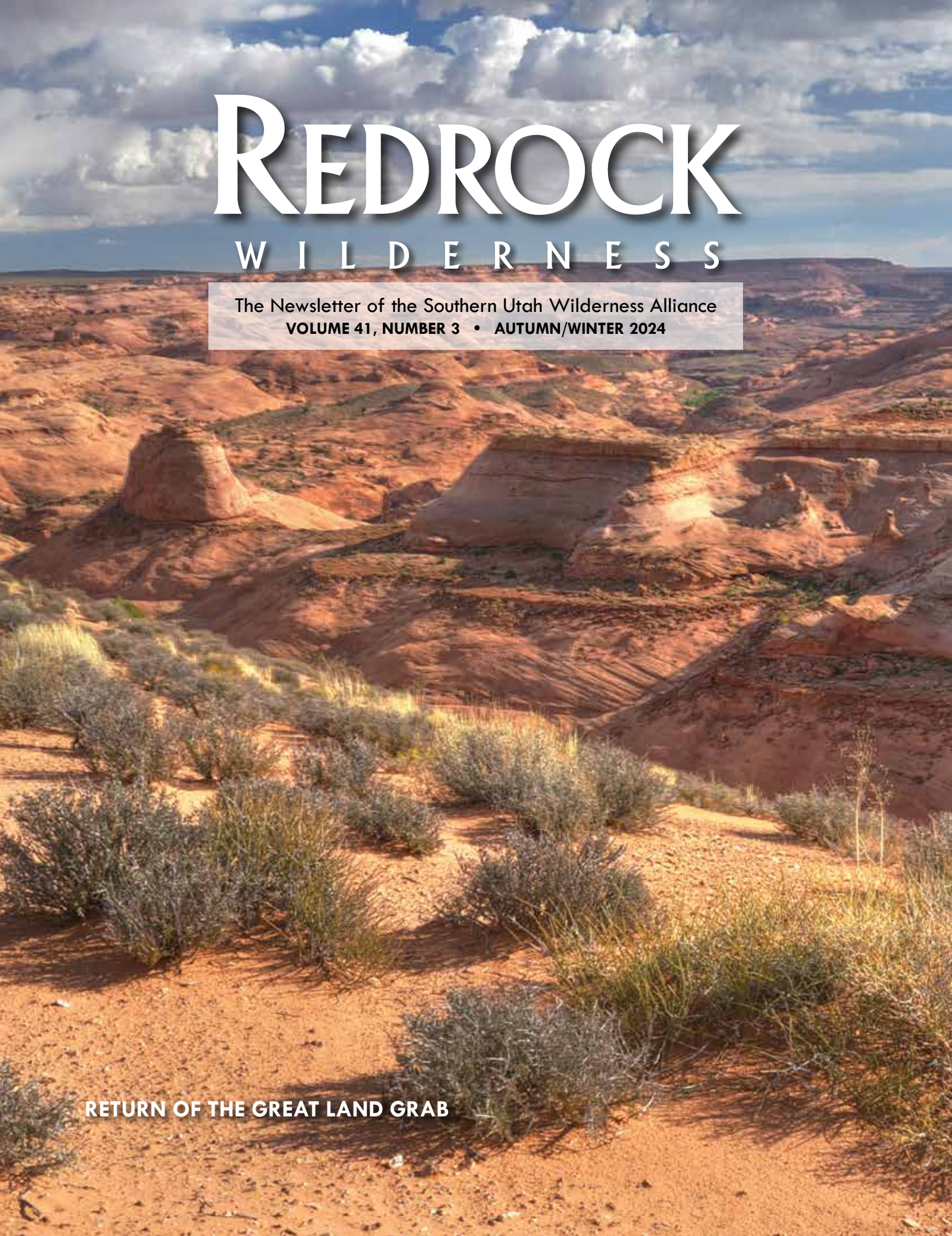

REDROCK WILDERNESS

The Newsletter of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
VOLUME 41, NUMBER 3 • AUTUMN/WINTER 2024

RETURN OF THE GREAT LAND GRAB

SUWA
SOUTHERN UTAH WILDERNESS ALLIANCE

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

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

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

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Cover Photo: Fiddler Butte proposed wilderness.
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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, Neal Clark, Scott Groene, Lauren Hainsworth, Travis Hammill, Jenny Holmes, Diane Kelly, Tom Kenworthy, Hanna Larsen, Jeremy Lynch, Kya Marienfeld, Nicole Milavetz, Heather Rose Martinez, Landon Newell, Laura Peterson, Grant Stevens, 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 peoples' 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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GOODBYES AND FRUITFUL NEW BEGINNINGS

In September, I stood in a raucous Washington, DC bar watching the inaugural gathering of the newly minted National Wilderness Coalition (for more on this, see page 10). It was powerful to see new groups and individuals come together under the wilderness banner—not only to mark the 60th anniversary of the Wilderness Act but to commit collectively to the bedrock belief that we must protect America's remaining wild places.

I'm proud to say SUWA played a leadership role in launching the Coalition and laying a foundation for its success.

Looking out at the crowd, I saw a revitalized and reinvigorated wilderness movement. There was a time when I knew every face and every name in almost any wilderness gathering I attended. No longer. Many of these faces were new to me. And the attendees have become more diverse over the past decade. This is all exceptionally good news for the wild places we care about.

GRATITUDE AND HOPE

This reassurance about the future of wilderness makes it a little easier to leave SUWA, as I will at the end of this year. I've been fortunate to have the best job, working with the best people, on behalf of the most spectacular landscape on earth.

I'm excited for SUWA's future, with its blend of new and experienced staff, and the support of the SUWA board. The upcoming transition will allow SUWA to grow and evolve into an even better defender of the redrock.

SUWA has faced many obstacles over the years: entrenched bureaucracies, the greed of short-term development schemes, the rise of motorized toys, climate change, and the never-ending foolishness and mean-spiritedness of Utah's politicians. But together, and beyond anyone's expectations, we have successfully defended the redrock over the past four decades.

Consider that in a 50-year period, from roughly 1935 to 1985, we lost—to drilling, damming, chaining, and roads—more than half of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands in Utah that would have qualified for wilderness protection. That loss totals approximately 13 million acres. In the subsequent 40 years, from 1983 to present, we've lost less than one percent of the remaining 9.5 million acres of redrock wilderness. That 40-year span corresponds to SUWA's existence. That is no coincidence.

OVER 5 MILLION ACRES WITH SOME LEVEL OF PROTECTION

We have achieved significant protection for these remaining lands, including three congressional wilderness enactments that, with associated land exchanges, protect a million acres of redrock. And with executive branch actions (national monument proclamations, for example), there are now more than 5.5 million acres of proposed wilderness in Utah with some form of protection. This surpasses what was once considered a naïve and unattainable goal when early advocates had the audacious dream of protecting 5.1 million acres.

We succeeded because we dared, and because of you and everyone else who has been part of this movement.

I first moved to Utah (Mexican Hat) nearly 40 years ago, and have since been blessed to spend much of my life exploring southern Utah with friends, my partner Christy, or alone. But my greatest joy has been teaching my daughters Maggie and Sadie to row the muddy rivers, ski the high backcountry, and navigate the redrock canyons. I trust in SUWA to make certain that there will always be plenty of wild canyon country for my daughters, and all of our children, to roam.

I imagine SUWA as a mythical desert river flowing through time. There's no guidebook for this river. Its flows are unpredictable. Every bend, every season, brings new views and challenges. Many have paddled it in the past, and there are uncharted miles ahead of us. It's been an incredible journey for me, but it's time to step off the raft and find a new adventure. I remain full of faith and trust in the next generation as it navigates its own stretch of river.

Through thick and thin, SUWA never gives up and never gives in. I am grateful for the chance to be part of this organization and its inextinguishable spirit. And I am equally grateful to all of you for your friendship, support, and hard work on behalf of the redrock. See you down the trail.

For the Redrock,

Scott Groene
Executive Director

[**Ed. Note**: This newsletter went to press prior to the 2024 election. Once we know the race results, we'll let you know via print and digital communications what it means for redrock country.]

ARTWORK BY BESSANN SWANSON

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

When I joined the SUWA Board of Directors back in 2011, I figured out something pretty fast: this was not a job that involved a lot of heavy lifting. By that time SUWA was a well-established and smoothly functioning nonprofit with almost 30 years of experience.

It had a fiercely loyal membership of roughly 13,000 people from across the country, all totally dedicated to the task of protecting wilderness-quality federal lands. The SUWA staff was, in my view, the best in the land conservation business, with many of them hardened veterans who stuck to their guns even when other groups were compromising away their principles. And the organization was on a secure financial footing, thanks to its generous members and its wise decision not to depend too much on any one funding source. All traits that remain true today.

And at its helm was Scott Groene, who had been executive director since 2004; aside from a few brief career detours, he had been a SUWA staffer dating back to the early 1990's. I first met Scott in 1992 when I was covering public lands for the *Washington Post* and he took me out on a field tour. Within the first hour, he nearly tore the bottom off my rental SUV and I was immediately hooked. He's been a great friend and, once I got out of the newspaper business, a wonderful colleague ever since. Scott's been an immensely talented leader at SUWA—wise, strategic, empathetic, smart, politically savvy, and definitely not afraid of a fight.

Now comes the heavy lift.

Scott is retiring at the end of this year, and it's the board's unfortunate task to find his replacement. He's been the executive director long enough that none of us currently serving on the board have been through this at SUWA before. To assist us, we've hired a search firm that specializes in nonprofits and comes highly recommended to us: Kittleman & Associates.

The team at Kittleman is guiding us through a well-crafted and thorough process that will take several months. As I write this, they're surveying the entire SUWA staff and board to understand what makes SUWA unique, its strengths and weaknesses, where it should be headed, and the qualities necessary in a new leader. After that comes a broad search for suitable candidates, winnowing down that list, conducting interviews of finalists, and then the board picks a new executive director.

This is, without a doubt, a big change for a remarkable organization. On behalf of the board, I want to assure you of how seriously we're taking this search for the next leader of SUWA and the *Protect Wild Utah* movement. Please be on the lookout for additional updates in the coming months.

Tom Kenworthy
Board Chair

RETURN OF THE GREAT LAND GRAB

GREEDY UTAH POLITICIANS ARE AFTER OUR NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS ONCE AGAIN

The feature story in the spring 2024 issue of *Redrock Wilderness* was titled *The Utah Way: What's up with Anti-Wilderness Beehive State Politicians?* In it, Executive Director Scott Groene wrote, "Much has changed since SUWA set out to protect the canyon country four decades ago. But, in this transformed world, one thing has not changed: Utah politicians' mulish animosity towards America's public lands generally, and to wilderness specifically."

Little did we know just how accurate those sentences would be.

In August, Utah Governor Spencer Cox, along with other Republican leaders, assembled reporters in the Utah Capitol's "Gold Room" for what they promised would be an important "Utah Public Lands" announcement.

Was the State of Utah finally going to express support for Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments and drop its futile Antiquities Act litigation? Maybe the state was going to take advantage of new conservation opportunities as part of the recently finalized Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Public Lands Rule?

Sadly, none of these came to pass. Instead, the governor proudly crowed that under his leadership the state was making another full-throated run at a Utah land grab. Governor Cox explained that the state had already spent millions of taxpayer dollars to hire a team of outside attorneys who just that very morning filed a request with the United States Supreme Court to take the extraordinary step of letting Utah bring its case directly to the nation's highest court.

We've seen this before. Like many who preceded them, this crop of Utah politicians is attempting to take millions of acres of public lands in Utah away from the American people and grab them instead for the State of Utah—and ultimately for developers and extractive industries. Utah's parochial leaders have been playing this land grab game on and off again for decades. Only the names, perceived grievances, and half-baked arguments have changed.

For this latest iteration, Utah politicians are focusing on what they're calling "unappropriated lands." As they define it, this open-ended term excludes national parks, national monuments, conservation areas, and national forests. But at 18.5 million acres, it does include all the remaining BLM land in the state, over 5.4 million acres of which are proposed as wilderness in our signature legislation, America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. This includes places like Labyrinth Canyon, the Dirty Devil, the Deep Creek Mountains, and Fisher Towers, just to name a few.

Let's pause for a moment and think about this: rather than celebrating the fact that Utah has some of the nation's most stunning public lands and redrock wilderness, Utah's offi-

THE STATE OF UTAH HAS USED OVER $20 MILLION OF TAXPAYER DOLLARS TO HIRE LAWYERS AND LAUNCH A MISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN AS IT PURSUES AN 18.5-MILLION-ACRE PUBLIC LAND GRAB.

cials are scheming to take more than 18.5 million acres of these lands away from the American people who own them.

While the state clearly thinks that today's ultra-conservative Supreme Court is leaning its way, the law and the facts are on our side. When Utah became a state (it had been a territory) and entered the Union in 1896, it forever disclaimed any interest in the public lands within its borders. Nothing has altered that bargain since then, and Utah's lawsuit should fail.

> "Let's pause for a moment and think about this: rather than celebrating the fact that Utah has some of the nation's most stunning public lands and redrock wilderness, Utah's officials are scheming to take more than 18.5 million acres of these lands away from the American people who own them."

THE STATE'S PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN

The same day as the press conference, the state, again using taxpayer money, launched a new misinformation and propaganda campaign in a bid to sway the court of public opinion. If you live or travel in Utah, you've no doubt seen "Stand for our Land: Let Utah Manage Utah Land" advertisements in many, many places—on social media, on billboards, and on TV.

Slickly produced, the various ads feature a variety of individuals, all of whom say that the state would be a better steward of public lands than the federal government. Here are a few things the ads conveniently ignore or gloss over:

• As a 2014 University of Utah study (aptly named "When Winning Means Losing") made clear, Utah cannot afford to manage these public lands. That study—which was prepared 10 years ago when Utah was last considering this maneuver—looked at whether the state could afford to manage more than 30 million acres of public lands in Utah. The result would be the same now as then: Utah would have to sell off land outright or lease large swaths of it for development (mining/drilling).

• Utah's land management laws and regulations (especially regarding the protection of cultural sites and threatened and endangered species) are nowhere near as protective as the federal government's when it comes to balancing various uses on public lands. For example, Utah has made it clear that any road or trail closures in BLM travel management plans are unacceptable, no matter the impacts that motorized use is causing.

• The State of Utah coyly fails to mention that though they're not outright targeting national monuments as part of the land grab, if their pending Antiquities Act litigation were to succeed in overturning national monument designations, they would surely argue that those lands are also "unappropriated" and thus ripe for the taking.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE LITIGATION?

During the press conference, the state outlined three general reasons for trying to get this case to the Supreme Court. Boiled down, their complaint is that Utah isn't the one calling the shots on public lands, but it oh so desperately wants to be.

• **The new Public Lands Rule**. The idea that conservation is part of the BLM's multiple-use mission is a bridge too far for Utah politicians. The state has already filed a lawsuit challenging the rule and is seeking an emergency injunction blocking it. SUWA and other conservation groups are seeking to intervene in the case, as well as one filed in North Dakota, to defend the rule (see sidebar, page 20).

• **Travel management plans**. As we've discussed many times in the newsletter, travel plans guide where motorized recreation is—and is not—allowed on public lands. The BLM is updating 11 travel plans in Utah, 3 of which are complete and 8 of which are underway. The State has sued over 2 of the completed plans and opposes any/all route closures, even if motorized recreation harms cultural or natural resources.

• **Monument management plans**. Utah is already complaining about soon-to-be-completed management plans for the restored Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments. As previously mentioned, the state is pursuing a lawsuit that seeks to overturn restoration of the national monuments

Officials also complained, in general and non-specific terms, that the federal government is thwarting energy development in Utah. This comes even as robust fossil fuel development continues in the Uinta Basin, the Western Solar Plan has been released, and the Department of Energy supports geothermal development in Utah's West Desert.

INCLUDED IN WHAT THE STATE OF UTAH CALLS "UNAPPROPRIATED LANDS" ARE PLACES LIKE LABYRINTH CANYON, THE DIRTY DEVIL, THE DEEP CREEK MOUNTAINS, AND FISHER TOWERS (ABOVE), JUST TO NAME A FEW. © SCOTT T. SMITH

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Filing a lawsuit (called a "complaint" in legalese) directly with the Supreme Court instead of the traditional route of District Court > Appeals Court > Supreme Court can best be described as a "Hail Mary" attempt. However, conservative states are trying this more and more. The State of Utah filed its "motion for leave to file bill of complaint" with the Supreme Court on August 20th and the federal government has until November 21st to respond. The Supreme Court will then review the complaint, the United States' response, and any friend of the court briefs (known as amicus briefs).

Once the court does review the motion, they'll have two options:

• Five of the nine justices vote to grant the motion for leave to file bill of complaint, which basically means that the Supreme Court will take up the case. Briefs will be filed, oral argument will occur, and eventually, the court will issue an opinion on the case.

• The court denies the motion. The state would then have the option to follow the more traditional legal path—filing in Federal District Court in Utah, appealing the case to the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, and ultimately petitioning for review once again before the Supreme Court.

The Salt Lake Tribune

Tribune editorial: Utah's latest land-grab lawsuit has no legal leg to stand on

SUWA's statement on the day of the governor's press conference said, in part, "With today's announcement, Utah has firmly established itself as the most anti-public-lands state in the country."

We stand by that statement and we're taking this unprecedented threat seriously. The land grab lawsuit is wrong in every way possible: wrong on the law, wrong on policy, and wrong for Utahns and all other Americans. Over the upcoming weeks and months, we'll keep you informed on Utah's costly power play and how you can show support for our efforts, wherever you may be.

—Steve Bloch and Grant Stevens

GOOD NEWS NATIONAL WILDERNESS COALITION BUILDS A PATH FORWARD

In spring of 2023, organizations from across the wilderness advocacy spectrum came together in Park City, Utah for the Wilderness Convergence, a conference to identify challenges and explore pathways forward for protecting and enhancing wilderness through relationship building among these organizations. Facilitated by the Wallace Stegner Center Environmental Dispute Resolution Program at the University of Utah's S.J. Quinney College of Law, organizations from around the country spent multiple days creating a plan of action to further the wilderness movement at a national level.

What started as a weekend discussion developed into a full-fledged National Wilderness Coalition that works to ensure wilderness conservation is a critical tool for addressing wild land integrity, climate change resilience, biodiversity protection, and reconnecting people and nature.

The 1964 Wilderness Act made possible visionary and remarkable conservation efforts across the country. Yet wilderness designation has become increasingly deprioritized in Congress, due in part to political polarization and the influence of corporate interests. The Coalition also recognizes that the wilderness movement has historically lacked diversity and has failed to meaningfully engage Indigenous Tribes.

In order to correct those past wrongs, the Coalition is working to engage and partner with Tribes and other historically marginalized communities. In doing so, the Coalition strives to honor the knowledge and experiences of Indigenous Peoples and communities most impacted by environmental injustice.

By working together to develop and implement a five-year strategy to diversify the movement and build political power, the Coalition hopes to reposition designated wilderness as a critical conservation tool; overcome partisan barriers to advancing wilderness legislation; and build a strong, vibrant, diverse, and inclusive wilderness movement that is reflective of the American public and sovereign nations.

SUWA is proud to be a founding member of the National Wilderness Coalition along with Colorado Wildlands Project, the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), GreenLatinos, Sierra Club, and many other organizations (please see **nationalwildernesscoalition.org** for the full list).

NATIONAL WILDERNESS COALITION GOES TO WASHINGTON

The National Wilderness Coalition collectively decided in early 2024 that a celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act was a great avenue for announcing the Coalition's existence and platform to members of Congress and to the Biden administration. Over the course of the year, the Coalition was able to put together a strong showing of more than 60 people from the Coalition member organizations for a multi-day lobby week in Washington, DC from September 9-11.

Leading up to the lobby week, partner organizations collaborated to work out messaging, meeting scheduling, event production, communications, travel arrangements, an awards dinner for congressional wilderness champions, and much more. The Coalition successfully secured a House Resolution celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act, met with members of Congress and their staff, and hosted a panel discussion with a wide range of advocates from across the country.

During one of the busiest times of the year on the Hill, Coalition lobbying teams delivered presentations to senators, representatives, and their staff. Our message was clear and concise, focusing on four key principles:

- **Ensuring Wildland Integrity**. The Wilderness Act provides legal safeguards for natural areas, preventing development and the loss of wild places.

- **Addressing Climate Change**. Wilderness areas mitigate the impacts of climate change by acting as important carbon sinks.

- **Protecting Biodiversity**. Wilderness preserves critical habitats and enhanc-

es species viability by creating natural buffers to allow for adaptation to a changing climate.

• **Reconnecting People & Nature**. Wilderness designation connects people to the natural world and conserves cultural heritage, promoting wellbeing while fostering a sense of wonder and responsibility for the environment.

The Coalition also hosted a celebration of congressional wilderness champions. Awards were presented to Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO), Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ-7), Rep. Melanie Stansbury (D-NM-1), Rep. Diana DeGette (D-CO-1), and Rep. Joe Neguse (D-CO-2).

While Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) was unable to attend the awards ceremony, the Coalition presented an award to him at his office the next day for his role in ensuring wilderness protections and defending wilderness-quality land through America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. We are deeply grateful for the support from all seven award recipients.

After a second long day of meetings with congressional offices, the Coalition gathered for a panel discussion featuring a range of perspectives

NATIONAL WILDERNESS WEEK PARTICIPANTS ATTEND AN EVENING PANEL DISCUSSION ON "60 YEARS OF THE WILDERNESS ACT: THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF WILDERNESS ADVOCACY." © SUWA

from individuals across the wilderness movement who all have a core shared belief: wilderness is essential. They discussed how wilderness conservation is a critical tool for addressing climate change, mitigating biodiversity loss, and advancing environmental justice. The conversation was recorded and will be made available on the National Wilderness Coalition website.

SO WHERE IS THE COALITION HEADED?

The Coalition is now working on a 5-year strategic plan to be a leading voice on wilderness issues, support strong wilderness protections through legislative and administrative policy, and create a network of committed organizations to ensure that the next 60 years of the Wilderness Act are

SEN. DICK DURBIN. PUBLIC DOMAIN PHOTO

Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) was celebrated at the National Wilderness Coalition's awards dinner in Washington, DC for his decades-long sponsorship of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, as well as his work to protect wilderness in the Shawnee National Forest in Illinois. Sen. Durbin was also instrumental in designating over 660,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management lands as wilderness in the 2019 Emery County Public Land Management Act and has defeated legislation, time and time again, that would have been detrimental to wilderness. Sen. Durbin has been SUWA's greatest advocate in the Senate since 1997 and we are so very grateful for his commitment to preserving wilderness across the country. Congratulations, Sen. Durbin!

Representative Melanie Stansbury (D-NM) was celebrated by the National Wilderness Coalition as an emerging leader on public lands issues. Her long history as a Senate Energy and Natural Resources staffer, state legislator, and champion of land and water conservation set her course for being a staunch advocate for wilderness in the House of Representatives. Her sponsorship of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act demonstrates a willingness to take on a leadership role in defending and protecting wilderness at the congressional level. SUWA is grateful she is working with us to ensure that public lands in Utah and around the country are preserved for future generations. Congratulations, Rep. Stansbury!

REP. MELANIE STANSBURY. PUBLIC DOMAIN PHOTO

equitable, create lasting protections, and preserve federal lands for future generations. SUWA is glad to be part of this process.

If you belong to an organization that would like to join the National Wilderness Coalition, visit the Coalition website at **nationalwildernesscoalition.org** for more information and to contact the Coaltion coordinator.

—Travis Hammill

SENATOR MARTIN HEINRICH (D-NM) RECEIVES A WILDERNESS CHAMPION AWARD FROM THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS COALITION. © SUWA

HILL STAFFERS VISIT CANYON COUNTRY

This summer and fall, two teams of congressional staff joined SUWA to visit areas included in America's Red Rock Wilderness Act and get firsthand experience of what the situation on the ground looks like in Utah. Staff from the offices of Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), and Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) took time to visit us in August, followed by a group of House staff from the offices of Representatives Melanie Stansbury (D-NM-1), Mike Levin (D-CA-49), and House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ-7) in October.

THE MAGIC OF AN AERIAL VIEW

Our good friends at EcoFlight took us up in a small plane from Canyonlands Airport to view the recently established Labyrinth Canyon Wilderness Area. EcoFlight is a non-profit organization that uses small aircraft to provide an aerial perspective to educate and advocate for our remaining wild lands, watersheds, and culturally important landscapes.

While in the air, we were able to show the staffers the boundaries of protected and unprotected lands while explaining the challenging mix of different land ownership and management. It was also an opportunity to celebrate the establishment of over 660,000 acres of wilderness included in the 2019 Emery County Public Land Management Act which Sen. Durbin was instrumental in negotiating with then-Senator Hatch.

We then drove along Highway 313 to view RS 2477 claim conflicts, energy development, and recreation management

issues. After a stop at the Long Canyon viewpoint to discuss the various land management agencies, we then drove back along the river road to view uranium tailings clean-up and discuss the Mining Act of 1872.

We also were able to spend some time on the Colorado River in pack rafts for an evening. We floated down the river and viewed proposed wilderness areas while discussing water issues on the Colorado Plateau and how wilderness study areas are used to provide interim land protection.

CULTURAL RESOURCES AND OUR TRIBAL PARTNERS

After getting off the river, we took a short hike to view the "Moon Flower" and "Birthing Panel" (Fremont and Ute peoples) petroglyphs and discuss the importance of protecting cultural resources that exist across the landscape. We also spoke of the support from the Zuni Council (see page 14), Navajo Nation Council, and Hopi Tribal Council (along with other Tribal partners) in preserving lands for these resources. The capstone on the final day was a visit to Arches National Park to show the challenges of overcrowding, recreation, and differences between frontcountry and backcountry recreation.

Bringing Hill staff to southern Utah allows them to build relationships with SUWA staff and connect the text of

AN EDUCATIONAL OVERLIGHT OFFERS CONGRESSIONAL STAFF A BIRDS-EYE VIEW OF THE LANDSCAPES SUWA IS WORKING TO PROTECT. © SUWA/ECOFLIGHT

America's Red Rock Wilderness Act to the landscape itself. We hope these staffers will return to DC with renewed excitement and drive to protect these lands, and that they'll continue to work with their senators and representatives on behalf of America's redrock wilderness.

—Travis Hammill

STAFF FROM THE DC OFFICES OF SENATORS DICK DURBIN (D-IL), MARTIN HEINRICH (D-NM), AND MAJORITY LEADER CHUCK SCHUMER (D-NY) VISIT AN AREA PROPOSED FOR WILDERNESS DESIGNATION IN AMERICA'S RED ROCK WILDERNESS ACT. © SUWA

GOOD NEWS

ZUNI COUNCIL ENDORSES ARRWA!

We're pleased to report that the Zuni Council, consisting of the governor, lieutenant governor, and six council members, has voted unanimously to support America's Red Rock Wilderness Act (ARRWA). Their July 10th resolution endorses congressional wilderness designation for lands within the bill.

"The animals and plants found there, along with the cultural and historic record of the legacy of the Zuni peoples, could be harmed," said Zuni Tribal Governor Arden Kucate. "Our approach to life is an all-encompassing effort to protect the environment for the benefit of all mankind. We find that America's Red Rock Wilderness Act is an important part of that effort."

The Hopi Tribal Council and Navajo Nation Council passed similar resolutions in 2023 and 2021, respectively.

"Defending America's Wilderness is crucial to ensuring the vital ecosystems and sacred lands across the Southwest and the country remain stable and protected, in collaboration with Tribes," said Representative Melanie Stansbury (D-NM). "I am proud to sponsor America's Red Rock Wilderness Act in the U.S. House and to have the endorsement of Zuni Pueblo."

HATCH CANYON PROPOSED WILDERNESS. © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA

GOOD NEWS

RED ROCK BILL ENJOYS SOLID SUPPORT AS 118TH CONGRESS WINDS DOWN

As the year careens toward the anxiously anticipated election, we are also getting close to the end of the 118th Congress. This has been a successful Congress in terms of cosponsorships of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act (ARRWA)—a bill that would protect more than 8.4 million acres of federal public land in Utah—with 23 cosponsors in the Senate and 96 in the House of Representatives. We are grateful for the hard work of our members and supporters around the country who have contacted or met with their elected officials to ask for their support of ARRWA.

A senator or representative becoming a cosponsor is not something to take lightly. Cosponsorship of ARRWA is a public commitment to not only vote a certain way, but also to stand up to legislation that could threaten the landscapes included in the bill. These senators and representatives are our partners in ensuring that public lands are protected for future generations.

SUWA thanks all the cosponsors of ARRWA in the 118th Congress for their support! We can't do this work without our wilderness champions on Capitol Hill.

If your representative and/or senators are listed on the opposite page, please take a moment to send them a note or call their office to thank them for their cosponsorship in the 118th Congress and ask them to cosponsor again in the 119th. If you don't see your members of Congress listed, there is still time to ask them to cosponsor. Text **ARRWA** to **52886** to do so today!

—Travis Hammill

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BLM ON SCHEDULE TO FINALIZE TWO MORE TRAVEL PLANS BY END OF 2024

It has been a slow process as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) strives to complete 11 travel management plans throughout eastern and southern Utah. The agency began that work in 2017 and is finally picking up speed. According to an update the BLM recently filed in federal court, the agency is poised to finish two more plans—for the San Rafael Swell and the Henry Mountains/Dirty Devil areas—by the end of this year. That will bring the total to five completed plans (these two, plus Labyrinth Canyon, San Rafael Desert, and Canyon Rims).

The San Rafael Swell and Henry Mountains/Dirty Devil travel management areas encompass nearly 3 million acres of BLM-managed lands and a significant chunk of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. Balanced travel planning that protects cultural and natural resources is essential to ensure the continued vitality of these spectacular wild lands. We will keep you updated as these two plans approach completion.

SAN RAFAEL SWELL. © LESLIE SCOPES ANDERSON

BERT MESA, DIRTY DEVIL PROPOSED WILDERNESS. © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA

BLM RELEASES DRAFT HENRY MOUNTAINS/DIRTY DEVIL TRAVEL PLAN

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been busy working on travel management plans covering more than 6 million acres of BLM-managed lands in eastern and southern Utah. These plans determine where off-road vehicles (ORVs) are allowed across Utah's wild lands.

The agency is nearing the finish line on revisions to the plan that started it all: the Henry Mountains/Dirty Devil travel plan. In 2008, the BLM's Richfield field office blanketed this area with 1,850 miles of designated ORV routes, including routes cutting directly through cultural sites and weaving in and out of desert streams, as well as phantom routes that do not exist on the ground. A federal court ruled in 2013 that this travel plan failed to comply with federal laws intended to protect public lands, resources, and cultural sites from ORV damage. That ruling led to an eventual settlement agreement in 2017 that requires the BLM to prepare 11 new travel management plans, including this one.

The Henry Mountains/Dirty Devil area is remarkable, stretching between Capitol Reef and Canyonlands National Parks and down to Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. This expansive landscape is made up of several distinct regions, ranging from the sinuous redrock canyons leading to the Dirty Devil River, to the sweeping badlands surrounding Factory Butte, and up to the alpine peaks of the Henry Mountains. That varied topography provides endless recreational opportunities. The travel plan will have a long-lasting impact on the future of this remote area.

In September, the BLM released a draft environmental assessment analyzing four alternative ORV travel networks the agency is considering designating. Of those, only Alternative B comports with the BLM's duty to minimize damage to natural and cultural resources. Alternative B would remove non-existent, redundant, and damaging routes and provide some balance between motorized and non-motor-

ized recreation. We expect a final travel plan at the end of this year (see sidebar, opposite page).

Public involvement in this process is critical to ensure that the BLM designates route networks that preserve, not imperil, Utah's wild lands. Please visit **suwa.org** to learn how your voice can make a difference.

—Laura Peterson

PARK SERVICE SEEKS COMMENTS ON PROPOSED ORV RULE FOR GLEN CANYON NRA

In our last issue of *Redrock Wilderness*, we announced our settlement with the National Park Service (NPS) over the agency's Trump-era off-road vehicle (ORV) management plan for Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. The settlement agreement requires that NPS promulgate a new rule proposing to 1) close the Orange Cliffs to all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and side-by-sides; 2) close designated shoreline access areas to motorized use unless lake elevations rise to sustainable levels; and 3) close various remote routes to ATVs and side-by-sides.

We're excited to share that the proposed new rule was released in September 2024 and is open for public comment until November 15, 2024. As we expected, the proposed rule complies with the terms of the settlement agreement. However, we believe the public (and Glen Canyon itself!) would further benefit from minor tweaks such as:

• Clear and obvious communications both online and in person explaining which shoreline access areas are open or closed to motorized vehicles.

• Information explaining what visitors are and are not permitted to do when a shoreline access area is open or closed to motorized vehicles.

• Posting signs, webpages, social media posts, etc., communicating closures in both English and Spanish.

Improving communications about the specifications and limitations on motorized vehicle use in Glen Canyon will not only make the recreation area safer and more accessible to visitors but will also further ensure that environmental impacts are reduced. To that end, we will be advocating for these inclusions in our comments supporting the proposed rule and we encourage you to do the same. The deadline for public comments is November 15th. Learn more and take action on our website at **suwa.org/GlenCanyon**.

(Continued next page)

THANKS TO A SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN SUWA AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, THE AGENCY HAS PROPOSED A NEW RULE THAT WOULD CLOSE CERTAIN REMOTE AND SENSITIVE AREAS IN THE GLEN CANYON NRA TO ATVS AND SIDE-BY-SIDES. © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA

We're optimistic that once finalized, the new rule will protect Glen Canyon's spectacular areas, scenic landscapes, and natural and cultural resources while still providing ample opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized recreation. We look forward to continuing to advocate on Glen Canyon's behalf to ensure its wilderness-quality lands remain protected for generations to come.

—Hanna Larsen

SUWA GOES TO COURT TO PROTECT SAN RAFAEL DESERT FROM ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Earlier this year, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) shocked conservationists when it reaffirmed Trump-era decisions to issue oil and gas leases in Utah's San Rafael Desert. One lease is especially problematic as it is located within what is now the Labyrinth Canyon Wilderness. The BLM's decision to reaffirm the leases essentially put the Biden administration's stamp of approval on the Trump "energy dominance" agenda in this remote corner of southern Utah.

In late August, SUWA filed a lawsuit in federal district court in Washington, DC challenging the BLM's decision to reaffirm these controversial leases. SUWA's litigation seeks an order from the court setting aside the decision as unlawful and thus undoing the oil and gas leases.

We have taken this necessary step to protect Utah's wild San Rafael Desert region, including the Labyrinth Canyon Wilderness. The Green River bounds this wild area on the east; Canyonlands National Park and the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area adjoin it on the south. The Labyrinth Canyon stretch of the Green River abuts the wilderness and passes through Bowknot Bend on its way to the confluence with the Colorado River. This stretch of river is one of the most magnificent in the United States and over 40 miles of it are designated as Scenic under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Your support makes this lawsuit possible. We will fight to ensure that this remarkable landscape receives the respect and protection it deserves, and we will keep you posted as this litigation moves forward.

—Landon Newell

PROPOSED WILDERNESS AT RISK IN EXPANSIVE WESTERN SOLAR PLAN

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has released its Proposed Western Utility-Scale Solar Energy Development Plan. Known as the Western Solar Plan, it is intended to decide where, and under what conditions, utility-scale solar development may occur on BLM-managed lands across the West, including Utah.

The environmental impact statement (EIS) for the plan analyzed five alternatives. The most expansive alternative would make solar development available on 57.7 million acres across the western states, with 9.8 million acres in Utah, while the most restrictive would open 8.7 million acres across the West, 1.5 million acres being in Utah.

Rather than select one of the five alternatives, the BLM's proposed plan opted for a new combination of alternatives such that BLM-managed lands would be available for solar projects under two conditions: (1) they are not excluded by a resource-based or slope exclusion and (2) they are either classified as previously disturbed lands or are within 15 miles of an existing or planned transmission line or designated energy corridor. Boilded down, that means a total 31.7 million acres of lands are open to solar development, with 5 million acres available in Utah.

Of the Utah acreage, around 600,000 acres (6.78%) overlap with wilderness proposed in America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. While that number may not seem like a lot, it could have been much lower, if not zero. That's because the plan only protects wilderness-quality lands from solar development if they have been identified by the BLM as "lands with wilderness characteristics" (LWC) and the agency has chosen to manage the LWC area to protect its wilderness characteristics. Unfortunately, most LWC areas in Utah are not managed this way so the lands remain open to solar development unless another exclusion applies.

Consequently, SUWA filed a protest on the Western Solar Plan explaining that the BLM had the information available to consider all LWC areas and should have done so. We've requested that the BLM revise the plan to exclude these areas regardless of how the agency chooses to manage them. Stay tuned for updates on our protest as well as the BLM's final decision on the Western Solar Plan.

—Hanna Larsen

AFTER TAKING MUCH-NEEDED STEPS IN 2023 TO PROTECT THE LABYRINTH CANYON AREA FROM OFF-ROAD VEHICLE DAMAGE, THE BLM HAS UNDERCUT THAT PROGRESS BY APPROVING THE "AMERICAN GREEN RIVER POTASH PROJECT" IN THE SAME WILD LANDSCAPE. © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA

MINING APPROVALS THREATEN CANYONLANDS, DEAD HORSE POINT & LABYRINTH CANYON AREAS

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Moab field office has approved two mining projects that put some of southern Utah's most popular redrock landscapes in the crosshairs of industrial development. This double whammy of rotten news gave the go-ahead to controversial lithium and potash drilling near the entrance to Canyonlands National Park and Dead Horse Point State Park, and in the Labyrinth Canyon region.

The first project, known as the A1 Lithium Project, reapproves a lithium mining project that SUWA successfully challenged last year. Rather than closely reexamine its decision, the BLM merely rubberstamped its prior approval. The project includes the construction of well pads and drilling of two lithium wells near the entrance to the Island in the Sky district of Canyonlands National Park and Dead Horse Point State Park. The development will be visible from the parks.

Maddeningly, after SUWA prevailed in its first challenge to this project, the company ignored the BLM's directives to halt all surface disturbing operations and continued to build one of the well pads. Now, the BLM has rewarded the company's unauthorized activity with new drilling permits.

The second approval, known as the American Green River Potash Project, involves the construction of four well pads and drilling of four exploratory potash and lithium wells. Three of the well pads are in the Labyrinth Canyon region proposed for wilderness designation in America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. These wells are the first step toward what the company hopes will be full-scale industrial development, culminating in staggeringly large evaporation ponds and other infrastructure (similar to the existing Intrepid Potash Mine near Moab).

In 2023, the BLM took much-needed steps to protect the Labyrinth Canyon landscape from off-road vehicle damage. But the agency's new decision—on that very same landscape—undoes much of that progress and will lead to new development, permanently scarring this remarkable area.

Individually and collectively, these mining projects will destroy or degrade wildlife habitats, wilderness-caliber lands, and scenic viewsheds. The industrial development will cause new air and greenhouse gas pollution and consume millions of gallons of water in the already overstressed Colorado River watershed. As the climate crisis continues to tighten its grip on southeastern Utah, we

GROUPS MOVE TO INTERVENE IN LAWSUITS SEEKING TO SCUTTLE BLM CONSERVATION RULE

Last June, after a year of consideration and public engagement, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) finalized its Conservation and Landscape Health Rule (also known as the Public Lands Rule). In short, the goal of the rule is for the BLM to improve the health and resilience of ecosystems on BLM-managed lands by protecting intact landscapes and restoring degraded ones. It also reiterates that conservation is a use on par with other uses on public lands (like grazing or mining). That proposition is already laid out in federal law.

Simply put, the rule is a long overdue step forward for public land management that supports our work to protect large landscapes. As SUWA Legal Director Steve Bloch noted, "With so much of Utah's redrock country facing dire consequences because of climate change, the rule will help keep conservation front of mind as BLM goes about its work."

The rule does not have immediate impacts on the ground; it simply provides a framework for the BLM to achieve conservation through future land management decisions. Nevertheless, the States of Utah, Wyoming, North Dakota, Idaho, Montana, and Alaska, along with a coalition of industry groups scurried to file lawsuits in several federal district courts across the West.

SUWA, The Wilderness Society, and Conservation Lands Foundation have moved to intervene in three of the pending lawsuits—two in the district of Utah and a third in the district of North Dakota. If the courts grant our motions to intervene, SUWA and our partners will be able to defend the BLM's lawfully promulgated rule throughout the litigation. Our attorneys are collaborating on these cases with Advocates for the West and Kaplan Kirsch LLP.

Special thanks to Lauren Wood, co-owner of longtime SUWA supporter Holiday River Expeditions, for providing a declaration to demonstrate to the court how the BLM's Public Lands Rule will benefit both people and businesses that depend on healthy, functioning, and intact landscapes.

cannot afford to pour this water down the drain. SUWA is scrutinizing the decisions and will take the necessary steps to protect these gems.

—Landon Newell

NEW PLAN ALMOST FINALIZED FOR GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE

In 2021, President Biden signed proclamations renewing and restoring Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments to their original boundaries and purposes: conservation, science, and the protection of cultural resources. For the past several years, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been in the process of developing new long-term management plans for both monuments. Now, the Grand Staircase plan is almost finished after the BLM released its final environmental impact statement (FEIS) in late August and articulated to the public the likely direction of its proposed final management plan for this important landscape.

During all stages of the plan revision process, SUWA, our partners, and our members both locally and nationally worked hard to provide detailed comments and encourage the agency to shape this incredible monument back into what was first envisioned when it was designated in 1996 by President Bill Clinton: a living laboratory, natural vault of intact dryland ecosystems, and a complete cultural landscape.

In the BLM's proposed final plan, the agency has indicated that it will return to the "management areas" approach that marked the first 20 years of monument's management prior to its illegal shrinking by President Trump. We are thrilled to see a return to this management area framework in which four areas similar to those used in the original management plan will be established: Frontcountry (36,600 acres), Passage (53,000 acres), Outback (558,700 acres), and Primitive (1,217,100 acres).

Each management area has its own rules and guidelines for different resource concerns. For example, some areas are more open to future established and dispersed recreation sites and active management, while others are intended to preserve the monument's largely undeveloped character and use natural processes for restoration and protecting wildlife and their habitat.

Other important aspects of the BLM's proposed plan and FEIS include: (1) managing almost 250,000 acres of BLM-identified "lands with wilderness characteristics" to protect that wilderness character; (2) once again closing the "V-Road," which in the Trump-era plans allowed motorized travel through a wilderness study area with sensitive geologic sites, resulting in harm to monument resources; (3) laying the groundwork to proactively and consistently engage on all planning decisions with Tribes through co-stewardship and to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge and science into research and education; and (4) paving the way for retirement of livestock grazing allotments in sensitive riparian areas.

More than 25 years since its establishment, the numerous benefits of protecting Grand Staircase-Escalante are clear: the monument preserves a remarkable ecosystem at the landscape-level and sets the stage for future discovery about human, paleontological, and geologic history on the Colorado Plateau. We are excited to see the BLM correct its recent course in protecting this incredible place at the heart of America's redrock wilderness, and we look forward to helping the agency implement its new plan.

—Kya Marienfeld

GOOD NEWS COURT UPHOLDS SUWA'S RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN CRITICAL RS 2477 CASE

To call Revised Statute (RS) 2477 obscure is to severely understate the case. But in terms of the future of Utah's wild country, few laws can match its potential for damage. The statute granted highway rights-of-way in certain cases as part of the Mining Act of 1866. Congress repealed RS 2477 in 1976, but in the 1990s Utah's politicians seized on it as a way to try to block wilderness designation and gain local control over our public lands, filing dozens of suits to achieve those goals.

The Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled last spring on SUWA's appeal of a federal district judge's decision denying our motion to intervene "as of right" in a critical RS 2477 lawsuit known as the Kane County "bellwether" case. The case involves more than a dozen claimed rights-of-way in Kane County, many of which are also located within Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, and several wilderness study areas.

The Tenth Circuit ruled in SUWA's favor regarding our right to participate in the bellwether trial on the issue of the "scope" for rights-of-way that plaintiffs can prove were created before 1976. Scope is the legal term of art that describes how Kane County and the State of Utah may use and, in some situations, construct improvements to rights-of-way that are adjudicated in their favor.

The State of Utah, Kane County, and the United States asked, for the third time, that the Tenth Circuit take the rare step of rehearing the issue while sitting *en banc* (meaning that all eligible judges on the circuit would participate in rehearing the case). SUWA successfully opposed this extraordinary request. In the order denying that review, Judge Gregory Phillips specifically took "issue" with

GOOD NEWS VICTORY: NO GIANT TOWER IN BEARS EARS!

In case you missed the great news, a Florida-based developer withdrew its application to build a 480-foot communications tower in the heart of Bears Ears National Monument! The proposed tower and its blinking red lights would have been visible across much of the monument, as well as from Natural Bridges National Monument, the first ever designated Dark Sky Park. Former San Juan County commissioner and Navajo Nation Council Delegate Mark Maryboy described it as "a spear in the heart of the Bears Ears area."

In July, SUWA and seven other groups submitted extensive comments on the application to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). We requested a full-blown environmental review of the proposal, noting that the applicant's environmental assessment failed to comply with both the National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act.

We also cited the project proponent's failure to consult with numerous Tribes that have significant cultural ties to Bears Ears, including the Hopi Tribe and the Navajo Nation.

A day later, the tower developer withdrew its proposal due to "unforeseen circumstances."

the state and county's "attempt to exploit this court's en banc procedure to revive arguments that they lost years ago." This means that the March opinion stands and SUWA finally can fully participate on the issue of scope for the bellwether trial.

—Michelle White

BLM TARGETS BOOK CLIFFS REGION WITH AGGRESSIVE FOREST REMOVAL PROJECT

SUWA recently submitted extensive comments on the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) plan to remove piñon and juniper trees from over 11,000 acres in the Book Cliffs in northeastern Utah. The Bitter Creek Sagebrush Restoration Project area is entirely within lands the agency has identified as having wilderness characteristics, including the Bitter Creek, Davis Canyon, Dragon Canyon, Rat Hole, Sweetwater, Cripple Cowboy, and Hells Hole areas.

The rugged beauty of these wilderness-quality lands, along with the Book Cliffs' abundant wildlife, make them one of Utah's wildest and most popular backcountry destinations. Unfortunately, the Bitter Creek project is just the latest effort by the BLM's Vernal field office to eliminate tens of thousands of acres of their native piñon-juniper forests—all under the guise of restoring sagebrush habitat.

Contrary to this pretext, however, following mechanical treatments such as mastication and chaining, which remove up to 100 percent of trees from the target area, the BLM revegetates with persistent non-native species such as crested wheatgrass and alfalfa. These species may outcompete native grasses and forbs, resulting in diminished wildlife habitat, albeit favorable to livestock. The agency has never analyzed the aggregate impacts of its piñon-juniper removal and non-native seedings on sensitive Book Cliffs resources such as wilderness values; bird and wildlife species and their habitats; soils, including cryptobiotic soils; and cultural resources.

Enough is enough. It's time for the BLM to account for its piñon-juniper elimination program. As SUWA's comments emphasized, before moving forward with the Bitter Creek project or any other vegetation removal project, the agency must conduct a landscape-scale analysis of past, present, and anticipated future actions, and the impacts of those actions on all of the Book Cliffs' sensitive resources.

We're keeping a close eye on this and other projects in the area. We will keep you posted on our efforts to ensure the Vernal field office protects the Book Cliffs' native piñon-juniper woodlands and wilderness values.

—Judi Brawer

THE BLM HAS NEVER ANALYZED THE AGGREGATE IMPACTS OF ITS PIÑON-JUNIPER REMOVAL AND NON-NATIVE SEEDINGS IN WILD AREAS OF THE BOOK CLIFFS, SUCH AS DRAGON CANYON, PICTURED ABOVE.

ACTIVISTS LEARN, CONNECT, AND HONE ADVOCACY SKILLS AT GRASSROOTS LEADER RETREAT

In early September, 32 wilderness activists from Utah and across the nation joined SUWA organizers in Boulder, Utah for our annual Grassroots Leader Retreat. The purpose of the retreat is to educate, inspire, and connect emerging leaders so they're better prepared to advocate for the red-rock in their local communities, in comments to federal agencies, and in meetings with elected officials.

The agenda included guided hikes and a field trip through Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument to the Waterpocket Fold, where activists learned about stewardship projects, management planning, and public comment opportunities. At camp, SUWA staff gave presentations on America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, public lands and environmental justice, and the wilderness-climate connection.

As a special treat, Dr. Jackie Grant, executive director of Grand Staircase Escalante Partners, hosted a quiz night on bats of the monument, and Dr. Emmanuel Santa-Martinez from Salt Lake Community College spoke about the importance of pollinator conservation (the monument is home to 660 bee species!). A talk by SUWA board member Tara Benally on Indigenous history and experience on the Colorado Plateau (including her own family's story) was especially compelling.

This year's diverse group of participants hailed from UT, AZ, NM, CO, TX, CA, OR, IL, IN, OH, VA, DC, GA, and MA. It was gratifying to witness the awe and excitement of first-time attendees as they took in the beauty, serenity, and abundant life of Utah's canyon country.

Reed Ochalek, a student of economics and environmental studies at UC Santa Barbara, said the retreat made him realize "there's a whole group of people just like me who care as much and more than I do about this landscape, and it gives me a lot of hope for the future." Callia Tellez, a law student at Ohio State University, said what she'll take away most from the weekend are the teachings of elder activists, "folks who have been doing this work for a very, very long time who have so much institutional knowledge to pass down."

People-powered activism is the heart of our movement, our origin story, and our inspiration in challenging times. Big thanks to Headwaters Ranch, our wonderful guest speakers, and each of the amazing activists for making the weekend a great success!

ACTIVISTS LEARN ABOUT MANAGEMENT PLANNING AT A STOP IN GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENT. © DIANE KELLY/SUWA

SUWA MIDWEST ORGANIZER CHRIS RICCARDO GIVES A PRIMER ON AMERICA'S RED ROCK WILDERNESS ACT. © DIANE KELLY/SUWA

MANY THANKS TO GRASSROOTS INTERN RACHEL KUNSELMAN!

Rachel Kunselman joined SUWA in June as our summer and fall grassroots organizing intern. Since that time, she has staffed SUWA outreach tables around the state, educated community members on the importance of protecting the redrock, and joined our staff in the field to better understand the complexities of travel management planning.

Rachel spent time in the San Rafael Swell and Henry Mountains travel management areas and used that experience to educate members of the public on the threats to these wild places and the importance of submitting public comments to the BLM.She also volunteerd with the SUWA Stewardship Program in the Book Cliffs backcountry, installing signs along the boundaries of the Winter Ridge Wilderness Study Area.

We are so grateful to Rachel for her hard work and for the energy and enthusiasm she has brought to SUWA over the last six months. Thank you, Rachel, and best of luck in your next adventure!

SUWA HELPS ORGANIZE, LEAD MULTIPLE EVENTS FOR LATINO CONSERVATION WEEK

September was a month of celebration and community building for SUWA's Latinx team as we observed both Latino Conservation Week (LCW) and Hispanic Heritage Month. The Hispanic Access Foundation created Latino Conservation Week to support the Latino community in knowing, using, and defending our natural resources. Our goal at SUWA in participating in LCW is to expand the tent of conservation advocacy. We work to connect Latinos/as/es with our organization, foster a relationship with the redrock, and guide and support their environmental activism.

Our September celebration featured three events. The first was a hike in Cedar City on the Rocky Ridge Trail. That walk sparked conversations about the Old Spanish National Historic Trail and Latino/a/e conservation and culture. Two years ago, SUWA intern Keegan Gallegos and a volunteer, Héctor Cedillo-Téllez, led this same hike. Hector kindly returned to lead this year's hike and help recruit students from Southern Utah University.

Next was a stewardship trip in the West Desert (see opposite page), where we captured videos of summer intern Louise Fernandez hard at work. This footage will give volunteers a sneak peek into what to expect during these trips. We hope to include a stewardship trip as a regular feature of Latino Conservation Weeks.

The third and final event was another educational hike in Big Cottonwood Canyon, just outside Salt Lake City. This hike coincided with National Public Lands Day, which added special meaning as we discussed current threats to public lands in Utah, explained SUWA's work, and outlined ways for folks to

SALT LAKE VALLEY RESIDENTS LEARN ABOUT PUBLIC LAND PROTECTION ON AN EDUCATIONAL HIKE IN BIG COTTONWOOD CANYON DURING LATINO CONSERVATION WEEK. © SUWA

get involved. SUWA collaborated with Wasatch Trails Collective for this event. Its members were essential in helping promote the event and recruit volunteers. We thank the Collective and look forward to partnering with them again!

Thank you to all the volunteers and participants who took time to attend these events. A special thanks to Latinx community outreach interns Louise Fernandez and Mili Pioquinto for all their hard work and dedication to the redrock and the Latino/a/e community!

STEWARDSHIP WRAP-UP: CHANGE IS IN THE AIR—AND ON THE GROUND

Monsoon season carved canyon country a little deeper this year. Now the light grows short and the mornings cooler as we transition to planning the 2025 stewardship season. These days, our Stewardship Program staff are either on the ground assessing the state of our wild lands or preparing project proposals for winter meetings with the Bureau of Land Management.

As our program approaches its tenth anniversary, our volunteers have given over 20,000 hours to protecting Utah's wild places. That's 1,400 folks over 330 project days managing 300 miles of illegal routes, naturalizing 300,000 square feet of desert, constructing 41,000 feet of barriers, installing 600 informational signs, cleaning 650 campsites, remediating 10,000 square feet of canyon graffiti, and removing 10,000 pounds of trash from public lands!

STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS CONSTRUCT A FLOOD FENCE BARRIER IN THE BOOK CLIFFS' COAL CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA. THE FENCE SERVES TO CONTROL OFF-ROUTE MOTORIZED TRAVEL WHILE ACCOMODATING NATURAL FLASH FLOOD CYCLES. © SUWA

This year, we held three projects in Utah's Basin & Range province (also known as the West Desert), working to achieve motorized compliance. On every trip, we remarked on the remoteness—and the beauty—of the isolated mountain ranges that characterize this region. As one pensive volunteer put it, "How remarkable it is to be in a landscape so remote, yet in so much need of restoration work. SUWA volunteers are . . . out here actually doing the work. It feels like being a torchlight on a dark road."

As important as the work itself is the community we build around it. We are here to model stewardship as culture—a way of being with the land—so that those we encounter, and those who follow, will have our example. Learn more about SUWA's Stewardship Project at **suwa.org/stewardship** and look for our 2025 calendar come late January.

THANKS TO OUR CALIFORNIA SUMMER INTERNS!

SUWA thanks **Ilia Sohrabi** and **Esmeralda Zambrano** for serving as summer outreach interns through the West LA College Climate Education Center. Their outreach included tabling at cultural festivals, educating folks on environmental justice, and explaining how protecting the redrock helps protect climate and biodiversity.

As part of his internship, Iilia developed resources on the links between human health, nature, and wilderness with the goal of making this information accessible to the layperson. He grew up in Tehran where he became concerned about air pollution and public health. After studying biology in community college and working in pharmacy, he's now pursuing a career in neuroscience at UC Berkeley.

Growing up in East LA made Esmeralda acutely aware of the lack of access to nature and high levels of pollution compared with other, more affluent areas of Los Angeles. She put her study and knowledge of environmental science and biology to use in working for environmental justice. Her internship included taking young people from areas with limited access to nature on hikes that incorporated education on Utah wilderness advocacy. She also attended our Grassroots Leader Retreat in September.

GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP—AND A SUWA BEANIE!

It's that time of year once again! Purchase a $25 gift membership from now until the end of the year and your gift recipient will receive a free SUWA beanie in their welcome packet, along with a newsletter and our popular yellow *Protect Wild Utah* sticker!

Offer good while supplies last. Take advantage of this year-end promotion at **suwa.org/giftmemberships**, and be sure to order by December 6th to guarantee delivery in time for the holidays. Looking for other holiday gift ideas? Visit our online store at **suwa.org/goodies**.

HELP KEEP THE REDROCK WILD WITH MONTHLY GIVING

For more than 40 years, SUWA has been protecting Utah's redrock wilderness, but our work isn't possible without the support of dedicated members like you. As threats to public lands in Utah grow, monthly giving has become one of the most effective ways for you to support our mission.

By joining our monthly giving program, you can help sustain our efforts year-round. For as little as $5 a month, your monthly contribution protects iconic landscapes across southern Utah from off-road vehicle abuse, ill-conceived resource extraction schemes, unchecked development, and the strain of growing backcountry recreational use.

Why is monthly giving so effective?

• **It offers continuous impact.** No matter their size, monthly gifts ensure a consistent and reliable source of funding year-round, allowing us to mobilize quickly and tackle time-sensitive conservation challenges effectively.

• **It amplifies your influence.** These donations also enable us to engage in long-term projects, such as advocating for legislative and administrative protections and organizing grassroots campaigns.

• **It's flexible and convenient.** Monthly giving is a customizable and efficient way to support SUWA's work. Set it up once and adjust your contribution at any time, ensuring continuous support without the hassle of repeated transactions.

Becoming a monthly donor is easy. Simply visit **suwa.org/givemonthly**, choose the amount you would like to give, and your card will automatically be charged each month, providing ongoing support for our work.

MAKE A LONG-TERM INVESTMENT IN UTAH WILDERNESS

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

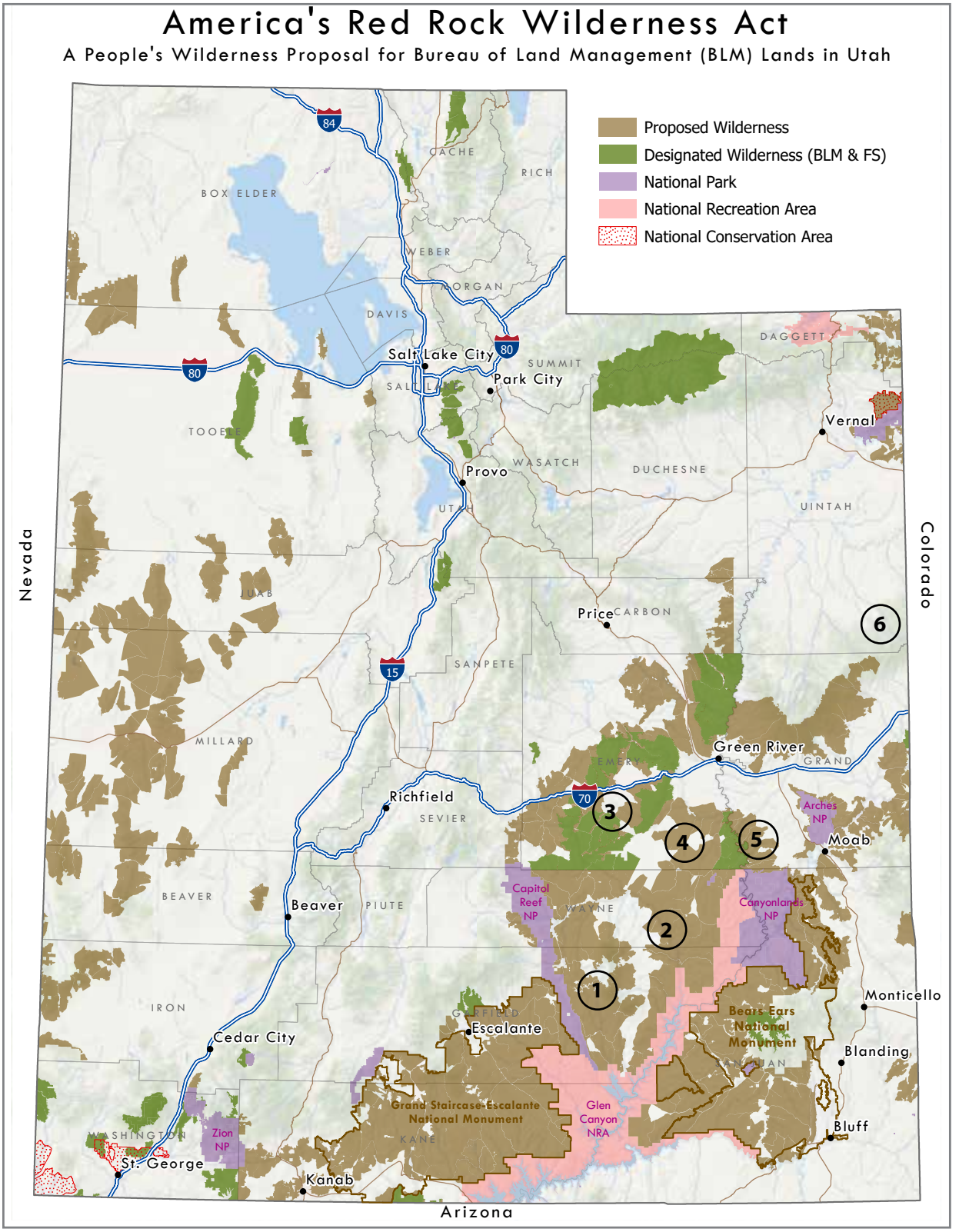
A gift to SUWA from your estate—whatever the amount—is entirely free from federal estate taxes. And if you haven't heard, SUWA is now working with FreeWill, an online estate planning tool that makes planned giving simpler than ever.

In recent years, gifts from the estates of supporters have made possible our Stewardship Program and new positions on our legal, wildlands, and grassroots organizing teams. These gifts enable staff to proactively identify potential threats and conduct work in the field that preserves and restores the wilderness character of our public lands. Freewill is a free, simple, and effective way for anyone who loves southern Utah to leave a legacy of wilderness preservation for generations to come.

Visit **suwa.org/plannedgiving** for more information. If you have any questions or have already included a gift to SUWA in your estate, please contact Development Associate Heather Rose Martinez at (801) 428-3971 or **heather@suwa.org**.

America's Red Rock Wilderness Act

A People's Wilderness Proposal for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lands in Utah



1 Henry Mountains (p. 16)

2 Dirty Devil (p. 16)

3 San Rafael Swell (p. 16)

4 San Rafael Desert (p. 18)

5 Labyrinth Canyon (p. 19)

6 Book Cliffs (p. 22)

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AUTUMN AT CALF CREEK FALLS, GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENT. © JEFF FOOTT

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