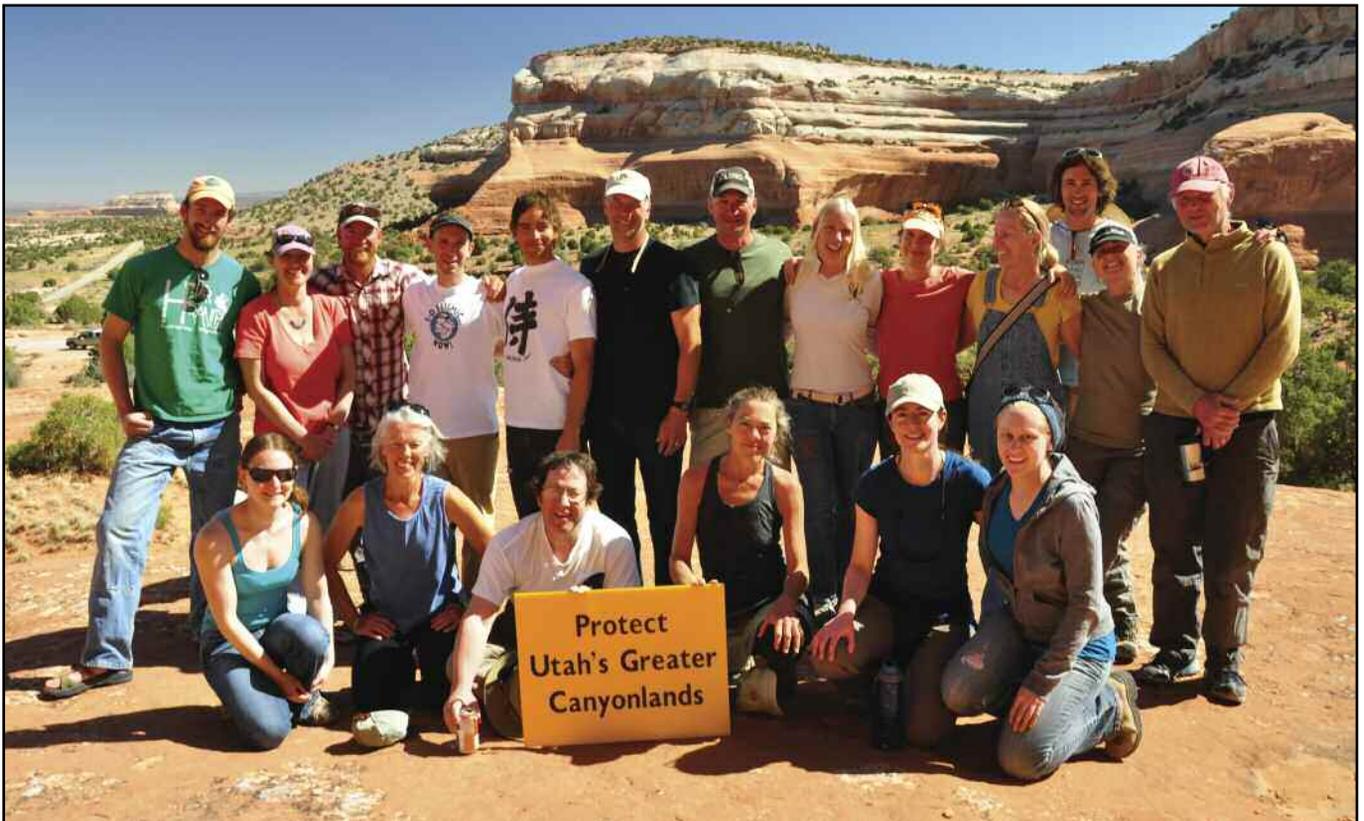
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|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| ① Muddy Creek (p. 5) | ④ Salt Creek Canyon (p. 7) | ⑦ Price River (p. 9) |
| ② Red Butte (p. 7) | ⑤ Desolation Canyon (p. 8) | ⑧ Arch Canyon (p. 13) |
| ③ Cedar Mountains (p. 7) | ⑥ White River (p. 9) | ⑨ Long Canyon (p. 18) |



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