



**2020:
OUTLASTING**

SUWA 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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SOUTHERN UTAH WILDERNESS ALLIANCE

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2020: OUTLASTING

SCOTT GROENE

Executive Director

The year 2020 brought the final charge of the corrupt Trump administration, which was coldly ruthless in its efforts to dismantle our system of public lands and too boneheadedly incompetent to fully address a growing world pandemic. We faced the consequences of both.

With cruel efficiency, political appointees like Interior Secretary David Bernhardt pushed a frenzy of leasing for coal, oil, and gas on our public lands. At the same time, the administration seemingly cared little about the health and economic catastrophes created by the coronavirus. At the hands of the Trump administration, while our public lands were under attack, we saw friends and family lose jobs, homes, and even their communities as schools and places of worship closed their doors. Some of them fell ill. And some died. It was a long and terrible year.

We all faced these challenges while isolated from each other, distancing to slow the pandemic's spread. We missed the spirited rallies and

membership gatherings that inspire us. And without the ability to travel, many were robbed of the healing solace of our redrock canyons.

All of us who care about the redrock were tested. But if there is something we hold together, it is our love for the canyons and a determination to never give up on them. With the help of our supporters, we kept the redrock largely inviolate. We lost some, but thanks to you, not much.

Despite the distancing and isolation, redrock supporters and activists remained dedicated to wilderness throughout 2020. The work looked a little different, with us problem-solving on Zoom instead of side by side. But still, together, we continued our history of outliving and outlasting hostile politicians and administrations. We fought back, we survived, and we stopped most of the worst of Trump's attacks on Utah's public lands. Thanks to your support, we now stand facing a new and better day.

It is unlikely there will be some magic moment when we'll save the redrock all at once. It will be an aggregation of steps, just like the steps we've taken together over the past decades. Now there is an even greater urgency to our work, with the almost overwhelming threats we face from climate change and the extinction crisis. But our decades of experience have shown what committed people can accomplish, through good times and bad. The end of 2020 means we can put away much of our defensive armament and move forward again with our steady and relentless push to protect the redrock. We will regain Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments. We will put the pieces back together.

Thank you for being part of this enduring movement.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 14** Congressional Hearings Attended
- 62** Members of Congress Who Sent or Signed Letters to the Department of the Interior on Utah-specific Issues
- 226** Capitol Hill Meetings (Real and Virtual)
- 21** Senate Cosponsors of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act
- 92** House Cosponsors of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act
- 13** First-time Cosponsors

LEGISLATIVE



Capitol Hill is built on relationships. In ordinary years, the work of the Washington, DC office is to attend hearings, exchange intel with colleagues in the marbled halls, and get to know legislative staff around cramped tables in bustling chambers and at receptions with fancy canapé trays. Glad-handing is not just a Washington cliché—it's a necessity. So when COVID-19 hit and we could no longer roam the halls of Congress asking legislators to act to protect Utah wilderness, it was a complex adjustment for everyone. Add to that Congress's very valid focus on the virus, policing, and the chaos of the final year of the Trump administration, and getting an audience with decision-makers became even more challenging.

And yet, we managed. We were fortunate to have scheduled our Wilderness Week fly-in with activists in February, blissfully unaware of the transformed world we'd be occupying in mere weeks. Volunteers came from around the country to meet with their members of Congress seeking cosponsorship of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, engaging directly with our representative democracy. It was the last normal thing most of us did before quarantine hit in March, and we were lucky the timing worked as it did.

There are perks to being relegated to Zoom: the voyeurism of seeing Hill staffers' apartments and pets, the relaxation of DC's strict culture of dressing, and the vanished security lines. It was impressive to see adjustments being made to the stodgy customs of Congress, an institution not exactly renowned for being nimble. Operating this way, we were still able to work with our champions, Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Representative Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), and other members of Congress to send multiple letters to the Department of the Interior on issues specific to the redrock. This included letters objecting to inappropriate fossil fuel leasing, "chaining" and other vegetation removal treatments, and the gutting of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Our legislative advocate, Chris Richardson, had the bizarre fortune of starting his job with us at the beginning of 2020, which allowed him about two months to learn the ropes before the rope snapped for all of us. His determination and flexibility in working to add cosponsors to the Red Rock bill under unprecedented circumstances have impressed us all.

And our members have shown immense resilience, arranging digital meetings with their

representatives and bolstering our legislative work with letters to the editor across the country. We miss seeing everyone, but the bonds remain, and so does the land we work to protect.

The year 2020 was a fitting coda to the horrors of the Trump administration, which did everything it could to erode bedrock environmental protections, from the illegal slashing of Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments to assaults on NEPA, the Endangered Species Act, and regulations meant to begin stemming the tide of the Climate Crisis's damage. Having offices just down the street from the routine crises that unfolded in DC during this era has sometimes been a trial, but we endured. And thanks to your help, the redrock did, too.

*Wilderness Week activists at the U.S. Capitol
in February / © SUWA*



*Activists meet with Rep. Torres Small (D-NM)
during Wilderness Week 2020 / © SUWA*





BY THE NUMBERS

3 Federal Lawsuits Filed

2 Oil & Gas Lease Sales Protested

1 Successful State Director Review

0 Leases Issued after SUWA Protested

0 New Wells Drilled in Proposed Wilderness

LEGAL

Last year pretty much shaped up the way we thought it would, with the Trump administration's Interior Department and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) working hard to lock in their four years of assault on and damage to America's redrock wilderness, plus a few "bonus" projects at the last minute. Everyone on SUWA's legal team rolled up our sleeves, brewed more coffee and tea, and got after it. Below is a summary of some of our most pressing work over this past year.

First, we continued the good work of largely blunting the effects of the Trump administration's "energy dominance" agenda in Utah. The BLM was forced to suspend every single oil and gas lease that it sold (and SUWA challenged) over the past four years. That's hundreds of leases spanning several hundred thousand acres across southern and eastern Utah. And SUWA successfully challenged every drilling permit approved in America's redrock wilderness during the Trump administration. We still have cleanup work to do—suspended leases aren't the same thing as canceled leases, and many of the drilling permits have a funny way of coming back around—but we're in a better spot than we feared four years ago.

Second, the BLM completed a terrible new travel management plan for Utah's sublime San Rafael Desert, more than doubling the mileage of

motorized trails in a truly remote and fragile corner of the state. We immediately challenged the plan and will continue to pursue that work in the Biden administration. Thanks to the damage they wreak on Utah's delicate desert landscape, ever increasing numbers of motorized vehicles are the biggest threat facing Utah's redrock wilderness, and we can't allow this plan to serve as a model for others that are already in the works.

Third, after more than a decade of work, we secured SUWA's right to intervene as a full party in federal court litigation to defend our interests in, and the United States' title to, more than 10,000 claimed rights-of-way across Utah. The State of Utah and most of its counties are asserting these so-called "RS 2477 rights-of-way" as a means to riddle the redrock with tens of thousands of miles of dirt roads; under their vision, streambeds, two-tracks, and cow paths would be expanded to 66-foot-wide highways.

Finally, we kept up the pressure on Trump's unlawful dismantling of Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments. Though we didn't get a decision from the federal courts on the illegality of Trump's handiwork, we watchdogged activities on the ground and, by and large, have kept these remarkable places and their irreplaceable resources safe and ready to be

Petroglyphs in Bears Ears National Monument / © Steve Hillyard



restored to their original glory by President Biden. SUWA's GIS team provided data and analysis regarding the monuments that repeatedly showed up in national and regional media, including the *Washington Post*, *National Geographic*, and *Salt Lake Tribune*.

Along the way we fielded some curveballs: the BLM approved and we initially blocked a proposed helium well atop the Labyrinth Canyon Wilderness, the BLM allowed and we challenged the improvement of a dirt road (without formal review) within the original boundaries of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, and we argued a case before the Utah Supreme Court regarding SUWA's claims that several southern Utah counties violated Utah's Open and Public Meeting Act when commissioners met behind closed doors with then-Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke about the fate of Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears.

SUWA sincerely appreciates and is deeply grateful to the following law firms that donated their time and services in defense of America's redrock wilderness in 2020: Cooley LLP, Manning Curtis Bradshaw & Bednar PLLC, Zimmerman Booher, and Parr Brown Gee & Loveless.

BY THE NUMBERS

24 Comment Letters Submitted
on Proposed Projects

5 Administrative
Appeals Filed

240 Fieldwork Days

2,500 Miles of Travel
Planning Routes
Inventoried

14,000 Travel Planning
Fieldwork Photos
Geotagged

31 Stewardship
Project Days

15 Stewardship Projects
& Trainings

86 Stewardship Project
Volunteers

1,423 Stewardship Hours
Completed

WILDLANDS

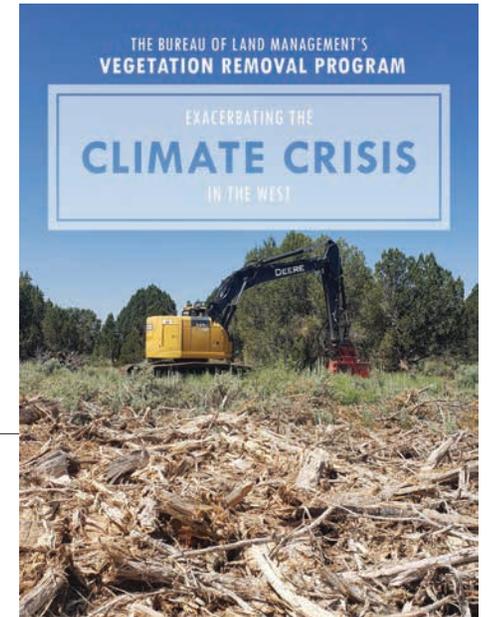
The year 2020 consisted of 12 long months of tirelessly fighting against the Trump administration's efforts to undermine public land policy and advance destructive projects in proposed wilderness. Like everyone else, we navigated the ever-changing pandemic tides, all too often feeling hamstrung in our efforts. But we evolved—hopefully for the better—and, as always, worked to identify opportunities to advance protection of the redrock landscapes we all love so dearly. Despite the challenges, we were largely able to hold the Trump administration at bay while exceeding fieldwork expectations and providing safe and meaningful on-the-ground remediation through our stewardship efforts.

Vegetation removal continued to be a high priority issue through 2020. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) forged ahead with efforts to destroy native piñon pine and juniper forests (mainly to increase livestock forage), going so far as to promulgate new regulations that fast-track mechanical vegetation removal and eliminate public input. While we successfully fended off projects in the Book Cliffs and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, this whack-a-mole approach required a larger national strategy. To that end, we've finalized a report showing how mechanical vegetation removal exacerbates the impacts of climate change, which will help us work with the Biden administration to implement measures to protect wilderness-quality lands from vegetation removal projects in the future.

We also continued to develop strategies to address the impacts public land recreation has on natural and cultural resources. The pandemic generated greater pressure on public lands, which further highlighted the necessity for a new direction in BLM recreation management. We've completed a report on the issue, which we intend to use as a starting point for discussions with the new administration and congressional leaders about how to better manage public lands to mitigate these adverse impacts. With a newfound emphasis on creative, visionary planning, we believe that the BLM can protect backcountry resources and wilderness while also providing accessible frontcountry recreation opportunities.

The most Sisyphean effort of 2020 was our work motivating the BLM to quickly implement wilderness protections as designated in the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019, which included more than 650,000 acres of wilderness encompassing the iconic landscapes of Labyrinth Canyon and the San Rafael Swell. While the agency spent all year slow-walking implementation efforts, SUWA continued our on-the-ground monitoring of these areas. Despite our frustration, we are optimistic that new leadership at the upper levels of the BLM will take seriously the protection of these world-class wilderness areas.

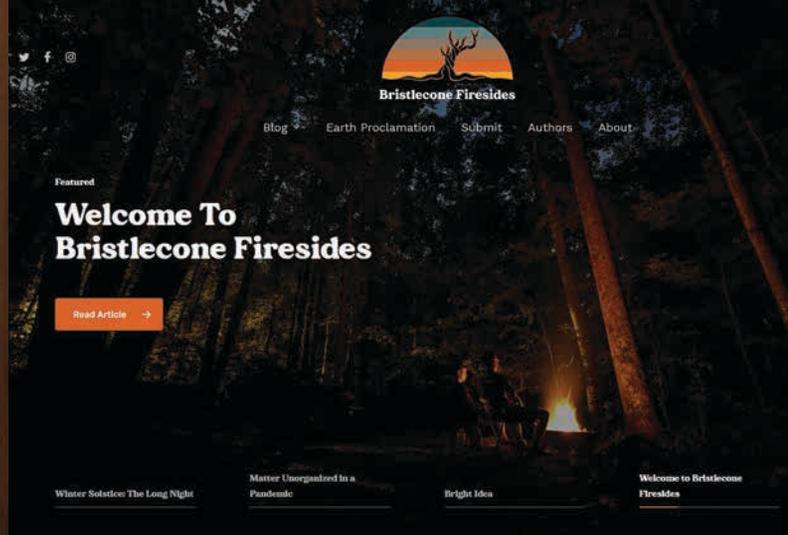
After delaying much of the spring field season due to COVID-19 restrictions, we continued our intensive off-road vehicle route inventories (in response to



the BLM's 13 current and forthcoming travel management plan revisions) in addition to other fieldwork essential to protecting the wild landscapes of southern Utah. Early spring brought the reality that every stewardship project for 2020 was headed towards cancellation. In an impressive show of adaptability, our stewardship team coordinated with the BLM to modify plans, recruit other staff or local volunteers, and carry out projects in a way that met goals and—most importantly—prioritized safety. By the end of the year, our completed projects on Utah public lands reclaimed over 50 illegal off-road vehicle routes, removed over 1,200 square feet of graffiti in designated wilderness, and installed thousands of feet of defense barriers along conservation boundaries. We also installed dozens more wilderness and wilderness study area boundary signs, reclaimed numerous undesignated campsites, and removed countless bags of refuse.

By the time you read this, the Trump administration will be in our rearview mirror, and we will once again be working towards proactive protection of America's redrock wilderness. Having outlasted the destructive Trump years, we couldn't be more excited for what's to come.





BY THE NUMBERS

82 Presentations and Webinars Hosted

4,285 Attendees of Those Presentations and Webinars

4,221 New Contacts Made by Organizers

279 Activist-led Exchanges with Members of Congress

Activists meet with Rep. Ryan (D-OH) during Wilderness Week 2020 / © SUWA

High school students screen printing Wild Utah art / © Olivia Juarez/SUWA

BristleconeFiresides.com home page / © SUWA

Activists meet with staff of Sen. Hirono (D-HI) during Wilderness Week 2020 / © SUWA

ORGANIZERS

To put it mildly, 2020 was a year marked by disruption and challenge. Did you ever feel that the very ground beneath your feet was shifting? We did. Instead of meeting you “in the field” to host events, organize meetings, staff outreach tables, and more, the pandemic suddenly meant we were often asking, “Can you hear me?” through grainy webcams.

But what held us steady and strong through the turmoil was the devotion and commitment our redrock activists continued to demonstrate. Thank you!

With your patience, we worked out the kinks of new ways to gather online, and after a few months, found we could bring people together across great geographic distances into conversations that were intimate, meaningful, and empowering.

HERE ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER:

- Just before COVID-19 closed things down, 45 activists from 18 states mobilized in Washington, DC to ask more than 140 members of Congress to support America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act (ARRWA). Over the course of the year, activists conducted another 60 online meetings, phone calls, or email exchanges with in-district offices.
- Responding to SUWA calls for action, activists generated an outpouring of guest editorials, letters to the editor, and public comments on

critical issues. These efforts helped shape the public debate over oil and gas leasing in the redrock, the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM’s) escalating removal of piñon-juniper forests, management of roads and off-road vehicles in the San Rafael Desert, and helium drilling in the Labyrinth Canyon Wilderness.

- Working together, we grew the Utah Wilderness Coalition (UWC) to 113 members across 24 states—a robust demonstration to Congress that citizens all over the United States support ARROW. The UWC is the collective of organizations, community groups, and businesses that support ARROW as the guiding vision for the future of Utah’s wild lands. Activists also formed new “friends of Utah wilderness” groups in Washington and Oregon as part of the UWC.
- Coming together online, nearly 4,300 activists participated in 82 SUWA-hosted webinars and presentations designed to educate, inspire, and generate action. Webinar topics included the BLM’s stepped-up vegetation removal plan, Patagonia’s *Public Trust* documentary film, the spiritual value of wild places, and the online “Climate Strike” that coincided with the 50th anniversary of Earth Day.
- Activists helped triple the number of SUWA newsletters disseminated to businesses and other venues in Utah. Increases to this program include: activists volunteering to deliver newsletters (from 12 to 42), venues volunteering to

distribute newsletters (from 123 to 363), and newsletters disseminated per issue (from 3,000 to 10,000).

- SUWA expanded our engagement with communities of faith with the launch of *Bristlecone Firesides*—a blog site featuring over 70 essays, poems, and artworks by students, scholars, church leaders, and more. The site serves as a gathering place for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and people of other faiths to dialogue on the spiritual value of nature, and to reflect on how to steward the Earth as our common home. Over 4,000 people visited the site in 2020.
- As the pandemic disproportionately increased hardship for Latino communities, our Latinx engagement efforts focused on creating joy through wild Utah ARTivism. We distributed two bilingual at-home art projects centered on the importance of public lands and the cultural values inherent in America’s redrock wilderness to hundreds of homes in partnership with community organizations serving Latinos in northern Utah. We also hosted additional events outside and online, including four activities for Latino Conservation Week. In addition, we created the 2020 Stewardship Essay Scholarship for students of color with financial need in the Southwest, awarding three conservation scholarships to help fund their undergraduate educations.

2020 FINANCIALS

*Figures are unaudited—please see www.suwa.org for audited financial information in June 2021



STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION FOR THE 12 MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 2020

ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Cash & Cash Equivalents	2,128,797
Long-Term Investments	
Property & Equipment	830,934
Endowment	3,425,498
Investments & Stocks	13,062,522
TOTAL ASSETS	\$19,447,752
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	420,180
Equity	
Fund Balance	12,372,064
Retained Earnings	4,136,679
Net Income	2,518,828
TOTAL EQUITY	\$19,027,571
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$19,447,752

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY FOR THE 12 MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 2020

REVENUES	
Donations	1,562,031
Bequests	1,097,116
Membership	1,928,561
Grants	158,858
Events & Sales	10,342
Reimbursed Expenses & Other Income	2,405
TOTAL REVENUES	\$4,759,314
EXPENSES	
Wilderness Programs*	801,525
(*Not including employee compensation)	
Member Services	348,723
Fundraising	45,217
General & Administrative	120,160
Facilities & Office Expenses	284,026
Total Employee Compensation	2,227,638
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$3,827,288
NET ORDINARY INCOME	\$932,026
OTHER INCOME/EXPENSE	
Bank Interest Income	3,979
Total Gain (Loss) on Sale of Investments	293,242
Investment Income	287,231
Unrealized Gains (Losses)	1,050,584
Total Other Income	1,635,036
Investment Fees	48,234
Total Other Expenses	48,234
Net Other Income	1,586,802
NET INCOME	\$2,518,828



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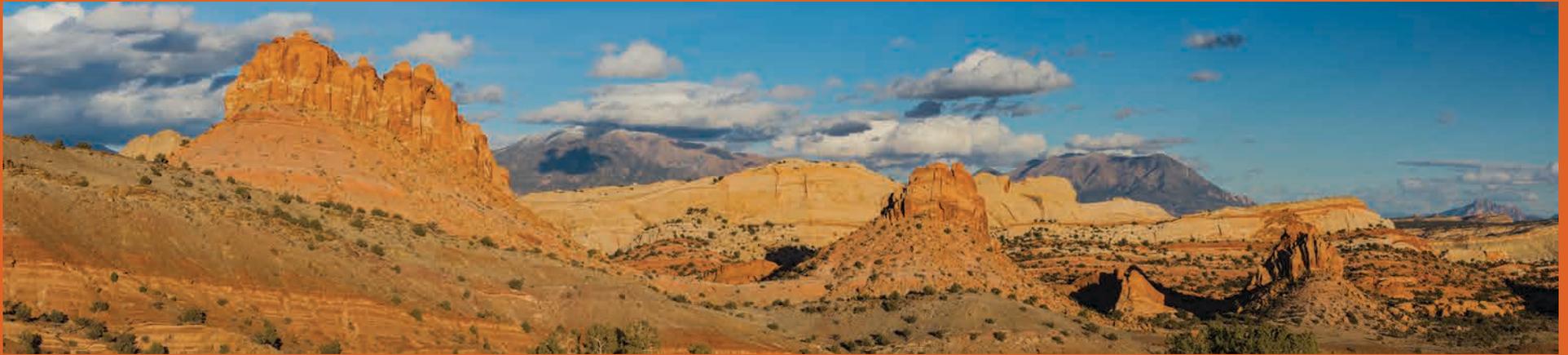
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Back Cover: Southern Utah / © Peter Gatch

Front Cover: Behind the Rocks proposed wilderness / © Tom Till

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