

MOMENTUM

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

SUWA
SOUTHERN UTAH WILDERNESS ALLIANCE

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance 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 wilderness character through research and public education; supports both administrative and legislative initiatives to permanently protect the Colorado Plateau wild places within the National Wilderness Preservation System, or by other protective designations where appropriate; builds support for such initiatives on both the local and national level; and provides leadership within the conservation movement through uncompromising advocacy for wilderness preservation.



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MOMENTUM

SCOTT GROENE

Executive Director

In 2021 we were able to flip our switch from defense to offense. Thanks to the national elections, the frightening and exhausting fight to block the Trump administration's relentless attacks on our public lands came to an end. And instead, the Biden administration gave us hope with its commitment to address climate change by protecting 30 percent of our nation's lands and waters.

History can teach, but retrospection can also provide an emotional lift to the sometimes frustrating task of defending the redrock country. Because reviewing how far we've come over the years—and it is far—reminds us that the day-in and day-out grind adds up to meaningful conservation in the long run.

To wit, eight months into President Biden's term, he re-established the original Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments. This brought the amount of our wilderness proposal that has some form of protection to well over 5.5 million acres—which is about a half a million acres more than our once audacious goal, 30 years ago, of protecting 5 million acres of Utah's redrock country.

2021 ushered in a new era—one in which the administration takes the climate crisis seriously and understands the integral role of public land protection in addressing that crisis, even if specific action plans have been slow in coming. We also applaud the administration's decision to pause oil and gas leasing on Utah's public lands.

There are great opportunities in front of us. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) can and should establish new wilderness study area protections for the millions of acres that qualify as wilderness but remain unprotected. And the agency can finally bring balance to its management of motorized recreation by addressing the problem of exploding off-road vehicle use and its impact on natural and cultural values.

This past year saw the continuing involvement and influence of Native American Tribes in public land management, most notably in the re-establishment of Bears Ears National Monument. We also greatly appreciated and welcomed the Navajo Nation's endorsement of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act.

Another positive shift occurred at the local level, with cracks forming in the historical and monolithic county-level hostility toward conservation of public lands. This past year we saw county commissioners in Grand County urge the BLM to rein in the off-road vehicle abuse damaging Labyrinth Canyon and its side canyons. In San Juan County, the commissioners urged Biden to re-establish Bears Ears National Monument.

But while much of the political momentum turned toward conservation this past year, most of Utah's politicians remained rooted in the past.

Utah's congressional delegation, along with Governor Cox, may be the political contingent most hostile to public lands in the entire Union. They unsuccessfully fought against re-establishment of Utah's monuments and now intend to bring litigation to overturn President Biden's proclamations. And Governor Cox continues to press forward with perhaps the most extensive public lands litigation ever filed against the United States, claiming thousands of miles of rights-of-way across public lands, including national parks and designated wilderness, in an effort to promote off-road vehicle use.

We head into 2022 with the Biden administration's admirable goals in place, and supportive congressional leadership. With your help, we can turn the intentions into action—and real protection for the canyon country.



LEGISLATIVE

For those of us working in the nation's capital, the start of 2021 was filled with enormous promise: a new administration that supports conservation and science, the first-ever Native American woman (Deb Haaland) nominated and later confirmed as Secretary of the Interior, and a vow from the Biden administration to restore Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments back to their rightful boundaries.

But boy did things get off to a rocky start.

The insurrection that seized the United States Capitol on January 6th spooked our friends in Congress, gave the Biden administration an unanticipated headache, and dashed our hope that we could resume in-person meetings on Capitol Hill once the vaccines rolled out. Had the pandemic not sent us home to work from our kitchens and living rooms, we would likely have been on the Hill ourselves that day.

Alas, we had no choice but to continue our Zoom-era style of advocacy. Still, important things got done. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Representative Alan Lowenthal (D-CA) reintroduced America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, the flagship legislation to permanently protect Utah's remaining redrock wild lands. Designating these 8.4 million acres of public land as wilderness would keep fossil fuels in the ground, help mitigate the dual climate and extinction crises by protecting important wildlife habitat, and ensure that Americans still have wild places to wander in an increasingly crowded world. At the end of the year, thanks to the persistent efforts of our staff and activists, the bill had acquired 18 cosponsors in the Senate and 84 in the House of Representatives.

The restoration of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments was slowed by the delay of Secretary Haaland's nomination. In the meantime, Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) introduced a legislative amendment to make national

monument designations harder. This kind of subversion is routine for Lee, and he usually fails, but we joined the effort to make sure he did. Ultimately, 54 senators voted against it.

As time went on, we grew impatient for the reinstatement of the monuments (like so many others) and endeavored to hasten the process. Senator Durbin, Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM), and Representative Ruben Gallego (D-AZ) each led separate letters encouraging Secretary Haaland to restore the monuments, and we worked

BY THE NUMBERS	(VIRTUAL) HILL MEETINGS	63
	ACTIONS TAKEN BY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ON BEHALF OF THE REDROCK	117
	COSPONSORS OF AMERICA'S RED ROCK WILDERNESS ACT IN THE HOUSE	84
	COSPONSORS OF AMERICA'S RED ROCK WILDERNESS ACT IN THE SENATE	18

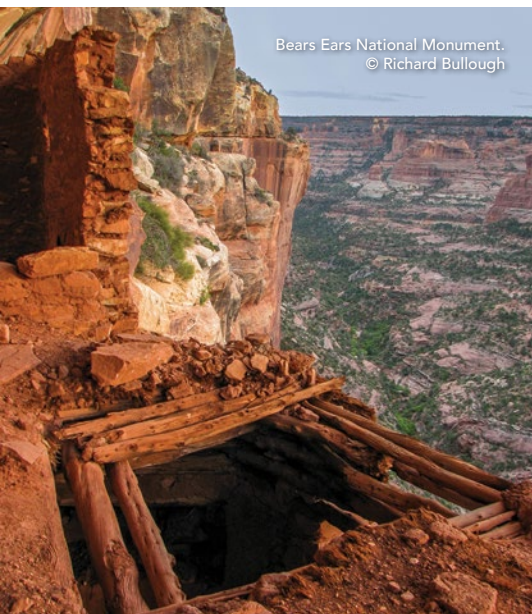
to get congressional cosigners on each. Between the 3 letters, 56 members of Congress ultimately signed their names in favor of restoring the monuments. And happily, in October of 2021, President Biden did just that!

We also worked to educate Hill staffers about the power held by the Interior Department to designate new wilderness

study areas, an important tool in the effort to protect 30 percent of America's lands and waters by 2030 (a stated goal of the Biden administration). The particulars can be a little jargony, but the bottom line is plain: if we are to reach our 30x30 goal, the Interior Department must play a major role as the largest single land manager in the country. We spent a good deal of time this year helping Congress connect the

dots, and more progress on this is likely in early 2022.

Interacting with Congress has never been more challenging, but we're finding a way through it. And thanks to members like you backing us up when we ask you to take action, offices still remember that the redrock is important to all Americans. Thank you!



LEGAL

2021 was the kind of transition year SUWA's legal team was hoping for. We prevailed in two important cases at the United States and Utah Supreme Courts, saw the Biden administration quickly pivot away from Trump's "energy dominance" agenda, and made some real gains for the redrock along the way. Add in President Biden's restoration of Grand Staircase-Es-

calante and Bears Ears National Monuments in early October and we have a full head of steam heading into the Biden presidency's critical second year.

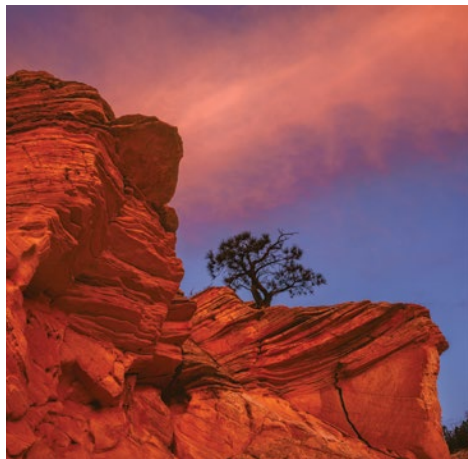
In January the United States Supreme Court issued an eight-word order that was music to our ears: "The petitions for writs of certiorari are denied." The petitions at issue asked the Supreme Court to reverse a decision by the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals that SUWA has the right to intervene in Utah's RS 2477 lawsuits and defend the United States' title to more than 10,000 claimed rights-of-way across the state.

Exactly one month later the Utah Supreme Court issued a pair of decisions in SUWA's favor. It held that SUWA had the right to pursue its state Open and Public Meetings Act lawsuits against Kane, Garfield, and San Juan Counties regarding closed-door meetings between county and Trump administration officials over the dismantling of Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments. Importantly,

the court roundly rejected one of the state judge's decisions that SUWA brought its cases for an improper purpose and noted that in reaching his conclusion the judge acted contrary to Utah's Code of Judicial Conduct. The Supreme Court reversed both the dismissal of SUWA's cases and the judges' decisions awarding costs and attorneys' fees against us.

In stark contrast to the Trump administration's "lease first, think later" approach to oil and gas leasing, the Biden administration took a more thoughtful approach: it paused leasing on public lands and waters so it could reevaluate the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) leasing program. A federal judge later blocked the leasing pause, but the net result was that there were no federal leases offered for sale in Utah in 2021.

By year's end, we'd added several more checks to the win column with a federal court ruling against the BLM's decision to allow "improvement" of an RS 2477 right-of-way in southern Utah, the State of



Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. © Jack Dykinga

Utah's withdrawal of a controversial "recordable disclaimer of interest" application for an RS 2477 right-of-way in Washington County, and the BLM's decision to pare back the miles of route open to motorized vehicles on Hatch Point south of Moab.

We are deeply grateful to the following law firms and legal clinics that aided SUWA's legal team with donated time and services in 2021: Cooley LLP, Manning Curtis Bradshaw & Bednar PLLC, Zimmerman Booher, Parr Brown Gee & Loveless, and the Stanford Supreme Court Litigation Clinic.

BY THE NUMBERS

NEW WELLS DRILLED IN PROPOSED
WILDERNESS

1

NEW LEASES ISSUED IN PROPOSED
WILDERNESS

0

LEGAL VICTORIES

4

MILES OF MOTORIZED TRAIL
CLOSED

15







WILDLANDS

After four years of the Trump administration's repeated attacks on public lands, 2021 brought with it a sense of optimism and excitement—a feeling that there



was potential for significant progress on conserving redrock wilderness and ending harmful land management practices. Indeed, as the year unfolded, we watched federal land policies slowly turn toward a forward-thinking vision for the future, one that takes climate change and ecosystem protection seriously.

Taking advantage of the political shift, we turned a spotlight on the explosive growth of recreation on the Colorado Plateau, highlighting impacts associated with lack of management and more recreationists (campers, hikers, bikers, etc.) pushing deeper into undisturbed areas. In an effort to promote science-based, proactive land management strategies, we worked with Utah State University professor and recreation ecologist Dr. Chris Monz to develop the new report, *Outdoor Recreation and Ecological Disturbance: A Review of Research and Implications for Management of the Colorado Plateau Province*.

Along with the release of the report, which synthesizes over 60 years of peer-reviewed

research, more than a dozen local and regional organizations signed a letter calling on the Utah Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to establish a working group to explore policy and management solutions to this growing problem. The momentum we built with the report roll-out will continue in the form of advocacy for forward-thinking recreation management policies at both the local and national level.

While the Biden administration has made it clear that conserving public lands is paramount in its efforts to combat the dual climate and extinction crises, the BLM continues to move forward with its efforts to clearcut native piñon pine and juniper forests throughout the West in the name of "habitat restoration." We saw a slight decrease in new mechanical vegetation removal projects in 2021, but the practice continues to pose a significant threat to Utah's wilderness-quality lands. In addition to fighting projects located within proposed wilderness, we worked with a coalition of partners to address Trump-era regulations intended to prevent the

public from meaningfully engaging in the comment process.

Meanwhile, our Stewardship Program centered its 2021 efforts on protecting newly-designated wilderness areas in the San Rafael Swell from illegal off-road vehicle (ORV) use and other recreation impacts. Throughout the state, our volunteer crews worked with BLM staff to remediate illegal ORV routes, install appropriate boundary signage, restore areas through the installation of physical structures such as buck and rail fencing, and clean up illegal campsites and fire rings.

Finally, SUWA's field team continued to prioritize motorized route inventories for forthcoming BLM travel planning efforts, completing 1,300 miles of on-the-ground route inventory work in places like Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, the San Rafael Swell, and the Book Cliffs. We also ground-truthed proposed project areas, engaged with BLM staff in the field, and maintained our ongoing work of monitoring proposed wilderness areas for new and illegal impacts.

BY THE NUMBERS

COMMENT LETTERS SUBMITTED **24**

FIELDWORK DAYS **222**

TRAVEL PLANNING FIELDWORK
PHOTOS GEOTAGGED **6,000**

MILES OF TRAVEL PLANNING
ROUTES INVENTORIED **1,300**

CALLS AND MEETINGS WITH
AGENCY STAFF **192**

STEWARDSHIP PROJECT
DAYS **48**

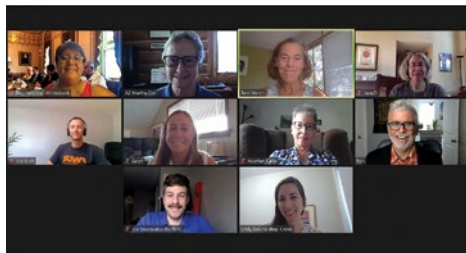
STEWARDSHIP PROJECT
VOLUNTEERS **191**

STEWARDSHIP HOURS
COMPLETED **3,341**



ORGANIZING

As the global pandemic continued to limit face-to-face interactions and force adaptations in 2021, more than 150 members and activists participated in the first ever on-line, year-round Wilderness Week (typically an annual in-person event in Washington, DC), lobbying congressional offices across the country and raising the profile of Utah wilderness issues nationally. Overcoming the challenges of social distancing, online trainings, video conferencing connections, and digital recruitment, we ended 2021 with many new cosponsors of America's



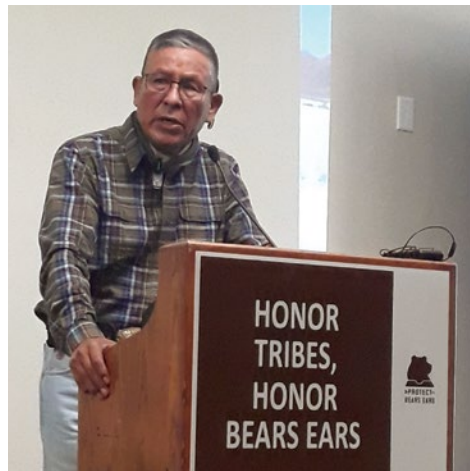
Activists meet virtually with Rep. Jason Crow's office (D-CO). The congressman later became a first-time cosponsor of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. © SUWA

Red Rock Wilderness Act and laid solid groundwork for future lobbying efforts. Our activist teams were absolutely impressive with their commitment to the cause and their personal knowledge of Utah's wild places.

The powerful grassroots momentum built by Native American Tribes and wilderness activists over recent years kept alive the hope that Trump's evisceration of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments would be short-lived and soundly repudiated. That hope was fulfilled in October, when SUWA activists gathered for a watch party in Salt Lake City to witness and celebrate President Biden's long-awaited restoration of both monuments. When news of the state's impending lawsuit against those restorations came soon thereafter, Tribal representatives gathered at the Utah Capitol and called for an immediate end to the "political football game." SUWA was there to help organize the protest and stand in support of the Tribes.

Momentum requires growth as well. In 2021, SUWA redoubled its efforts to engage new communities in the movement. We launched a TikTok account (@ProtectWildUtah) to mobilize young users of that platform to include discussions of climate change and Utah wilderness in their content; engaged heavily with the growing Latino community in Utah, holding presentations and conversations with "Latinos in Action" classes in high schools across Salt Lake City; and launched a new page on SUWA's website (suwa.org/silvestre) that highlights how Latinos are uniquely affected by the climate crisis, and how protecting wilderness is a culturally relevant solution to promoting community health.

The efforts of SUWA's members, activists, volunteers, and coalition partners continued to push the Utah wilderness movement forward in 2021. We are so grateful for your dedication and look forward to continuing this important work together in the year ahead.



BY THE NUMBERS

NEW CONTACTS MADE BY ORGANIZERS	2,579
PRESENTATIONS AND WEBINARS HOSTED	132
ACTIVIST-LED EXCHANGES WITH CONGRESS OR AGENCY	184
GRASSROOTS LEADERS RECRUITED	147



Utahns gather at the state capitol in December to protest the attorney general's plan to challenge President Biden's monument restorations. © David Ricketts

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Comb Ridge, Bears Ears National Monument.
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2021 FINANCIALS

STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION FOR THE 12 MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 2021

ASSETS		LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Current Assets		Liabilities	7,868
Cash & Cash Equivalents	2,388,678	Equity	
Long-Term Investments		Fund Balance	16,508,743
Property & Equipment	831,676	Retained Earnings	7,973,203
Endowment	4,000,080	Net Income	2,518,828
Investments & Stocks	17,121,554		
TOTAL ASSETS \$24,341,988		TOTAL EQUITY \$24,349,857	
		TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY \$24,341,988	



* Figures are unaudited – please see www.suwa.org for audited financial information in June 2022

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY FOR THE 12 MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 2021

REVENUES		EXPENSES		OTHER INCOME/EXPENSE	
Donations	2,372,518	Wilderness Programs* (*Not including employee compensation)	760,346	Bank Interest Income	321
Bequests	1,953,554	Member Services	466,681	Total Gain (Loss) on Sale of Investments	373,125
Membership	2,220,668	Fundraising	20,380	Investment Income	254,427
Grants	323,000	General & Administrative	119,700	Unrealized Gains (Losses)	803,942
Events & Sales	14,566	Facilities & Office Expenses	255,311	Total Other Income	1,432,814
CARES Act PPP Loan Forgiveness	424,415	Total Employee Compensation	2,427,755	Investment Fees	65,164
Reimbursed Expenses & Other Income	240,869			Total Other Expenses	65,164
				Net Other Income	1,367,649
TOTAL REVENUES	\$7,549,591	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$4,050,174	NET INCOME	\$4,867,066
		NET ORDINARY INCOME	\$3,499,417		

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