

REDROCK

W I L D E R N E S S

The Newsletter of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
VOLUME 40, NUMBER 2 • SUMMER 2023

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF REDROCK ADVOCACY!



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

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

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SUMMER 2023

Volume 40, Number 2



4

WILDERNESS NOTES

On to the Next Decade

5

FEATURES

We've Come a Long Way Together: Highlights from the Past Four Decades of Redrock Advocacy



12

CENTER SPREAD: Wild Places Now Protected Thanks to Your Support

14

DC NEWS

17

CANYON COUNTRY UPDATES



20

INSIDE SUWA

23

AMERICA'S RED ROCK WILDERNESS ACT REFERENCE MAP

This issue of *Redrock Wilderness* was written by the following staff and outside contributors: Steve Bloch, Judi Brawer, Travis Hammill, Diana Haro, Tom Kenworthy, Darell Knuffke, Jeremy Lynch, Kya Marienfeld, Nicole Milavetz, Mark Maryboy, Creed Murdock, Laura Peterson, Richerd Peterson-Cremer, Ken Rait, Cindy Shogan, Liz Thomas, Jen Ujifusa, and Michelle White. It was edited by Darrell Knuffke and laid out by Diane Kelly. Newsletter design by Amy Westberg.

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 submissions to photos@suwa.org or via regular mail c/o Editor, SUWA, 425 East 100 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84111.

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ON TO THE NEXT DECADE

Forty years. Hard to believe, but the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance is heading into its fifth decade. And like someone entering middle age and still firing on all cylinders, SUWA continues to build on a remarkable history.

I'm pretty sure most of our members have a clear memory of when they first encountered SUWA and its work, and then made the choice of becoming supporters to help save the redrock. I've got mine, still vivid after more than three decades. I had my introduction in early 1992. I was a reporter at the *Washington Post*, fresh off five years of covering Congress and just setting out

to cover public lands and the environment. To be perfectly honest, I was something of a lost ball in high grass and had a lot to learn.

Sitting at my desk in the *Post's* newsroom one day during those early days on the beat, I got a call from a woman who identified herself as Heidi McIntosh, an attorney with SUWA. I didn't confess it to Heidi at the time, but I had never heard of the organization.

Heidi started pitching me on a story about RS 2477 right-of-way claims. Again, no confession: I had never heard of that weirdly named issue. Even so, Heidi was a convincing salesperson, and it wasn't long before I was on a plane to Utah for a reporting trip on how local governments and the state were using an obscure 19th Century mining statute to assert title to thousands of miles of dirt tracks on federal lands and thereby frustrate wilderness protection.

In Moab, I linked up with SUWA attorney Scott Groene, now our longtime executive director. He took me on an eye-opening tour of obscure backcountry tracks that sure didn't look like roads to me. Among the places we visited was Arch Canyon, where the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) had certified an RS 2477 right-of-way and ORV enthusiasts had trashed a potential addition to the nation's wilderness system.

That was the first of quite a few times that Scott and other SUWA staffers took me out into the redrock to explain issues affecting public lands in Utah. It was a great education by an organization that always impressed me with its dedication to protecting wilderness-quality federal lands and its ability to fight and win in a state with very tough politics.

As a reporter for a national newspaper, I got banged on a lot by the big national environmental groups. It seemed to me that some of them were at times more interested in getting their groups' names in the paper than the actual issues. Not so with SUWA. Then, as now, the organization was laser-focused on its single, easily understood mission: protect every single acre of BLM managed land that by rights ought to be part of the nation's wilderness system. No digressing into other issues. No gratuitous quests for publicity. No compromise for the sake of compromise so they could claim a "victory." No fealty to the whims of foundations thanks to the support of their remarkably loyal membership base.

So, after I'd left the newspaper business and Scott asked if I'd be interested in serving on the SUWA board, I jumped at the chance to trade in most of a lifetime up in the press box for activism on the field.

Easy call. How lucky I've been to play a small part in SUWA's history. Now, on to the next decade.

For the Redrock,

Tom Kenworthy
SUWA Board Chair

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY TOGETHER HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PAST FOUR DECADES OF REDROCK ADVOCACY

Public lands protection has never been easy in Utah. It was especially hard in the early 1980s.

James Watt, the embodiment of anti-environmental extremism, was Interior Secretary. Though he resigned in 1983, his philosophy lingered over the department as it completed some of the last wilderness inventories on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land, including in Utah.

Then there was the internecine skirmishing about a bill to protect wilderness on Utah's national forests. One environmental group broke ranks and gave the federal delegation the fig leaf it needed to pass what many activists considered to be a wildly inadequate bill.

From that experience emerged a corps of disappointed but resolute redrock defenders. Most were quite adamant about a couple of things: (1) Utah politicians would never again be sole arbiters of the fate of Utah's wild country, and (2) Utah conservationists, politically outgunned at home, could not afford to speak with less than a unified voice.

That was the atmosphere into which SUWA was born, followed shortly by creation of the Utah Wilderness Coalition, our longtime partner. SUWA's mission was, and remains today, protection of Utah's BLM wilderness. How much wilderness, exactly? Brant Calkin, former SUWA executive director, answered that question simply: "All that's left."

The questions of how much wilderness was left, and where, were the focus of the original "citizens' inventory." In response to the BLM's meager, hastily prepared, and deeply flawed Utah wilderness proposal (released in 1980), volunteers spent thousands of hours in the field carefully documenting wilderness characteristics and mapping boundaries of proposed wilderness areas. America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, the embodiment of this grassroots effort, was first introduced in Congress by Representative Wayne Owens (D-UT) in 1989, and has been introduced in every Congress since. With continuing fieldwork, the original 5.7 million-acre proposal now stands at more than 8 million.

A decade or so after SUWA was formed, Representative James Hansen (R-UT), then chair of the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Lands, went to St. Paul, MN, for a hearing regarding Voyageurs National



WE COULDN'T PROTECT WILD UTAH WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF OUR MEMBERS.
© PETER GATCH

Park and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. At issue was a bill to gut those wonders by giving county commissioners management control.

As Hansen gaveled the hearing to order, wilderness lovers in the balcony unfurled a large, bright yellow banner touting protection of 5.7 million acres of Utah wilderness. Hansen was astonished. The delegation was put on notice: Utah wilderness had garnered national attention and could no longer be considered a parochial issue.

In this 40th anniversary edition of *Redrock Wilderness*, we've invited six former members of SUWA's staff and board to share a highlight from their time at the organization—each a potent reminder of our combined strength as advocates, and a testament to just how far we've come together.

You and other SUWA members have made these successes possible. We are where we are only because of your trust, your generosity, and your dedication. Thank you!

—Darrell Knuffke, newsletter editor and former board chair

UTAH WILDERNESS MAKES NATIONAL HEADLINES AS ACTIVISTS TAKE ON THE STATE DELEGATION . . . AND WIN

Brant Calkin and Susan Tixier were gifted political prognosticators. These early SUWA leaders had the uncanny ability to “look way down the road” when it came to developing a plan to defend and protect southern Utah’s magnificent wild lands. Looking back on the turbulent 1990s, it’s clear that they had a successful three-prong conservation strategy.

Prong One: *Nationalize the issue.* Brant and Susan recognized the need for SUWA to have a full-time presence in Washington, DC, in order to raise the profile of our cause. I’m very proud to say I was SUWA’s first Washington representative and DC office employee in 1990. Over the next five years, more staff joined the team, interns rotated out every month, and Utah-based staff would often get the dreaded call to spend weeks in the DC swamp. During those awful humid summer months, Scott Groene (one of the exiles) mastered the challenge of navigating every building on Capitol Hill without ever going outside.

Prong Two: *It takes a village.* Demonstrating strong national support for America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act was (and still is) crucial to protecting canyon country. The Utah Wilderness Coalition hired organizer extraordinaire Liz McCoy, who partnered with SUWA’s national grassroots coordinator Tom Price to mount an innovative cosponsor campaign that included Wilderness Week events in DC and intensive training camps for “wilderness warriors” from



CINDY SHOGAN (CENTER), SUWA’S FIRST WASHINGTON REPRESENTATIVE, WAS LATER JOINED IN DC BY TOM PRICE (LEFT) AND SCOTT GROENE (RIGHT) AS THE BATTLE OVER UTAH’S REMAINING WILD LANDS BEGAN TO HEAT UP AND MAKE NATIONAL HEADLINES.

across the country. Their work produced record congressional support for the Red Rock bill.

Prong Three: *Endless pressure, endlessly applied.* In 1995, the Utah congressional delegation declared war on Utah wilderness with the introduction of a ludicrously inadequate statewide bill containing “hard release” language for millions of acres—meaning undesignated lands would no longer be eligible for wilderness designation.

SUWA and our partners sprang into action. Brant Calkin, then serving as national outreach coordinator, hit the road with a traveling slideshow. SUWA Issues Director Ken Rait and board member Jim Baca generated more editorials than there were newspapers. Volunteers and staff did daily “Hill drops” to congressional offices—distributing educational materials, 8x10 glossy photographs, and a chapbook of eloquent essays edited by authors Stephen Trimble and Terry Tempest Williams. Back in Utah, hearings were packed with wilderness advocates wearing “Wild Utah” buttons and chanting “5.7!” There was so much opposition to the delegation’s proposal that the House bill was never even brought to the floor for a vote.



THE 1995 UTAH WILDERNESS HEARINGS WERE PACKED WITH RED ROCK ADVOCATES PROTESTING THE MEAGER COUNTY AND STATE DELEGATION PROPOSALS AND CHANTING “5.7!”

But the Utah delegation did not give up. In early 1996 they attached an anti-wilderness provision to the very popular “Omnibus Parks and Recreation Act.” Now the heavy

hitters spoke out in defense of Utah wilderness, including Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and General Brent Scowcroft (originally from Ogden, UT), who urged the Senate to “look beyond today.”

And then there was Robert Redford’s faceoff with Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) in the newspaper magazine *USA Weekend*. Polling showed that readers agreed 9-1 with Mr. Redford that Utah’s wilderness should be protected. But the champion of Utah wilderness champions was Senator Bill Bradley (D-NJ), who successfully mounted a Senate filibuster, at one point saying “[W]hat I want to preserve is the possibility for silence and the possibility for time that exists only in a wilderness . . .” Thanks to the extended network of activists in DC and across the nation, the delegation’s bill failed and those possibilities still exist today.

—Cindy Shogan, former Washington representative/director & board member

A MONUMENTAL ACHIEVEMENT: PROTECTING THE KAIPAROWITS AND GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE

In 1996, not long after our dramatic defeat of the Utah delegation’s anti-wilderness bill, SUWA celebrated a historic victory in the form of a nearly 2-million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Designation of the

monument capped nearly a decade of work to prevent coal mining on the Kaiparowits Plateau.

The battle over the Kaiparowits was one that SUWA took on following earlier efforts by Robert Redford and others to beat back large-scale industrialization across this wild region. Through tireless work at the state and federal levels, we fought to stop a massive coal mine proposed by Dutch-owned Andalex Resources.

Those years hardened me as an emerging wilderness advocate. I became the nemesis of Utah’s Division of Oil, Gas and Mining, the Utah Education Association (which thought coal development would alleviate education funding challenges), and staff at the local BLM office who confused their role as regulators with that of project proponents (among the latter was Mike Noel, who later became a member of the Utah House of Representatives, where he railed endlessly against conservation initiatives.) The cards were stacked against us, but fierce advocacy by the SUWA team—including Mark MacAllister, Amy O’Connor, Mike Matz, and star attorney Heidi McIntosh—helped lay the groundwork for that historic September day in 1996 when the monument became a reality.

I was fortunate to be present on that crisp, early fall day when President Bill Clinton signed the proclamation, accompanied by my wife, newborn daughter, my mother,



THE KAIPAROWITS PLATEAU HAD LONG BEEN TARGETED BY COAL DEVELOPERS BEFORE IT WAS PROTECTED AS PART OF GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENT. © TIM PETERSON



KEN RAIT (CENTER) WITH FORMER BOARD MEMBERS BERT FINGERHUT (LEFT) AND WAYNE OWENS (RIGHT) AT THE GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE PROCLAMATION SIGNING CEREMONY.

brothers, and a nephew. Listening to the president, vice president, and others extol the virtues of this incredible area was a transcendent experience etched in my memory.

Local reaction to the monument was typical Chicken Little rhetoric that the sky would fall. In reality, the nearby communities of Kanab, Escalante, and Boulder thrived with solid economic growth. Meanwhile, Utah's schoolchildren were well served by a bill that consolidated BLM holdings within the monument and traded out the checkerboard of state trust land sections for developable assets elsewhere. Not surprisingly, the anti-monument torch passed from that mid-1990s congressional delegation to the current crop of legislators, which led to President Donald Trump's insidious effort to eviscerate the monument. Thankfully, that unlawful action was reversed.

Today, the re-established monument is renowned for its dizzying vistas, paleontological wonders, and rare silence. From the Waterpocket Fold, west through the canyons of the Escalante, across the vast Kaiparowits, and down through the Grand Staircase, the protections we achieved together will endure for all time.

—Ken Rait, former issues director

FROM OPPORTUNITY TO TRIUMPH: UTAH'S CEDAR MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS

President George W. Bush signed the Cedar Mountain Wilderness legislation into law in January 2006 after its bumpy four-year ride through Congress. It was the first

Utah-specific federal wilderness designation in 22 years and quadrupled the amount of designated BLM wilderness in Utah from 25,120 acres to 100,000 acres. The bill also marked the first time SUWA broke off a chunk of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act to gain immediate and permanent protection for deserving lands.

Representative Rob Bishop (R-UT) introduced the bill in the House as a component of his Utah Test and Training Range Act, which was itself folded into the larger National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). For Bishop—no great friend of wilderness—protecting the Cedars was a useful means of addressing the military's concerns while at the same time blocking a controversial nuclear waste transportation route. But even with the support of the entire Utah delegation, the bill's passage was far from guaranteed. Many members of the Senate opposed the legislation precisely because of its anti-nuclear waste implications.

The Senate version of the NDAA omitted Bishop's Cedar Mountain legislation, leading to a nerve-racking process to reconcile differences between the House and Senate bills. Proponents, including key SUWA activists in Virginia, Michigan, and Nevada, immediately mobilized. Their efforts paid off and the Cedar Mountain Wilderness bill ultimately became law, demonstrating that even in tough political times we can make progress on wilderness designation.

The Cedar range may lack the fame of Utah's redrock country, but its grassy slopes and rugged limestone outcrops pro-



SUWA STAFF ON A CELEBRATORY HIKE IN THE NEWLY DESIGNATED CEDAR MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS IN JANUARY OF 2006.

vide important wildlife habitat and offer an accessible oasis of solitude for northern Utah's urban communities. Rising to 7,700 feet above the Great Salt Lake Desert, just 40 miles west of Salt Lake City, this wilderness area is part of Utah's lonely and expansive Basin and Range province, an undulating succession of peaks and valleys rolling west toward the Nevada border. The mountains, thrust skyward from block faulting, were once literal islands surrounded by the waters of ancient Lake Bonneville, an inland sea which covered much of western Utah over 14,000 years ago.

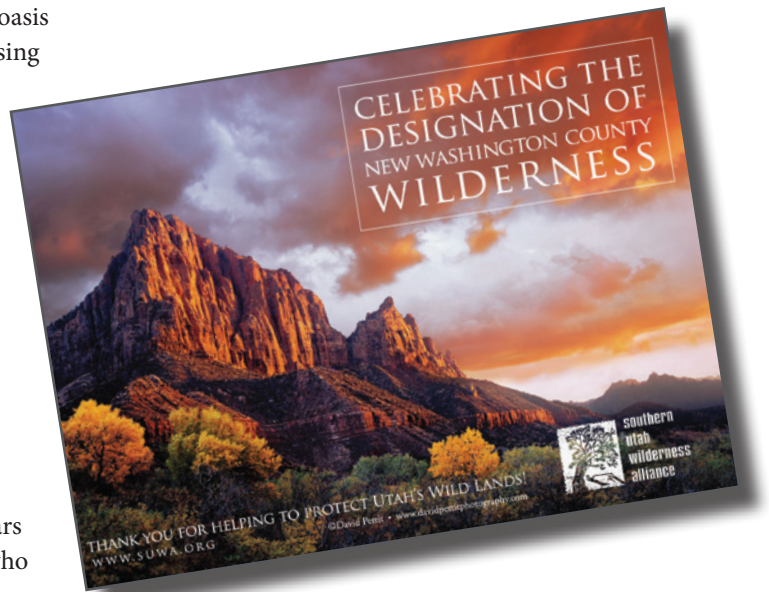
Wilderness designation has kept the Cedar range a lovely and serene place, free from the encroachment of off-road vehicles and industrial development. This conservation victory was made possible by 20-plus years of hard work by SUWA activists around the country who made sure their members of Congress supported the protection of Utah wild lands.

—Liz Thomas, current board member & former field attorney

SETTING A PRECEDENT WITH THE WASHINGTON COUNTY GROWTH AND CONSERVATION ACT

With a new, potentially more wilderness-friendly administration at the helm, 2009 was a heady time for public land advocates. But that didn't mean our work would be easy. Oklahoma Senator Tom Coburn (otherwise known as "Dr. No") had held up so many public land bills over the previous years that the only way to get anything through Congress was to combine a bunch of popular individual bills into a single "omnibus" package. With enough senators supporting particular provisions of the package, a successful filibuster was less likely. Such was the strategy behind S. 22, the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009. Tucked into this bill's 1,000-plus pages was a Utah wilderness bill: the Washington County Growth and Conservation Act.

The Washington County bill had come a long way since Senator Bob Bennett (R-UT) and Representative Jim Matheson (D-UT) first introduced their anti-wilderness 2006 version that would have stripped protection from wilderness-quality lands and forced the sale of more than 20,000 acres of federal public land surrounding St. George. After SUWA's Senate champions, led by Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), killed that misbegotten measure, its sponsors tried and failed again to pass a slightly better (but still not good enough) version in 2008.



Ultimately, Senator Durbin, Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), and Senate Energy Committee Chairman Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) managed to transform the Washington County bill into a landmark piece of legislation that set the standard of "no-net-loss" of protected wilderness study area (WSA) acreage in future Utah wilderness bills. That standard endures, ensuring that existing WSA protection is the floor, not the ceiling, for any Utah wilderness negotiation.

It took another two months of coordinated lobbying by the conservation community to get the omnibus bill over the finish line. I had just started as SUWA's legislative director after a couple of years of tutelage under colleagues Pete Downing and Justin Allegro. Luckily, we convinced our Moab field advocate, Scott Braden, to join me for a year in the nation's capital. Together, we embarked upon a massive lobbying and grassroots mobilization blitz.

The effort was well worth it. The final bill, which President Barack Obama signed into law in March of 2009, designated 140,000 acres of new BLM wilderness in Utah's Zion-Mojave region, including Canaan Mountain, Black Ridge, and Doc's Pass. It also added wilderness protection to 125,000 acres within Zion National Park and protected another 50,000 acres of wild country within the Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area (prohibiting off-road vehicles, drilling, and mining).

It was a law we could all be proud of, thanks to the fierce commitment of SUWA's remarkable members and activists.

—Richard Peterson-Cremer, former legislative director

AGAINST THE ODDS: A TRUMP-ERA VICTORY FOR UTAH'S SAN RAFAEL SWELL

By the time I joined SUWA's staff there was so much lore—a rebellious lore that drew me in. I grew up in Ogden, Utah, loved the redrock landscapes of my home state, and was eager to work in their defense.

During my time in SUWA's Washington, DC, office, there arose an opportunity to protect Utah's extraordinary San Rafael Swell. It was a long shot. When Representative John Curtis (R-UT) and then-Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) introduced terrible legislation for this region in 2018, Trump was president and Republicans controlled both chambers of Congress.

Fate intervened in a fashion. Sen. Hatch had aged and his faculties were declining, but his staff had known us for years and understood that we were rational actors who could hammer out a deal in good faith. I went out for beers with them (they were not Utahns) and we built an understanding.

SUWA had plenty of experience defeating bad bills, including six previous proposals for the San Rafael Swell. This time, we were committed to transforming an awful bill into something truly good for Utah's public lands. Fortunately, redrock champion Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) was up for



WILDERNESS SUPPORTERS POSE WITH A CUT-OUT OF REP. JOHN CURTIS, WHO INTRODUCED TERRIBLE LEGISLATION FOR THE SAN RAFAEL SWELL IN 2018.

the challenge too. We gained additional wilderness protections with the help of his staff, who had somehow managed to keep Utah issues on their radar in the midst of national political fights of enormous—even existential—gravity.

SUWA had previously taken Senator Durbin on hikes through the Bears Ears area that we promised would be “short and flat,” though they were often neither. It astounds me to recall that when “House on Fire” described our actual country (rather than just the well-known ancestral site



UTAH'S MEXICAN MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS, DESIGNATED AS PART OF THE EMERY COUNTY PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2019. © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA

on Cedar Mesa), Senator Durbin still worked to enact the San Rafael Swell legislation and reinstate Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments.

The Emery County Public Land Management Act became law in March of 2019. All around us chaos reigned. The Trump administration was wreaking havoc on the nation, the environment, the world. By some miracle, 663,000 acres of protected wilderness emerged from that quagmire—including Muddy Creek, Mexican Mountain, the San Rafael Reef, parts of Labyrinth and Desolation Canyons, and other spectacular places. As icing on the cake, the law added 70 miles of river to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

After months of hard work, and plenty of anxiety-inducing twists and turns, there was a happy ending after all—a glimmer of hope in the darkest of times. The San Rafael Swell wilderness bill remains the most significant legislative victory in SUWA's history.

This is what we accomplished together.

—*Jen Ujifusa, former legislative director*

PROTECTING OUR FUTURE, PRESERVING OUR PAST: AMERICA'S RED ROCK WILDERNESS ACT EARNS NAVAJO NATION'S SUPPORT

Environmental groups like SUWA are often misunderstood by Native people throughout San Juan County, Utah. Many Navajo families, on and off the Reservation, face domestic hardships which lead us to deprioritize working with environmental groups; yet respect for nature is the cornerstone of all Native teachings.

Navajo traditional beliefs are centered around the plants, the trees, the wildlife, the water, the canyons, the mountains, the rocks, and earlier forms of life (*Sa aah naaghai Bik eh hozho*). During every monsoon season on the Navajo Nation, we hear and feel thunder that brings messages that the future of the earth itself is in peril.

For these reasons, Navajos believe that all of the earth should be protected at all times.

I wish I'd known more about SUWA during the 16 years I served as a San Juan County commissioner. Though I consistently fought to ensure that benefits and services were provided to my constituents on an equal basis with non-Native county residents, I did not realize that my fel-

low commissioners were making anti-conservation land-use decisions. If I had known more about SUWA's work at that time, I would have been able to use my position to do more for public lands.

I was happy to join the SUWA board in 2017. I felt it was time for me to try to make an impact on behalf of Utah's wild places. In particular, I wanted to help educate members of the Navajo Nation about America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. I eventually met with all seven Utah Navajo government chapters, attending numerous meetings across the Utah portion of the Nation, from Navajo Mountain to Mexican Water to Montezuma Creek. It was a long process but, in the end, all the Utah Navajo chapters passed resolutions supporting the Red Rock bill.

I also met with the Navajo Nation Council in Window Rock, AZ, to advocate for the bill. In December 2021, a resolution in support of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act was presented to the Tribal Council. The Council passed the resolution unanimously and the Speaker and the Navajo Nation president both endorsed it.

During the discussions and debates at chapter meetings and before the Tribal Council, it was good to hear the deep knowledge and concern voiced by Navajos along with their support for protecting the archaeological remnants of Pueblo and Navajo culture that are at the heart of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act.

In beauty we walk. *Hozho nahasdlit*.

—*Mark Maryboy, former board member*

WHAT DOES THE REDROCK MEAN TO YOU?

On the occasion of our 40th anniversary, we're asking our members and supporters: "What does the redrock mean to you?" Everyone's response has been different, and as new faces join our fight to protect the redrock, it's inspiring to hear what brought them to the movement.

Whether you're a longtime supporter or new to the cause, we'd love to hear from you! Please send your answer to info@suwa.org. We'll keep it anonymous, though we may use it publicly—perhaps even in a future issue of *Redrock Wilderness!*



LABYRINTH CANYON WILDERNESS. © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA



BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT. © HAL MYERS



CEDAR MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS. © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA



Together we've secured wilderness designations for the Zion-Mojave region, and Labyrinth and Desolation; we've defend monument designations for Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments; and we've protected vast expanses of public lands from development, off-road vehicle damage, vegetation



BEAVER DAM WASH NCA © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA

WILD PLACES NOW PROTECTED THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT!

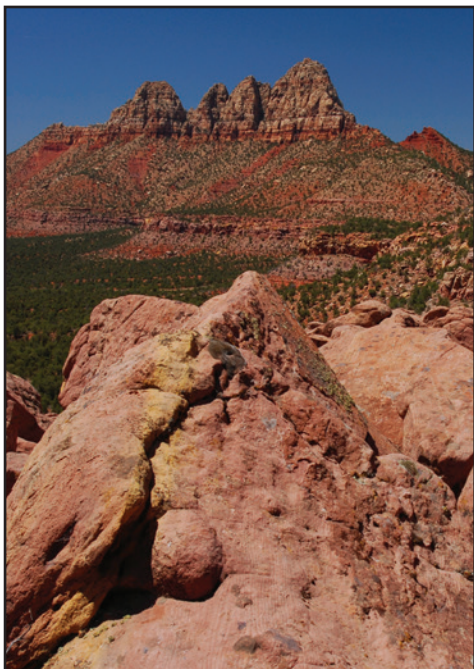
...s in the San Rafael Swell, Cedar Mountains, ...ation Canyons; we've helped establish and ...rcase-Escalante and Bears Ears National ...s of redrock country from mining, fossil fuel ...ion removal, and other threats. **THANK YOU!**



SIDS MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS. © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA



GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENT. © TOM TILL



CANAAN MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS. © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA



DESOLATION CANYON WILDERNESS. © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA

BEARS EARS LAND EXCHANGE BILLS HEARD IN HOUSE, SENATE

It has taken time, but elected officials in Utah finally seem interested in trading state lands out of Bears Ears National Monument—and Congress seems supportive.

When President Barack Obama proclaimed Bears Ears National Monument in 2016, he also proposed a trade of around 100,000 acres of state lands within the new monument for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands elsewhere in Utah.

The state lands are school trust lands, granted to Utah when it entered the Union to support public education. Monument lands are managed for protection, school trust lands for an economic return. Their purposes are at odds. Before a trade could be accomplished, President Donald Trump dismantled the monument in 2017; President Joe Biden restored

it in 2021, directing the Interior Department to work with the Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) to achieve an exchange.

House and Senate subcommittees heard testimony on two bills this summer (Representative John Curtis's H.R. 3049, the Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration Act of 2023 and Senator Mike Lee's companion bill, S. 1409) that would exchange trust lands in the monument and other nearby lands in San Juan County for other BLM-managed lands in the state. The subcommittees received the bills favorably and we expect they are on their way to passage.

At the highest level, the goal of this exchange is to unify ownership of the lands within the monument and

allow the BLM and Forest Service to better protect the irreplaceable cultural resources, fossils, and unique flora and fauna that make Bears Ears so special.

In a rare display of solidarity, most of the parties with an interest in Bears Ears support a land exchange. The Bears Ears Commission, made up of five Tribal Nations (Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, Ute Indian Tribe, Zuni Tribe, and Ute Mountain Ute Tribe) sent in letters of support, as did SUWA and several other conservation groups. The Utah legislature, Utah congressional delegation, and several Utah counties also registered their support.

Stay tuned for updates on the land exchange later this year.

—*Steve Bloch*



A MEASURE TO TRADE STATE LANDS OUT OF BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT IS MAKING ITS WAY THROUGH CONGRESS AND IS EXPECTED TO BECOME LAW.



BEHIND THE ROCKS PROPOSED WILDERNESS. © TOM TILL

GOOD NEWS

AMERICA'S RED ROCK WILDERNESS ACT GAINS 23 COSPONSORS!

Shortly after our spring newsletter went to press, America's Red Rock Wilderness Act (H.R. 3031 / S. 1310) was reintroduced in the 118th Congress with 63 original cosponsors. The bill has since gained 23 additional cosponsors, bringing the current total to 22 in the Senate and 64 in the House.

The latest endorsements came from Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI), Sen. Peter Welch (D-VT), Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández (D-NM), Rep. Eric Sorensen (D-IL), Rep. Sean Casten (D-IL), Rep. Yvette Clarke (D-NY), Rep. Gwen Moore (D-WI), Rep. Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA), Rep. Nanette Diaz Barragán (D-CA), Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA), Rep. Donald Beyer (D-VA), Rep. André Carson (D-IN), Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL), Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL), Rep. Bill Foster (D-IL), Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-NY), Rep. Greg Landsman (D-OH), Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon (D-PA), Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA), Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA), Rep. Janice Schakowsky (D-IL), Rep. Lori Trahan (D-MA), and Rep. Joe Courtney (D-CT).

America's Red Rock Wilderness Act is the flagship legislation that would designate more than 8 million acres of wild public land in Utah as federally protected wilderness. As the climate crisis disrupts both natural ecosystems and human communities, protecting such large tracts of public land from fossil fuel development and other human impacts can help preserve important wildlife habitat, increase carbon storage, and boost climate resiliency. Passage of the Red Rock bill would also help protect the region's abundant cultural resources

GOOD NEWS

HOPI TRIBAL COUNCIL ENDORSES RED ROCK BILL

In March, the Hopi Tribal Council passed a resolution formally endorsing America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. Passage of the resolution was proposed and supported by the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office (HCPO) and the Hopi Cultural Resource Advisory Task Team.

In a historic first, the resolution was written in the Hopi language, the first time the Tribal Council has passed a resolution in Hopi since the contemporary Hopi government was established in 1936. Typically, resolutions and other official documents from the Hopi Tribal Council are written in English.

"Hopi peoples have lived in the canyons and mountains and on the mesas included in America's Red Rock Wilderness Act since time immemorial, and these areas comprise one of the most significant cultural landscapes in the United States," said HCPO Director Stewart Koyiyumptewa. "The passage of this resolution in Hopi is an assertion of our tribal Sovereignty, and a reminder that our relationship with the landscapes that would be protected by America's Red Rock Wilderness Act precedes both the United States and the state of Utah."

and conserve some of our nation's most spectacular wild landscapes for future generations to enjoy.

Your advocacy is what drives congressional support for America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. Please contact your representatives today and urge them to become cosponsors (or thank them if they already have). Take action by visiting suwa.org/cosponsor or text ARROW to 52886.

—Travis Hammill

AMERICANS STRONGLY SUPPORT PUBLIC LANDS RULE, HOUSE TRIES TO KILL IT

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) proposed Public Lands Rule (which at its core seeks to put conservation on equal footing with extractive uses) went prime time in early summer when the House Natural Resources Committee debated a bill to stop the effort in its tracks.

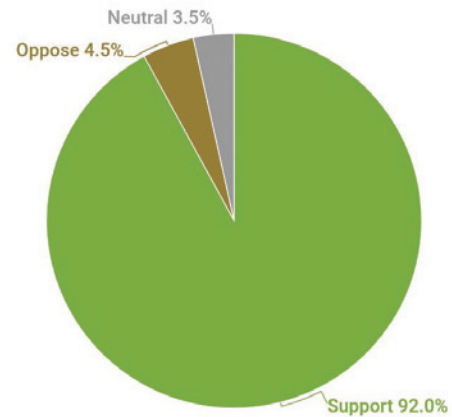
Utah Representative John Curtis (R) sponsored the bill (H.R. 3397). Its title says it all: *To require the Director of the Bureau of Land Management to withdraw a rule of the Bureau of Land Management relating to conservation and landscape health*. In addition to requiring the BLM to withdraw the rule, the bill prohibits promulgation of any similar future rule. The term "debating" isn't the best way to describe what Republicans actually did at that hearing. They ranted, threw temper-tantrums, and made things up.

DISCONNECTED FROM REALITY

Time-and-time again, Republican committee members misstated what the rule would and wouldn't do. Several members wrongly claimed that it would end grazing on BLM-managed lands. While that would no doubt be the best result for the land, that's not what the rule says. Others complained that the BLM was way out of line in even proposing this rule. But when Congress passed the Federal Land Policy and Management Act in 1976, it directed the agency to do precisely what it has done in the public lands rule: to manage our public lands according to a multiple-use and sustained-yield principle and to issue regulations to implement that management approach.

Notwithstanding these gross misrepresentations and many members' small and petty behavior, Curtis's bill passed out

Public comments on proposed BLM Public Lands Rule



PIE CHART COURTESY OF CENTER FOR WESTERN PRIORITIES. MARGIN OF ERROR ~0.5%. METHODOLOGY: RANDOM SAMPLE OF 10,000 COMMENTS POSTED TO REGULATIONS.GOV AS OF 8:00 AM ET ON JULY 5, 2023. COMMENTS WERE CATEGORIZED USING A COMBINATION OF AUTOMATED AND MANUAL SENTIMENT ANALYSIS.

of committee on a party-line vote. The full House will likely take up the bill this fall. We don't expect its companion bill in the Senate, sponsored by Senator John Barrasso (R) of Wyoming, to go anywhere.

STRONG PUBLIC SUPPORT

Meanwhile, during the 90-day public comment period for the proposed rule—which included three in-person public meetings, two virtual public meetings, and countless briefings with stakeholders around the West—the BLM received more than 150,000 comments, most of which are in support of the proposed rule. Several western newspapers also editorialized in support of the rule, including the *Salt Lake Tribune*, *Albuquerque Journal*, and *Grand Junction Sentinel*.

For its part, the *Salt Lake Tribune* embraced the rule and excoriated Curtis, both for his bill and his fear mongering: "At a hearing for the bill . . . Curtis invoked one of the Western Republican's favorite scare tactics, the idea that Western lands should be managed the way Western politicians and extractive industries want them managed, the interests of the American people—and the land itself—be damned."

We expect the BLM will take several months to review public comments and refine the rule before issuing it in final form. Lawsuits will surely follow. SUWA will be there to defend the rule and its goal of fulfilling Congress's vision of managing BLM lands for all uses, including conservation.

—Steve Bloch

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLANS: THE SAGA CONTINUES

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is continuing its effort to complete nine travel management plans covering more than 5 million acres of BLM-managed land in Utah. These critical plans will determine where motorized vehicles are allowed to travel across some of Utah's wildest and most fragile public lands.

While the plans have been moving slowly, there are encouraging signs of progress. The BLM now appears to be on track to finish several plans in 2024. To support both the Henry Mountains/Freemont Gorge and San Rafael Swell travel plans, the agency has been conducting surveys for threatened and endangered species such as the Mexican spotted owl, yellow-billed cuckoo, and San Rafael cactus. These surveys—done over the course of two years—help the BLM determine potential impacts to these species from motorized vehicles. The agency has also been inventorying cultural resources to assess the impacts of off-road vehicle travel on irreplaceable cultural sites. Historically, poor motorized travel planning has caused significant damage to these important resources.

The BLM also anticipates completing travel plans next year for the stunning landscapes adjacent to Zion National Park and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in the Trail Canyon and Paunsaugunt Travel Management Plans as well as for lands near Dinosaur National Monument.

We also expect that the agency will release the final plan for the Labyrinth Canyon and Gemini Bridges area outside of Moab later this summer.

Public involvement in this process is critical to ensuring that the BLM designates route networks that preserve Utah's wild lands. Keep an eye out for opportunities to get involved.

—*Laura Peterson*



THE BLM'S FINAL TRAVEL PLAN FOR THE LABYRINTH CANYON AND GEMINI BRIDGES AREA IS EXPECTED SOON. © SUWA

STATE RS 2477 DEPOSITIONS RETURN

After several years of going largely quiet, the State of Utah picked up the pace of its RS 2477 depositions this summer, taking several weeks of testimony from potential witnesses in San Juan County.

An obscure legal provision of the 1866 Mining Act, Revised Statute (RS) 2477 opened the door to granting "highway" rights-of-way across public lands. Utah politicians have seized on the law as a means of preventing wilderness designation and asserting local control over federal public lands.

For years, Utah and various counties have been taking depositions from older current and former rural county residents to preserve their testimony for later RS 2477 court cases. The witnesses' memories are often "refreshed" by first going on field tours with state attorneys and county officials. Then they answer questions under oath about their use nearly 50 years ago of what were and often remain faded-two tracks, stream bottoms, and cow paths.

SUWA attorneys attend every deposition that implicates lands proposed for wilderness designation. And while we've been barred (for now) from examining the state's witnesses, we are permitted to object to certain questions and we also try to coordinate with federal attorneys who attend to represent the United States.



BLM AGREES TO ABANDON PINYON-JUNIPER “CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION” RULE

In April, SUWA and Defenders of Wildlife reached a court-approved settlement agreement requiring the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to abandon a rule that authorized extensive destruction of native pinyon pine and juniper habitats across the American West without requiring prior analysis and public disclosure of possible environmental impacts.

In the very same week, the BLM and U.S. Forest Service released a nationwide report on mature and old-growth forests which revealed that pinyon-juniper woodlands are by far the forest type with the most remaining old growth. Nine million acres of old-growth pinyon-juniper were found on BLM and Forest Service lands, and an additional 14 million acres of mature pinyon-juniper woodlands were identified. This inventory data helps put new emphasis on the importance of protecting pinyon pine and juniper forests from rushed and indiscriminate destruction.

The BLM adopted the controversial “Pinyon-Juniper Categorical Exclusion Rule” in December of 2020, at the end of the Trump administration. The rule authorized extensive destruction of native trees by mechanical means—including cutting and masticating with heavy equipment—without environmental review or the opportunity for public and scientific comment. These projects could be up to 10,000 acres in size with no limit on the number of these projects the agency could approve.

As a result of the settlement, the BLM must conduct environmental reviews and solicit and respond to public comment before approving pinyon-juniper deforestation projects on public lands. In doing so, the agency must consider how a project will affect native ecosystems, including evaluating how it will impact at-risk plants and animals, sensitive soils, and the global climate crisis.

DEEP CREEK DEFORESTATION PROJECT IS BACK AND UGLY AS EVER

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has again proposed the North Deep Creek Sagebrush Habitat Restoration project, an extensive vegetation removal project across over 9,000 acres on the slopes of the Deep Creek mountains (Goshute: *Pià-roi-ya-bi*). Under the guise of restoring sagebrush habitat for sage grouse and big game, and reducing fire risk, in some areas the agency could masticate (literally chew up) as much as 100 percent of pinyon and juniper trees.

The North Deep Creek project was first approved in 2022 using an unsavory Trump-era rule which excluded pinyon and juniper removal projects of up to 10,000 acres from the usual detailed environmental analysis and public oversight. SUWA challenged the project. Then, pursuant to a court-approved settlement, the BLM abandoned the pinyon-juniper rule (see sidebar). The agency must now conduct environmental review of, and seek public comment on, pinyon-juniper deforestation projects. Accordingly, the BLM withdrew its initial approval of the project.

This spring, the BLM announced its intent to prepare an environmental assessment for the latest iteration of the North Deep Creek project. While there are a couple of noticeable improvements, SUWA still has significant concerns.

Over 70,000 acres in the heart of the range are managed as the Deep Creek Mountains Wilderness Study Area (WSA). The BLM also identified additional acreage adjacent to the WSA as having wilderness characteristics. SUWA has identified even more acreage as an essential part of America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act. The North Deep project would remove vegetation directly adjacent to the WSA and in proposed wilderness areas.

SUWA submitted extensive scoping comments on the BLM’s proposal. We pointed out the need for the environmental assessment to identify all naturally occurring pinyon-juniper woodlands in the project area, and for the agency to use the best available science to analyze the project’s likelihood of success and its potential for adverse impacts on other values: wilderness characteristics and important resources such as native vegetation, bird and wildlife habitat, and soils, including cryptobiotic soils.

We're keeping a close eye on this project, urging the BLM to make necessary changes to protect sensitive resources. We'll keep you posted.

—Judi Brawer

STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM EXPANDS REACH TO NEW AREAS

Midsummer means midseason for SUWA's Stewardship Program. As the first signs of monsoon hover like reticent visitors over the isolated mountain ranges of southeastern Utah, we reflect on what the first half of 2023 has brought.

It's been a productive season so far as we partner with more Bureau of Land Management (BLM) field offices across the state. This spring we worked with the BLM's Hanksville field office for the first time in seven years, remediating off-road vehicle impacts near the Dirty Devil Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and river put-in. There is much more work to be done and we hope to schedule more projects in this area over the coming years.

Down in the southern reaches of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, we completed our first project with the BLM's Kanab field office, raking tracks and rolling boulders to bolster WSA boundaries meant to preclude off-road vehicle travel. We also clarified foot access while eliminating sandstone graffiti in designated wilderness. We have a second project lined up with the Kanab office in October and look forward to keeping the momentum going.

Over in Utah's West Desert, our volunteers continued work on boundaries in the Notch Peak WSA, building an additional 220 feet of mixed buck-and-rail and post-and-rail fence to better define the non-motorized area. We did it all by hand, with a sledgehammer and 12" galvanized nails. There is something particularly rewarding about the physicality of manual construction (in Latin *manualis* means "hand"), especially in an increasingly motorized and mechanized world.

Most of this year's projects are full, but we encourage you to add your name to the waitlist. Spaces often open up and we would be grateful for your participation. To see our late summer and fall schedule, visit suwa.org/projectcalendar.

—Jeremy Lynch



STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS BUILD AND INSTALL BUCK-AND-RAIL FENCING ALONG THE NOTCH PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA BOUNDARY.

NICOLE MILAVETZ IS SUWA'S NEW UTAH ORGANIZER

Nicole Milavetz joined SUWA this spring as our new Utah organizer. Nicole is originally from Salt Lake City and is excited to be back in Utah after living in several places around the West.

Nicole says that throughout her life the desert has been one of the most important places on earth to her. She feels most herself walking through quiet desert washes and scrambling up sandstone faces. Nicole graduated from the University of Colorado at Boulder with a degree in environmental studies and is passionate about environmental activism, public land management, and environmental justice. She has worked in the conservation, education, and journalism fields and is thrilled to be a part of SUWA, a group she has admired since childhood.

Nicole believes in the power of wilderness preservation and activism when it comes to managing the climate crisis, and she works to develop the connection between wilderness, writing, and environmental advocacy. Nicole has jumped into her role with SUWA and the busy summer season by organizing numerous tabling events across the valley and introducing herself to community leaders throughout Utah. She continues to build a community of passionate redrock defenders and activists.

Nicole spends as much free time as possible hiking and camping across southern Utah, and skiing throughout the Wasatch. She loves poetry and long bike rides in the Salt Lake valley.



NICOLE'S PASSION FOR PUBLIC LANDS, ACTIVISM, AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ARE EVIDENT IN THE ENERGY SHE BRINGS TO HER OUTREACH WORK.



FROM MONTESSORI TO WILD UTAH, DIANA CONTINUES TO MAKE GOOD USE OF HER SKILLS AS AN EDUCATOR.

DIANA HARO BRINGS LOVE OF LEARNING TO LATINX ORGANIZER ROLE

Diana Haro joined SUWA in March of 2023 as our Latinx community organizer. Diana was born in Mexico City, surrounded by volcanoes, her grandmother's plantitas (small plants), delicious food, and the art of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. She carried all of this with her when she moved to Utah as a child.

Diana grew up in West Valley and graduated from the University of Utah and Westminster College. She's an experienced Montessori educator, having taught elementary school for the past 15 years. She enjoys learning and loves to follow her curiosity so her list of interests is long.

Since joining SUWA Diana has been hard at work engaging with younger, newer, and more diverse redrock defenders. She attended the GreenLatinos national summit and led a session, drawing parallels between the lived experiences of Latinos, migrants, and refugees with those of threatened and endangered wildlife. This shared experience uniquely positions Latinos to be powerful advocates for wildlife and its habitat, because protecting wilderness promotes its freedom—a way of decolonizing Madre Tierra.

Diana is excited to share her love for the redrock, plant the seeds of activism in the Latino/a/e community, and help Latinos harness their collective fuerza (power) to protect Utah's public lands.

SUWA WELCOMES NEW GIS ANALYST DELANEY CALLAHAN

SUWA GIS Analyst Delaney Callahan was born in Utah and later moved to California. She has lived in Colorado most recently, completing a master's degree from the University of Colorado at Denver in applied geography and geospatial science, with a specialization in natural resource management.

In addition to her impressive educational background, Delaney has years of experience in applying GIS tools and knowledge to an array of conservation and wilderness preservation efforts throughout the West. At SUWA, Delaney will bring her mapping skills to bear on a wide range of issues, from travel management and field data collection to oil and gas projects.

When Delaney is not working you are likely to find her—if you can find her at all—hiking as far and as high as possible, riding her Yamaha MT-07 bike on twisty canyon roads, or enjoying a beer by the campfire. She recently became obsessed with the oddity that is pickleball and is always down to embarrass herself with a pickup game.

Welcome, Delaney! We are delighted to have you with us.



DELANEY BRINGS VALUABLE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE TO SUWA'S GIS TEAM.



GET 40% OFF SUWA MERCHANDISE FOR OUR 40TH ANNIVERSARY!

Join us in honoring four decades of unwavering wilderness advocacy with an exclusive offer! For a limited time, enjoy 40% off all gear in our online store, including ballcaps, t-shirts, bandanas, stickers, and magnets (see photo).

Every purchase you make helps SUWA in its ongoing mission to preserve and defend the beauty of Utah's spectacular wild lands. Offer good while supplies last! Shop now at suwa.org/goodies.

... AND COME CELEBRATE WITH US ON SEPTEMBER 9TH!

If you'll be in Utah this September, don't forget to purchase tickets to our 40th Anniversary Celebration at the Natural History Museum of Utah in Salt Lake City on September 9th! Ticket sales end on Friday, August 25th. See back cover for details!

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. For an annual donation of \$150 or more, we'll print your company's name in our newsletter once a year and on our website 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 us at membership@suwa.org or (801) 486-3161. Listed below are businesses from Utah and across the country that currently support Utah wilderness through SUWA's Business Membership Program.

KAYENTA MEMBERS

(\$1,000+)

Caffe Ibis Coffee Roasting Co, UT
Colorado River & Trail, UT
Chris Brown Photography, CO
Imlay Canyon Gear, UT

Law Office of Robert Miller, AZ
Longwave Financial, NY
McGrath + McKenna Design Group, CO

Powderhound Marketing, CO
Stone Forest Inc, NM
Tangerine Restaurants, CO

WINGATE MEMBERS

(\$500-\$999)

Glenn Randall Writing and
Photography, CO

On The Trail Financial Planning LLC, CA
SLC Qi Community Acupuncture, UT

The Wildland Trekking Co, AZ

MOENKOPI MEMBERS

(\$150-\$499)

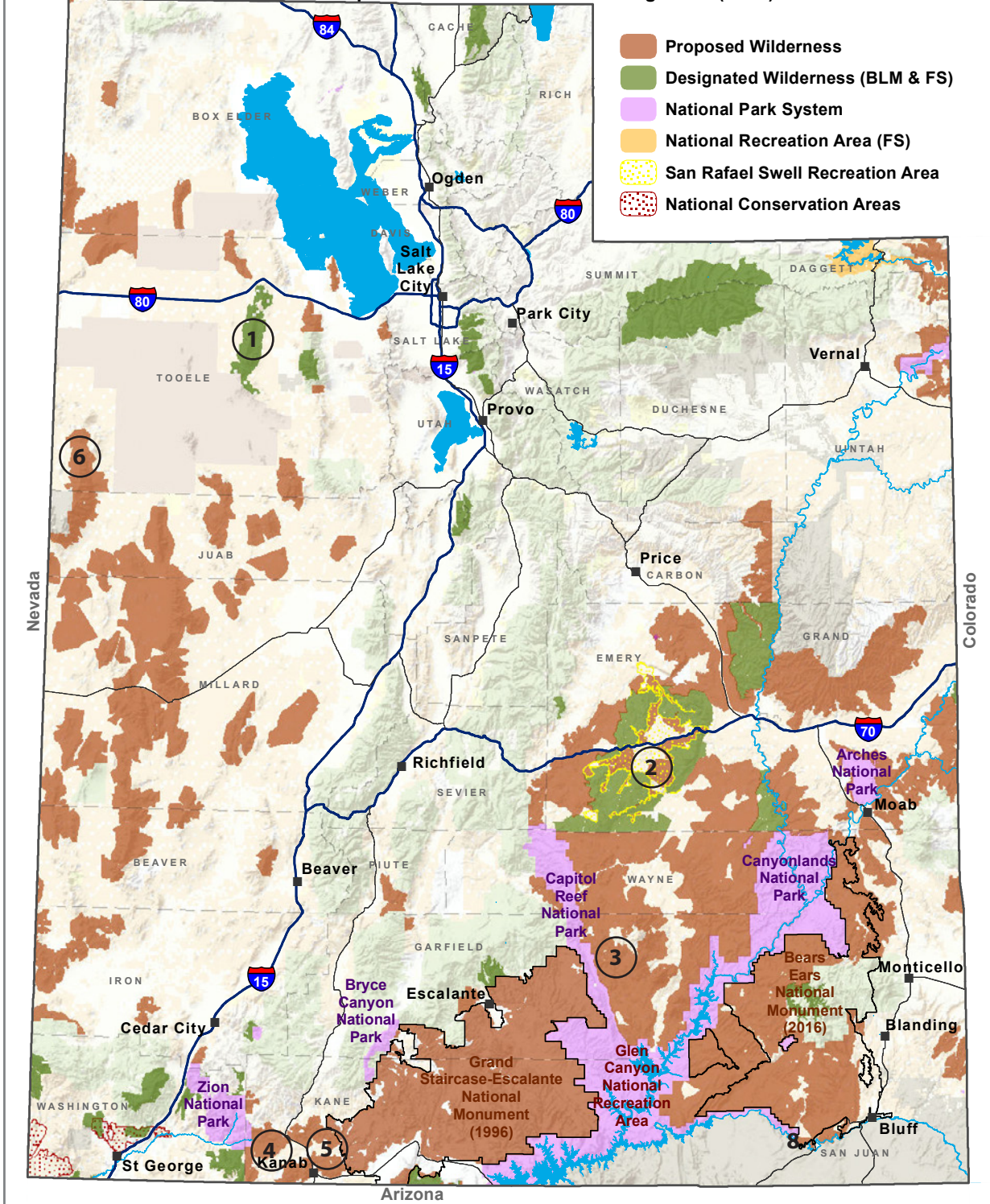
Alta Lodge, UT
Brown Bag Farms, CA
Carol Montgomery Drake CPA PLLC, NY
Clayhaus Photography, UT
Consulting Psychologists, AZ
Da Vinci Painting, WA
Escape Goats, UT
Githens Properties, LLC, CO
Gospel Flat Farm, CA
Holiday River Expeditions, UT

J Groene Construction Inc, KS
James Kay Photography, UT
Malach Consulting, LLC, UT
Maui Mountain Coffee Farm, HI
Northstar Canoes, MN
Pinnacle Peak Eye Care, AZ
Spherical Studio, CA
The Carpet Barn, UT
The Group Real Estate, LLC, UT
Underwood Environmental, Inc, UT

William Stone Photography, RI
Words and Photographs by Stephen
Trimble, UT
Workspace Installations LLC, CT
Yourstory Photography, IN
ZAK Construction, OR

America's Red Rock Wilderness Act

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



- ① Cedar Mountains (p. 8)
- ② San Rafael Swell (pp. 10, 17)
- ③ Henry Mountains (p. 17)
- ④ Trail Canyon (p. 17)
- ⑤ Pausugunt Region (p. 17)
- ⑥ Deep Creek Mountains (p. 18)



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JOIN US ON SEPTEMBER 9TH AS WE CELEBRATE 40 YEARS OF REDROCK ADVOCACY!

Our staff and board invite you to attend our 40th Anniversary Celebration at the Natural History Museum of Utah on September 9th!

40th Anniversary Celebration

Saturday, September 9th, 2023

6:30-10:00pm

Natural History Museum of Utah

at the Rio Tinto Center

301 Wakara Way, Salt Lake City



Mingle with fellow redrock supporters while enjoying DJ tunes, drinks, and delicious appetizers. We're going to party like it's 1983, so retro attire is highly encouraged—or simply come as you are!

SUWA is stronger than ever thanks to the support of tens of thousands of people who share a love for these special places. Against the odds, more than 98 percent of the wild lands in Utah we work to protect are still wild because people like you are willing to stand in their defense. Please join us in celebrating all we've achieved together and looking forward to the next exciting chapter of the Utah Wilderness movement!

Visit suwa.org/celebration to learn more and purchase tickets. **Please reserve your spot soon—ticket sales end on Friday, August 25th!**



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