Bears Ears Proposal Gains Momentum
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.

Cover Photo: A sweeping view from atop Comb Ridge, now part of the Bears Ears National Monument proposal (see page 5). Photo copyright Tim Peterson/Grand Canyon Trust.

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This issue of Redrock Wilderness was written by the following staff and outside contributors: Steve Bloch, Joe Bushyhead, Neal Clark, Jordan Giaconia, Willie Grayeyes, Scott Groene, Travis Hammill, Kya Marienfeld, Landon Newell, Dave Pacheco, and Jen Ujifusa. It was laid out by Diane Kelly.

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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SUWA, 425 East 100 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84111
The “Plundered Lands Initiative” or a 1.9 Million-Acre Bears Ears National Monument?

As we wrap up this issue of Redrock, the Utah congressional delegation threatens finally to introduce its so-called Public Lands Initiative (PLI) legislation—or more accurately the “Plundered Lands Initiative.”

The latest product will likely smell no better than earlier ones. That is speculation, of course; Reps. Rob Bishop and Jason Chaffetz have refused to talk to us for months. But our speculation is informed by experience with these two. The PLI will likely sustain the state’s public land grab, diminish wilderness protection, and demand “drill, baby, drill.” It will sneer at Tribal efforts to protect the Bears Ears region.

Bishop and Chaffetz will now characterize the PLI as a “yuuge” protective package that will obviate the need for the Obama administration to consider a Bears Ears National Monument. They hope to cause enough hesitation to run out Obama’s clock.

Their “maybe tomorrow” coyness about introducing the bill is unavoidable. Now they can raise it in the abstract and swear that we’re “gonna love it.” But the moment the PLI is unveiled, the administration will see clearly that the bill is an utter stinker and their claims that it will safeguard the Bears Ears are specious.

If time is running out on anyone, though, it is on Chaffetz and Bishop. There are too few legislative days left for their scheme to remain much of a threat.

Hope and Good Faith

We began hopeful discussions with the pair four years ago. Through the process, we built new relationships and a new level of trust, both valuable. Both are now victims of the Utah delegation’s willingness to say and do anything to prevent presidential protection of the Bears Ears.

Our early enthusiasm now seems dreadfully naïve. The slim chance that Bishop’s “grand bargain” might succeed rested on the need to impose on county commissioners the same conditions they imposed on conservationists: come to the table in good faith or be left out of the process.

That never happened. Instead, the Utah delegation pandered to commissioners at every turn. Still, we don’t regret agreeing to participate. Any effort to protect the redrock is worth the energy and worth the risk. So we tried. That is what SUWA does. We did all we could do; no regrets there, either.

The legislative route has closed, and so we’ve moved towards the executive branch and assisting where we can with the Tribes’ efforts. With your help, we will stop the Utah politicians on the PLI as we have stopped other wretched ideas so many times before. But the fates of the PLI and Bears Ears are merged (or as Yoda might put it, the Force has both a dark and light side). So this time, there is a presidential pen poised over a 1.9 million-acre Bears Ears monument proclamation when we succeed.

For the Redrock,

Scott Groene
Executive Director
Bears Ears Campaign Surges Despite Official Utah’s Rabid Opposition

The tribally-led effort to protect the ancestral Native American lands surrounding Bears Ears in southeastern Utah has been gaining a great deal of momentum—as well as press coverage.

In April, following a contentious hearing in Salt Lake City at which Utah politicians were openly disrespectful and rude to Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition Co-Chair and Ute Mountain Ute Councilwoman Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk, the editorial board at the Salt Lake Tribune came out with a ringing endorsement of the monument proposal. Noting that Rep. Rob Bishop’s Public Lands Initiative is unlikely to pass (and provide any meaningful protection to the place), the Tribune wrote that “Obama [should] end the delay, the bickering and the suspense and create the Bears Ears National Monument.”

Also in April, Interior Secretary Sally Jewell announced that she plans to travel to Utah this summer to “review conservation proposals.” If it wasn’t clear then that she was talking about Bears Ears, it is now: Secretary Jewell recently told Greenwire that “there are challenges on that landscape [the Bears Ears] right now that we’ve got to address.”

The State of Utah, of course, opposes the president’s use of the Antiquities Act to protect the region. In fact, Governor Gary Herbert called a special session of the Utah legislature on May 18th and in less than an hour the legislature passed a largely symbolic resolution opposing the creation of a Bears Ears monument. As usual, Utah politicians were out of step with their constituents; a poll released the day before the vote showed 71 percent of Utahns support the creation of the monument, and just 20 percent oppose it.

As spring has turned to summer, the story has truly gone national—and even international. The Washington Post published a long front-page feature in early June. The fact that opponents of the

On the subject of a possible Bears Ears National Monument, the New York Times recently noted that “Mr. Obama has nothing to lose politically, and everything to gain in terms of the environmental accomplishment.”
monument continue to be up to no good, and have been posting misleading and threatening flyers in San Juan County, caught the attention of a number of media outlets, including the venerable UK outlet, The Guardian. And on June 17th, as President Obama toured Yosemite to celebrate the centennial of America’s national parks, the editorial board of the New York Times endorsed Bears Ears, writing:

A monument designation would earn Mr. Obama the admiration of conservationists and the many Indian tribes that support the idea. It would also arouse the fury of the political establishment in a state where . . . powerful interests would resent the restrictions on off-road vehicles, oil and gas drilling, and other development that the designation would bring. But so what? Mr. Obama has nothing to lose politically, and everything to gain in terms of the environmental accomplishment.

With Secretary Jewell’s visit this summer, and a possible designation by the fall, expect to see more coverage of what rightfully should be America’s next national monument.

Because that monument would also be America’s first truly Native American national monument, we invited Willie Grayeyes, board chairman of Utah Diné Bikéyah, to explain the proposal from a Native American viewpoint (see opposite page).

—Mathew Gross

Badgers Get Framed

If opponents of a Bears Ears monument designation couldn’t dissemble, misrepresent and mislead, they couldn’t talk at all. But the outrageous comments of Utah State Rep. Mike Noel stand in a rancid class of their own. On June 15th, Noel dismissed the many reports of looting and grave-robbing at Bears Ears as a “scam.”

“There is no immediate threat,” he said. “There is no fresh digging. All we can see today are badger holes. We have to get a handle on these badgers because those little suckers are going down and digging up artifacts and sticking them in their holes.”

We await honey badger’s reaction.
Despite what some people believe, southeastern Utah was not an empty place waiting to be inhabited by Mormon settlers or discovered as a playground for city people. It has been home to Navajo people, as well as Paiute and Ute communities, for millennia. Together we lived and thrived within the mountains and redrock canyons of Utah.

Each of our Tribes, and others like the Hopi and Zuni, occupied this land and to this day maintain strong ties to this region called San Juan County, Utah. We have lived here since time immemorial, and some of these Native American civilizations built networks of villages that still stand today. This uniquely intact archaeological record is a testament to the sophistication of the ancient ones and is considered sacred to all Native American people, and especially those who can trace their ancestry to this place of great significance to American history.

Here, in Bears Ears, our spiritual traditions are rooted in the rocks, the trees, and the winds. Today, we continue to rely on these public lands for practicing our ceremonies; gathering herbs, firewood, and cedar poles; hunting for game; rejuvenating our spirits and caring for our sacred places; and passing along our oral traditions, our stories, that spring from the canyons and mountains surrounding Bears Ears.

That is why, for the first time in the 110-year history of the Antiquities Act, five Tribes have come together to formally ask the president to use the act not only on our behalf but for the benefit of all people, by proclaiming Bears Ears a national monument.

A Plea from the Hearts of the People

But some may ask, where did this proposal to protect Bears Ears come from and how was it developed? The answer is that it came from the grassroots, from the people: from our elders and our traditional and spiritual leaders.

Back in 2010, following the passage of the Washington County wilderness bill, former Utah Sen. Bob Bennett began a legislative process to resolve the debate over public lands and wilderness protection in San Juan County. Ute and Navajo people understood that, because of the depth of our connections to these lands, our elders were afraid to speak out for fear of what might still be taken away.

My organization, Utah Diné Bikéyah (pronounced di-NAY bi-KAY-uh, which means “people’s sacred lands” in Navajo) emerged from local Utah Navajo elders’ and leaders’ caring and concern for this area. We decided to take a seat at the planning table despite the risk and despite the unlikelihood of our being heard.

Over the next year, Utah Diné Bikéyah (UDB) interviewed Navajo elders and spiritual leaders within the seven Utah Navajo chapters in San Juan County to create a “cultural map” of the region.

“For the first time in the 110-year history of the Antiquities Act, five Tribes have come together to formally ask the President to use the act not only on our behalf but for the benefit of all people, by proclaiming Bears Ears a national monument.”

The First to Respond

In April 2013, after three years of data analysis, policy review, and decision-making by leaders at all levels of tribal government, UDB and the Navajo Nation unveiled the Bears Ears proposal to county, state, and federal officials. Ours was the first government proposal on the table in Congressman Rob Bishop’s Public Lands Initiative (PLI). We were scheduled to see San Juan County’s proposal two weeks later, but it would be nearly two years before the county revealed its recommendation to the PLI. Eventually, despite the fact that the Bears Ears pro-
Proposal received the support of 64 percent of the people in the county, the San Juan County Commission approved a recommendation that failed to address Native American interests to protect the Bears Ears region.

In July 2015, UDB asked the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition—a formal partnership between the Ute Mountain Ute, Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, and Uinta Ouray Ute Tribes—to take over the leadership of the Bears Ears proposal. In October 2015, after months of hard work and further improvements to the proposal, the Coalition formally delivered it to the Obama administration, requesting the creation of a 1.9 million-acre Bears Ears National Monument, with an innovative form of collaborative management between Tribes and the federal government. The National Congress of American Indians formally endorsed the proposal, and thus Bears Ears gained the support of 270 Tribes from across the U.S.

However, even as the Coalition delivered the proposal to the Obama administration, we continued to engage in good faith in Rep. Bishop’s PLI process. Finally, after numerous missed deadlines on the part of the Utah delegation, the Tribes formally walked away from the PLI on the last day of last year—December 31, 2015. And as I write this in June, 2016, the PLI has yet to be introduced in Congress.

**Our Hope Rests with the President**

That means that unless Congress works a miracle, the power to protect Bears Ears lies in President Obama’s hands. We are relying on him to act, because the management and care of these lands is integral to the future of all Native people’s belief and practice. When our ancestral lands are degraded, Native Americans will also be degraded. Under the Bears Ears proposal, Native Americans will have a role in protecting these lands. Our involvement will improve their management through ancient stewardship practices, traditional wisdom, and reverence for the spirits who occupy this place.

The physical evidence of Native American history in the Bears Ears region is of global significance.
It cries out for protection, which is loud and clear with all the negative impacts to the land and the native remains of the region. The era of looting, vandalism, and grave-robbing must end.

We are hopeful that President Obama will proclaim a Bears Ears National Monument, and through his action promote healing for all—not just for Native Americans, but for all people and for the land—by retaining as much pristine condition for generations to enjoy.

Willie Grayeyes is board chairman of Utah Diné Bikéyah. He lives at Navajo Mountain, Utah.

The “Plundered Lands Initiative” Continues to Haunt

By the time you read this newsletter article, Reps. Rob Bishop and Jason Chaffetz likely will have introduced their Public Lands Initiative—also known as the PLI—in Congress.

Bishop has already warned against expecting many changes in the bill since its first, terrible draft was introduced in January—and we don’t.

As in its first draft, the PLI will remain a disaster. There is no indication from either representative that a new version will resolve any of its four major failings, each fatal on its own:

• Diminishing the Bureau of Land Management’s already meager wilderness management in Utah
• Benefiting fossil fuels at the expense of every other value
• Furthering the State of Utah’s land grab
• Failing to protect Bears Ears

Bishop and Chaffetz refuse to talk or work with the conservation community because, in their words, we criticized the draft PLI upon its release in January—though they began to ignore us much earlier.

They have learned nothing from history.

Rather than seeking to work with conservationists on legislation to resolve disputes, they have completely cut off communication with preservationists. Rather than seeking to further wilderness protection on public lands, they are attempting to roll it back. Rather than recognizing that the public lands of Utah belong to all Americans and are a national treasure, they treat those lands as their own personal fiefdom.

We have seen this approach again and again from Utah politicians and it has always failed. Bishop’s predecessor Jim Hansen took this approach multiple times in the 1990s and never succeeded. Chaffetz’s predecessor Chris Cannon tried this in 2000 and failed as well.

This is unfortunate. The PLI started with much promise and goodwill; many longtime antagonists laid down their rhetorical swords to talk and seek common ground. Unfortunately, Bishop and Chaffetz squandered this opportunity by eventually prioritizing politics over solutions. The PLI has devolved into nothing more than a desperate delaying tactic to thwart the real conservation legacy offered by the Bears Ears National Monument proposal.

The beautiful public lands of Utah belong to all Americans and we all deserve a voice. Utah politicians will continue to fail in their efforts until they recognize this fact.
Horrid UTTTR Legislation Attached to House and Senate Defense Bills

We earlier reported that Sen. Orrin Hatch and Rep. Chris Stewart introduced legislation to withdraw 650,000 acres of BLM land to expand the Utah Test and Training Range (UTTR). On its surface that seems innocent enough, but a closer look reveals that the legislation facilitates a bad land exchange with the Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA), circumvents the National Environmental Policy Act, and, most egregiously, gives away 6,000 miles of bogus RS 2477 rights-of-way to three counties.

Thanks in large part to their Utah compatriots on the Armed Services Committee, Sen. Mike Lee and Rep. Rob Bishop, the legislation has made its way into both the House and Senate versions of this year’s National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), a huge package of defense bills that sets the yearly budget for the Defense Department.

During the House Armed Services Committee markup on the NDAA in April, Rep. Bishop proposed Stewart’s bill as an amendment, claiming that doling out federal lands to the state (and ratifying disputed RS 2477 rights-of-way) would help the military secure the base for exercises. He did, however, make one change: any sort of route crossing a designated wilderness or wilderness study area would be exempt from the RS 2477 giveaway.

In an unexpected twist, Bishop mentioned the letter SUWA sent to the House and Senate resources committees stating our opposition—specifically, our concerns about the irreparable damage RS 2477 roads across wilderness-quality lands in the area would cause. “Everything has wilderness potential,” mocked Bishop. “The deck on my apartment has wilderness potential. You don’t dust these benches and they will turn into wilderness potential.”

Rep. Madeleine Bordallo (D-GU) and Nikki Tsongas (D-MA) quickly stood in opposition to the amendment. Tsongas called it “an attempt to use national security as an excuse to undermine federal management of public lands.” We couldn’t agree more and thank them both for their support. Unfortunately, due to the partisan divide and lopsided nature of the House Armed Services committee, Bishop’s UTTTR amendment passed and was added to the defense measure, though not without some resistance from the White House.

In a policy statement issued in mid-May, the Obama administration decried the numerous anti-environ-

ARRWA is Bipartisan Once Again!

Since our last newsletter issue, America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act (ARRWA) has gained seven new cosponsors in the House of Representatives. We are especially delighted to welcome Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ) as the first Republican member of Congress to cosponsor ARRWA since the 112th Congress (2011-2013). ARRWA is once again a bipartisan bill.

We would also like to recognize the newest Democratic cosponsors. They are: Reps. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), Ron Kind (D-WI), Ann Kuster (D-NH), Mark Takai (D-HI), Robin Kelly (D-IL), and Eric Swalwell (D-CA).

If any of these is your representative, please take a moment to thank her or him for working to protect Utah’s redrock country. You can do so with a phone call to either Washington or district offices or through social media such as Facebook or Twitter.
mental provisions heaped onto the NDAA, including Bishop’s UTTR amendment. The administration expressed its strong objections, calling the proposed RS 2477 giveaway an unnecessary provision “that would prevent the effective management of Federal lands, including those proposed for temporary use and closure.”

The administration’s decision to weigh in on this issue was a huge victory. Credit goes to the tireless work of our friends on both the House Armed Services and Natural Resources Committees, including redrock champion Rep. Alan Lowenthal (D-CA) along with Reps. Tsongas, Bordallo, and Raul Grijalva (D-AZ).

Our efforts have also borne some fruit in the Senate. While Senators Mike Lee and Orrin Hatch were able to attach a version of the UTTR to the Senate defense authorization bill, their version does not include the RS 2477 provision. Unfortunately, the bill still contains the same language that would facilitate the trade of SITLA lands for high-value federal parcels including 14,500 acres of proposed wilderness in the Cricket and Drum mountain ranges, so there’s still plenty of work to be done.

While the NDAA has passed both the House and Senate, the two chambers still must reconcile their respective versions in a conference committee before a final bill can go to President Obama for his signature or veto.

—Jordan Giaconia
Victory! Tenth Circuit Says SUWA’s RS 2477 Lawsuit in State Court Can Proceed

Victories that hover just out of reach can be the sweetest of all when we finally achieve them. This is that sort of story.

We’ve written before about our state court lawsuit challenging the legality of Utah’s claim to tens of thousands of RS 2477 rights-of-way and the circuitous path that case has taken. But the story is complicated, so let’s recap.

In 2011 and 2012, the State of Utah and most of its counties filed over 20 lawsuits claiming title to over 12,000 “highways” under RS 2477, a repealed Civil War-era statute. These claims—many to unmaintained two-tracks, trails, and wash bottoms—would allow the state and counties to bulldoze 66-foot-wide roadways into nearly every wilderness-eligible landscape in Utah. That, of course, is the purpose of the claims. They have nothing to do with transportation, and everything to do with wilderness disqualification.

SUWA intervened in federal court to defend against these claims. Additionally, nearly two years ago, SUWA and Mike Abdo, a Tooele County taxpayer and wilderness advocate, opened a new front by filing suit in state court. We alleged that state law prohibits the Utah Attorney General from filing suit more than three decades after Congress repealed RS 2477 in 1976 (see Spring 2016 issue, p. 20).

The state tried to fold the state court case into the ponderous federal litigation, a move that was clearly intended to delay resolution of our state law claims and frustrate the ultimate goal of the our case—stopping the waste of taxpayer dollars on costly, illegal, and anti-wilderness RS 2477 lawsuits as quickly as possible.

We successfully blocked the state’s maneuvers and thought that the case was on its way back to the state courts. Not quite. The federal judge hearing the case, without any prompting from the parties,
issued an injunction stopping the state court case from proceeding under an arcane and seldom-used federal law known as the “Anti-Injunction Act.” Mike Abdo’s 9-year-old grandniece Maddison, present when the judge issued his decision from the bench, asked incredulously, “Can he do that?”

She got her answer in May: the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals said “No.” The circuit court concluded that the federal judge’s injunction violated federal law and the principle that state and federal courts should each be able to hear cases without interference from the other.

What does the decision mean? Simply put, it means that we have the green light to pursue our state law claims in state courts which seek to end the RS 2477 litigation. We are waiting for a ruling from the Utah Supreme Court in a related case which will clarify when we can actually proceed.

Our many thanks to Jess Krannich and his team at the law firm of Manning Curtis Bradshaw & Bednar for their excellent work before both the Tenth Circuit and the Utah Supreme Court.

—Joe Bushyhead

BLM Launches Another Master Leasing Plan, this Time in San Rafael Desert

After an extended delay, the Utah BLM is kicking off preparation of the San Rafael Desert Master Leasing Plan (MLP) covering lands in eastern Emery and Wayne Counties.

MLPs are a by-product of SUWA-led litigation brought in the last days of the George W. Bush administration to stop oil and gas leasing on the doorstep of Arches and Canyonlands national parks and other remarkable wilderness landscapes. After we successfully blocked the sale of the infamous “77 leases” in 2009 and then-Interior Secretary Ken Salazar withdrew them from sale, there was consensus that the Obama administration needed to do better than its predecessor. Master leasing plans are one of the tools the BLM created to guide a “smart from the start” approach.

The MLP will give the BLM tools to protect just over a half million acres in the San Rafael Swell and Dirty Devil regions. The planning area...
The Obama Administration and Climate Change: One Step Forward, One Step Back

Last winter, Interior Secretary Sally Jewell announced a two-year moratorium on new federal coal leasing. The time-out is intended in part to allow federal agencies to determine whether—if

This includes protecting Arches and Canyonlands National Parks from the sights and sounds of oil and gas development.

We are hopeful that the San Rafael Desert MLP will result in similar protections for sensitive lands and resources in the area it covers and we will do all we can to make that happen. SUWA will work with its partners to provide information and comments on the proposed MLP and will closely monitor the process.

As always, stay tuned for updates and alerts on how you can get involved.

—Landon Newell

SUWA Protests Power Line that Threatens Wilderness, Wildlife

SUWA, with our partners at The Wilderness Society, Conservation Colorado, and Audubon Rockies, has officially protested the Gateway South Transmission project with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The project authorizes the construction of a 500-kilovolt transmission line over 400 miles of federal, state, and private lands from Wyoming, through Colorado, to central Utah. Its purpose is to carry electricity from renewable and fossil fuel sources in Wyoming to existing transmission systems in central Utah. Towers ranging from 140 to 190 feet in height would rise from the line’s 250-foot-wide right-of-way.

The transmission line would result in the fragmentation of wildlife habitat and the loss of wilderness-quality lands along its route. In Utah, the project would disqualify nearly 7,500 acres proposed for wilderness designation in America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act—lands that the BLM itself has identified as possessing wilderness characteristics.

We’ll keep you posted as the process unfolds.
at all—continued leasing, mining and burning of coal is compatible with our nation’s urgent need to address climate change. (This is the third coal leasing moratorium, by the way: there was one under Nixon, one under Reagan.)

Over the spring, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) held public hearings throughout the country about the moratorium, including one in Salt Lake City and one in Grand Junction, CO. The meetings were packed and contentious. They included coal miners who were bussed in to speak their pro-coal piece, as well as conservationists, activists, and local residents who have suffered because of mining. As the dust settles from these loud and often rancorous hearings, the fact remains that a combination of administration policies, market forces, and climate reality mean that coal is the fuel of the past.

But the administration giveth and the administration taketh away. Even as its parent agency, the Interior Dept., is pressing ahead with the coal leasing moratorium, the BLM has released a draft environmental impact statement in support of an Estonian state-owned oil shale company’s plans to mine and burn oil shale in northeastern Utah.

**No Right-of-Way, No Project**

The company, Enefit, proposes to develop a commercial-scale oil shale mine and upgrade a refinery on private lands southeast of Vernal. In order to make the project fly, Enefit is seeking rights-of-way across public lands for water, oil and gas, and electricity transmission. Without this approval it is doubtful the company could go ahead with its plans.

The carbon footprint from this mine and the oil shale would be disastrous (up to 450 million tons of carbon dioxide, about the same as 100 coal-fired power plants emit in a year). And it would be completely at odds with the Obama administration’s stated goals of taking climate change seriously. The BLM has prioritized the project because the company asked it to and is moving ahead with its analysis.

Working with our partners at Grand Canyon Trust, Earthjustice, Natural Resources Defense Council, Western Resource Advocates, Center for Biological Diversity, Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment and others, SUWA submitted detailed...
comments on the project pointing out the numerous shortcomings in the BLM’s environmental analysis. First and worst among these problems is that the BLM did a woefully inadequate job of analyzing the impacts that the development of this dirtiest of fossil fuels would have on any serious effort to combat climate change.

We’ll keep a close eye on this project as it wends its way through the BLM. We hope that clearer heads prevail at Interior and that Enefit will be emphatically told ‘no thanks’ in response to its dirty fuel plans.

—Steve Bloch

Documenting Wilderness in Utah’s West Desert

This spring, SUWA resumed large-scale fieldwork on several wilderness-quality landscapes located in Utah’s breathtaking West Desert. Using scenic photos, GIS mapping, and other on-the-ground documentation, SUWA plans to submit over ten new wilderness character recommendations to Utah Bureau of Land Management (BLM) field offices for review. The goal of this work is to encourage the BLM to correctly identify these areas as “lands with wilderness character,” ultimately bringing more of Utah’s spectacular wild lands under protective management.

Dominating the western third of the state, Utah’s West Desert is a refuge of peace and solitude. Its massive peaks and rocky slopes offer sweeping views of the valleys below in some of the most pristine “basin and range” ecosystems of the West. As with our work on the Colorado Plateau, SUWA is committed to protecting these vast natural areas from threats such as development, off-road vehicle destruction, and harmful vegetation treatment projects.

We’ll keep you posted as we continue fieldwork in this remarkable part of the state.

—Kya Marienfeld

The Orr Ridge proposed wilderness is one of many wild landscapes worthy of protection in Utah’s western “basin and range” country.
Join Us for the SUWA Roundup this September!

Fall is just around the corner and there’s no better time to head to canyon country. Please join us at this year’s SUWA Roundup, September 16-18 at Hidden Splendor.

This relaxed every-other-year gathering offers SUWA members, activists and staff the opportunity to get to know each other while camping in the beautiful San Rafael Swell. Activities include a discussion of Utah wilderness issues, 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.

For details on how to get to Hidden Splendor and what to bring, visit our website at suwa.org/roundup2016 or contact Dave Pacheco at dave@suwa.org, (801) 428-3961. If you plan to attend, please RSVP so we can plan accordingly. Hope to see you there!

Best of Luck to Grassroots Intern Cinimin Kofford

Without the help of dedicated volunteer interns SUWA would be a less effective wilderness advocate. They extend our reach, increase our horsepower and—because they are mostly young, always bright, and always energetic—they keep us on our toes. Cinimin Kofford, our spring intern in Salt Lake City, once again proved those points.

During the three months we had the pleasure of working with her, she ably performed a variety of outreach and grassroots organizing tasks, including a couple of unexpected opportunities to speak publicly about the flaws of the so-called Public Lands Initiative (PLI).

Cinimin debuted in front of the cameras at a student-run press conference at the Utah Capitol, and again in front of a crowd of over 600 Utahns speaking out against the PLI. Whether it was as simple a task as data entry or the heavy lifting of hauling materials and outreach tables from Provo to Springdale, she proved to be a real trooper and a great resource for our team.

A Utah native from Orem, Cinimin came to us as part of her undergraduate degree work in outdoor recreation management at Utah Valley University, where she recently
graduated summa cum laude with honors. We wish Cinimin the very best, starting with her current job as a seasonal ranger and park guide at Guadalupe Mountains National Park in Texas!

Thanks to Legal Intern Emma Whitaker

Goodbye and thanks to Emma Whitaker, our spring 2016 legal intern, for her exceptional work. Emma tackled a broad range of issues for SUWA, including RS 2477 rights-of-way, legislative proposals and actions, and BLM resource management plan litigation.

Over several months, Emma conducted legal research for administrative appeals, helped SUWA’s legal team prepare for oral arguments at the Utah Supreme Court in our ongoing RS 2477 litigation, and dug into weedy issues regarding Beaver Dam Wash and the proposed management plan for the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area, among other things.

Emma is a third-year law student at the University of Utah’s S.J. Quinney College of Law in Salt Lake City. She intends to continue studying environmental law and to stay in Utah following graduation. Good luck in your final year of law school, Emma! And thank you for your hard work!

Katie staffs our table at Georgetown’s Patagonia store.

Katie Burke Helps Lighten the Load in DC

Katie Burke, our spring (and later summer) D.C. intern has been a godsend. To say that Katie is a jack-of-all-office-trades would understate the case. Katie gets stuff done.

The Boston, MA, resident was invaluable before and during this year’s Wilderness Week. She helped activists coming from all over the county get hotel rooms booked, make calls, and schedule meetings with congressional offices. She made sure there was coffee on hand to jump-start activists’ hectic days on the Hill, and entered all the meeting reports into our database. This she did while juggling school work as a second-year environmental studies student at American University in D.C.

As luck would have it, Katie stayed on with us as our summer intern. In addition to helping the legislative team with our work, she staffed our table at the Georgetown Patagonia store, getting the message out about the importance of public lands and wilderness.

Katie returns to American this fall. We hope she’ll visit when her studies allow; she’ll always be a welcome sight. Thanks for everything, Katie!
Reference Map for Articles in this Issue

1. Cricket Mountains (p. 11)
2. Drum Mountains (p. 11)
3. Dugway Mountains (p. 12)
4. San Rafael Desert (p. 13)
5. Dirty Devil Region (p. 13)
6. Orr Ridge (p. 16)
Join Our Monthly Giving Program

If you’re looking for a convenient, hassle-free way to help SUWA over the long term, our monthly giving program is for you. Monthly giving is easy and secure, and provides us with reliable, year-round funding to fight current and future attacks on Utah wilderness. To sign up, use the envelope in this newsletter or go to suwa.org/donate, select a monthly amount, and check the recurring donation box.

Leave a Legacy for the Redrock

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 Michelle Farnsworth at (801) 236-3763. You can also visit us online at suwa.org/plannedgiving.