

REDROCK

W I L D E R N E S S

The Newsletter of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
VOLUME 37, NUMBER 2 • SUMMER 2020

**THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S
GOING-OUT-OF-BUSINESS SALE**



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

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

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This issue of *Redrock Wilderness* was written by the following staff and outside contributors: Steve Bloch, Joe Bushyhead, Scott Groene, Travis Hammill, Katherine Indermaur, Olivia Juarez, Tom Kenworthy, Jeremy Lynch, Kya Marienfeld, Landon Newell, Dave Pacheco, Laura Peterson, Chris Richardson, Jen Ujifusa, and Oliver Wood. It was edited by Darrell Knuffke and laid out by Diane Kelly. Newsletter design by Amy Westberg.

Contributions of photographs (especially of areas within the citizens' proposal for Utah wilderness) and original art (such as pen-and-ink sketches) are greatly appreciated! Please send submissions to photos@suwa.org or via regular mail c/o Editor, SUWA, 425 East 100 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84111.

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150 DAYS AND COUNTING

Could these be the final days of the Trump administration? Well, one intriguing sign is the fact that the president's political appointees apparently think the end is nigh. They have kicked into high gear the pillage of the public estate. They are working at a feverish pace to gut laws that protect our air, water, and land and weaken rules that guarantee the public a role in public land management decisions. They are also busily paying off industry cronies.

In polarized America, only a thin slice of the electorate was undecided about Trump. But he has bleated against protests by Black Lives Matter (that's the other BLM, the principled one). And he has floundered on the coronavirus, causing unnecessary death and sickness. Such blunders have amplified public disgust with Trump; that makes the light at the end of the tunnel grow brighter as we count down the days to November's election.

Much can change in the next four months and certainly the electoral outcome is anything but certain. I wish the election were today. Still, after three and a half years of battling this administration it is good to have some hope. That is not to say that our political challenges will end with the departure of an impeached Donald J. Trump, though that would certainly advance our work to protect the redrock. But Utah remains Utah and its politicians remain rabidly anti-public-lands and anti-wilderness.

Two millennia ago, Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius observed, "That which is not good for the beehive cannot be good for the bees." But here in the Beehive State, that lesson has bounced off the impregnable skulls of Utah politicians. They are eager to hurl public money at every boondoggle aimed at propping up the failing coal, oil, and gas industries. Utah may trail the nation in funding education, but we have ample money to subsidize a coal shipping port in California and to build the oil and gas companies a brand new railroad to ship fuel from Vernal to refineries near Salt Lake City. Meanwhile, the state maintains an entire department of lawyers whose work is to fight sensible public land management, most immediately through 20 RS 2477 lawsuits (see article on page 11). We've been fighting this single issue for over 30 years, and so far have largely blocked their claims.

In 2010, former U.S. Senator Bob Bennett, a political moderate, was humiliated with a third-place finish at the Utah Republican Convention. His fate persuaded surviving politicians they'd best pander to rural, right-wing officials on public land issues. And they do. Consider this: while Sen. Mitt Romney is willing to stand as the lone Republican senator against some of Trump's most egregious acts and utterances, his public land positions and rhetoric are largely indistinguishable from those of other Utah politicians.

None of this is new. Nor has it stopped us. With your support, we've gained protection in some form for roughly 4.7 million acres. When we win back what Trump illegally severed from Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments, that figure will climb to 5.5 million acres.

We pray that the election produces a more decent and just government. We pray it opens the door to this country seriously addressing the global threats of extinction and climate change. And we pray for protection for some of the most spectacular lands on this planet, southern Utah's redrock. We pray but we fight, always mindful of the ancient dictum, "Call on the Lord . . . but row away from the rocks."

For the Redrock,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Groene". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long, sweeping underline.

Scott Groene
Executive Director

TRUMP'S GOING-OUT-OF-BUSINESS SALE COULD SCAR THE REDROCK FOR YEARS TO COME

We're in a particularly intense news cycle right now, and there are no signs it will ease any time soon. Leaders around the world are navigating the increasingly complicated conditions of the coronavirus pandemic. There are attempts to reopen the economy in fits and starts. Protests continue over police killings of unarmed Black men and women nationwide. For responsible people, these are difficult challenges. For the Trump administration, which has no intention of leading, this is all opportunity. Trump is taking full, corrupt advantage of the chaos—up to and including fomenting it—and doing all he can to cement his disastrous environmental policies.

By the *New York Times's* count, after three years in office Trump had already succeeded in rolling back 66 environmental rules. He is pushing to cut or weaken another 34 rules before the November election. It's no secret that this administration despises even the most necessary environmental regulations and climate agreements. But 2020 has brought a truly frenzied assault on the natural world. It looks like nothing so much as Trump's going-out-of-business sale.



DECEMBER 2017 MONUMENTAL MISTAKE RALLY. © DIANE KELLY/SUWA

Daily life has slowed in some sectors as a result of the pandemic. But for SUWA and other organizations that advocate for public lands and environmental protection, there has been no respite.



By the *New York Times's* count, after three years in office Trump had already succeeded in rolling back 66 environmental rules. He is pushing to cut or weaken another 34 rules before the November election."

FOSSIL FUELS HIT ROCK BOTTOM. SO WHY THE PUSH TO DRILL AND MINE?

International and economic forces sent the price of oil futures into negative territory for the first time in world history, but the Trump administration saw only one thing: another chance to help its friends in the fossil fuel industries. Trump's Interior Secretary, the former oil and gas lobbyist David Bernhardt, leads the squalid effort. His Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is continuing to plow ahead with its dirty energy agenda. The agency is now gearing up for its September lease sale, which will offer oil and gas companies more than 150,000 acres of Utah wild lands near Canyonlands, Arches, and Capitol Reef National Parks.

SUWA has challenged every oil and gas lease sale in proposed Utah wilderness since Trump took office. Thanks to your support, so far we've blocked hundreds of leases, keeping 328,000 acres of wild public land free from energy development. We will build on that success when we challenge the September lease sale (see article on page 10).

In June, the BLM announced plans to allow a subsidiary of Murray Energy Corporation to mine coal on the western slope of the Book Cliffs. Their parent company filed for bankruptcy just last year, but that hasn't discouraged the Trump administration from trying to prop up the company's failing coal business. The proposal would allow the company to extract over 9 million tons of coal from 1,270 acres in the magnificent Book Cliffs, the longest continuous escarpment in the world. It will also mean the release

of millions of tons of greenhouse gas emissions into our atmosphere.

SUWA submitted detailed comments on the proposal, and the ball is now in the BLM's court. Should the agency approve the scheme over SUWA's objections, we may either appeal the decision to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, an administrative panel that reviews the decisions of Interior Department agencies, or we may go to federal court.

The pandemic has also slowed progress on the litigation filed by SUWA, Native American Tribes, and other conservation organizations against Trump's decision to eviscerate Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments. Since Trump's announcement, three mining projects have already begun operation on the lands cut from both monuments—two alabaster mines in the former Grand Staircase-Escalante, and one uranium mine in what was formerly protected as Bears Ears National Monument. Pollution and disruption of these magnificent and culturally rich landscapes are inevitable results of these three mining claims. SUWA is closely monitoring these projects as well as any fossil fuel industry "expressions of interest" for oil and gas leases across these formerly protected lands.

Climate change is already forcing our desert wild lands to endure record-setting heat and what scientists are calling the beginnings of a "megadrought." By continuing to sell new leases for oil, gas, and coal extraction, the Trump administration is tethering us to fossil fuels at the precise moment when we should be doing everything in our power to transition away from them.

BENDING THE RULES TO BULLDOZE NATIVE FORESTS

Trump's BLM is also using the distraction of the pandemic to ravage more of our public lands by deforestation.

Last year we helped shut down the BLM's attempt to clearcut and churn to mulch more than 135,000 acres of piñon-juniper woodlands and sagebrush steppes in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Our strategy to halt this savage practice has worked exceptionally well—so well, in fact, that the agency is now trying to gut the rules under which our challenges were successfully brought. The BLM proposes, among other workarounds, a new "categorical exclusion" under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In essence, the agency would throw together a

(Continued on page 8)



THE BLM PLANS TO ALLOW MURRAY ENERGY CORPORATION TO EXTRACT OVER 9 MILLION TONS OF COAL FROM 1,270 ACRES IN UTAH'S BOOK CLIFFS. © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA



A BULLDOZER RIPS OUT NATIVE PIÑON AND JUNIPER TREES WITH AN ENORMOUS ANCHOR CHAIN. © SUWA/TWIG MEDIA

WHEN PUBLIC SCRUTINY PINCHES, TRUMP'S BLM OPTS FOR SECRECY

The BLM has spent tens of millions of taxpayer dollars over the decades manipulating native piñon pine and juniper forests and sagebrush stands across the West. Methods include chaining, mowing, masticating, spraying herbicides and burning. Initially undertaken to enhance forage for wildlife and livestock, and more recently in the name of habitat and watershed restoration, these projects are often controversial because the scientific evidence to support their efficacy is mixed at best.

Increased public and scientific scrutiny in recent years has forced the BLM to shelve or revamp a number of large vegetation removal proposals. The BLM could respond to the public outcry with an honest reassessment of its deforestation work and a good, hard scientific look at the impacts of these large projects on native species. Instead, its response is to forge ahead with several initiatives of historic proportions designed to curtail public

input and scientific oversight altogether. These represent a case study in a broader push from the Trump administration to gut protections in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), take the public out of public lands, and downplay science in decision-making (see article on page 9).

In 2020 alone, the BLM has approved or is close to approving:

- A rulemaking that would allow the BLM to thin or cut down piñon pine and juniper forests up to 10,000 acres in size without environmental analysis, scientific oversight, or public review and input.
- A rulemaking that would exempt deforestation projects (including chaining of sagebrush and other native vegetation) of up to 4,500 acres in size from the scrutiny that NEPA would ordinarily require.
- A plan that authorizes in a single stroke the clearing of up to 11,000 miles (667,000 acres) of

“fuel breaks” in forest, sagebrush, and grassland habitats across Utah, Nevada, Idaho, California, Washington, and Oregon.

- A corresponding, but even broader plan that would allow the BLM to plan and execute vegetation removal projects across a 223 million-acre area in the same six states with no accountability.
- A categorical exclusion that would automatically authorize logging on up to 5,000 acres of BLM-managed forest at a time, so long as the agency determines the trees are “dead and dying” due to a variety of possible “disturbances.”

To plan and execute these actions without NEPA review undermines an already fragile public trust, and effectively shelves the critical role of science in some of the most unproven and controversial management actions taking place on public lands today.

—Kya Marienfeld

catch-all environmental review, then shoehorn every other deforestation project into its findings. This would allow mechanical removal of piñon pine and juniper forest from as many as 10,000 acres at a time with no environmental analysis, no public accountability—no public input or scrutiny at all. The change would affect public lands within an area spanning six western states.

This attempt to dismantle legal protections for the environment would allow clearcutting within national monuments such as Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante, wilderness study areas, lands with wilderness characteristics, and other sensitive management areas.

Along with our conservation allies, SUWA has submitted detailed comments to the BLM opposing this very dangerous proposal. We have argued that this unprecedentedly broad exclusion from NEPA is illegal, unsupported by science, and runs counter to NEPA's core principles of public involvement and environmental review.

Thanks to our work to generate congressional pressure on the BLM, in late June, Illinois Senator Dick Durbin sent a strongly worded letter to Secretary Bernhardt in order to “express our opposition to the Department of Interior’s continued efforts to undermine the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by developing categorical exclusions intended to fast-track large-scale mechanical vegetation removal on public lands” (see article on page 9).

If the BLM does not withdraw its proposed categorical exclusion in response to our comments, SUWA’s only remaining option will be to sue the agency in federal court.

MOTORIZED MAYHEM IN THE SAN RAFAEL DESERT

Another tactic the Trump administration is using to enshrine horrible environmental policy is writing new management plans for proposed and existing wilderness areas. Ideally, new plans offer the opportunity to establish sustainable policies to preserve fragile ecosystems. Sadly, the BLM is uninterested in any such redemptive behavior.

Pursuant to a settlement agreement between the BLM and SUWA, the agency is issuing new travel management plans for 13 areas, including the San Rafael Desert, a remote area in Emery County that includes the newly designated Labyrinth Canyon Wilderness sculpted by the Green River. The BLM might have chosen to recognize the outstanding natural values of the place. Instead, its draft plan virtually guarantees wild places will be diminished or destroyed.

That plan will likely be made final this summer. It would open 300 miles of routes to rampaging off-road vehicles (ORVs). Many of those miles are in places that nature has reclaimed or is in the process of reclaiming. Based on their extensive field work, SUWA staffers report that some of these so-called routes no longer exist on the ground.

The result of the BLM’s surrender to motorized recreation will be more than a doubling—from 300 miles to 775 miles—of ORV routes. Among places sure to suffer damage are Moonshine Wash, June’s Bottom, and special sites along the San Rafael River. All are popular for backcountry visitors who treasure peace and quiet.

SUWA is closely tracking this dreadful plan as well as others likely to be released in the coming year. We will not let stand any plan that is inconsistent with the BLM’s legal duty to minimize the impacts of ORVs on public lands.

TRUMP’S DESTRUCTIVE PUBLIC LANDS LEGACY WON’T GO UNCHALLENGED OR UNCHECKED

The Trump administration continues to threaten the survival of our desert wild lands. In the face of that, we stand more committed than ever to protect wild Utah. Our public lands offer a refuge not just for us, but for all the plants and wildlife that thrive in the redrock wilderness.

In the midst of this ever-growing list of threats to wild Utah, we know our supporters are coping with their own hardships as a result of the global pandemic. This is why the Trump administration’s myriad schemes to lock in bad public lands policy right now are so alarming and so potentially devastating

Left unchecked, these atrocious decisions ensure that we will be dealing with Trump’s destructive legacy for years to come. Fortunately, SUWA will keep fighting in the courts, in the nation’s capitol, and on the ground to protect our chosen legacy, and it’s one we can be proud of: the preservation of America’s outstanding redrock wilderness.

Throughout this disruptive and damaging administration, and to its very end, SUWA remains focused on our mission. The endurance and persistence that our movement to protect wild Utah has shown these past few years surpass anything we could have imagined. With your continuing support, we will work every day to monitor and protect Utah’s redrock country for many years to come.

—Katherine Indermaur

COSPONSORS IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

During this strange and difficult time, many congressional offices aren't even answering the phone. But persistence and adaptability have helped us persuade many members of Congress to become cosponsors of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act despite the pandemic. This is the visionary proposal to protect 8.4 million acres of wild public land in Utah. As of this writing, the bill has 20 cosponsors in the Senate and 90 in the House.

Cosponsorships are vital to the continued protection of proposed wilderness lands in Utah, especially in the face of an administration bent on savaging them. Once they have decided that Utah's wild public lands are worthy of protection, cosponsors become invaluable allies in our work to keep wild places intact until they become federally designated wilderness.

One state that has been very fruitful for our work is Washington. We have had productive conference calls with dozens of SUWA members and supporters, resulting in at least two new cosponsorships. Volunteers in several states have had their own adventures with congressional staff, but we wanted to share the experience of one in particular.

Her name is Katie Fellows, a SUWA volunteer and staffer at the Patagonia-Ballard store in Seattle. She notes, "The call with Senator Patty Murray's office was the first time I had 'visited' with a member of Congress. I believe it is important to speak up about protecting public lands. I learned how significant it is to listen and make connections with other participants as well. It felt extremely empowering to say why protecting the redrock is important to me and to have a member of Congress listen."

Keys to securing the meetings during a pandemic were identifying the right staff member for the meeting, following up several times by email and phone to schedule the meeting, and understanding and empathizing with the challenges staff face in trying to get things done while working from home during a major public health emergency. Preparation was essential to get through a tight agenda during the 15- to 30-minute visits without benefit of the normal visual cues of face-to-face meetings.

If you would like to hold a video conference with the office of your senator or representative, SUWA staff are ready to help you get it organized, provide materials, and recruit others to join you. Just send an email to groots@suwa.org and your regional organizer will be in touch!

—Travis Hammill

GOOD
NEWS

SENATOR DURBIN DEFENDS NEPA FROM TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S ATTACKS

Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) has written to Interior Secretary David Bernhardt blasting the department's relentless attempts to shield from public scrutiny so-called "vegetation treatment" projects under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

These treatments are, in plainer language, deforestation by clearcutting. They involve chewing up and spitting out vast swaths of piñon and juniper forest with bulldozers, giant wood-chippers known as "bull-hog masticators," and by other means (see sidebar on page 7). The department seeks to justify the destruction with claims of benefits ranging from

wildfire prevention to stream restoration. But those claims have little scientific backing. These clearcutting projects can cause massive disturbance to the sensitive soil crusts of the Colorado Plateau, the wildlife that rely on these forests, and the cultural resources in the path of the machines.

The Trump administration has proposed two new "categorical exclusions" to evade NEPA review. SUWA has recently relied on this key review process to stop deforestation projects in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. One of the proposed exceptions to NEPA would be for projects up to 10,000 acres, and one for

projects of up to 4,500 acres. If those exclusions take effect, the public will be shut out of the decision-making process and thousands of acres of public lands could be stripped of vegetation with little transparency.

Senator Durbin's June letter is a key piece of congressional oversight of Interior's quest to undo environmental protections, and once again reminds us what a strong champion he is for Utah's redrock wilderness.

If you are a constituent of Senator Durbin's, please be sure to thank him.

—Jen Ujifusa

EVER EAGER TO SERVE BIG OIL, BLM READIES HUGE FALL LEASE SALE

The Trump administration is proposing to flood southeastern Utah's red-rock country with oil and gas leases in its September 2020 lease sale, opening the door to the industrialization of some of the nation's most remarkable public lands.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is poised to offer oil and gas leases near Bears Ears National Monument, Labyrinth Canyon, and other lands proposed for wilderness designation in America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. Many parcels are also on the doorstep of Arches, Canyonlands, and Capitol Reef National Parks.

The threat of such reckless leasing prompted the county commission in Grand County, where most of the lease parcels are located, and the Moab City Council to demand that the BLM cancel the sale. The agency has ignored their concerns.

This sale will almost certainly promote wide-scale lease speculation.

In April of this year, the price of oil fell below zero for the first time ever. The BLM, now wholly in thrall to the energy industry, can't do enough to line industry pockets. When prices collapsed, the BLM granted royalty relief to operators who can't economically produce oil and gas from their existing leases. In Utah, this included approximately 94,000 acres of public land, most of which is near or adjacent to the lease parcels at issue in the September 2020 sale.

In other words, the BLM is moving to lease even more wild places while simultaneously bailing out operators

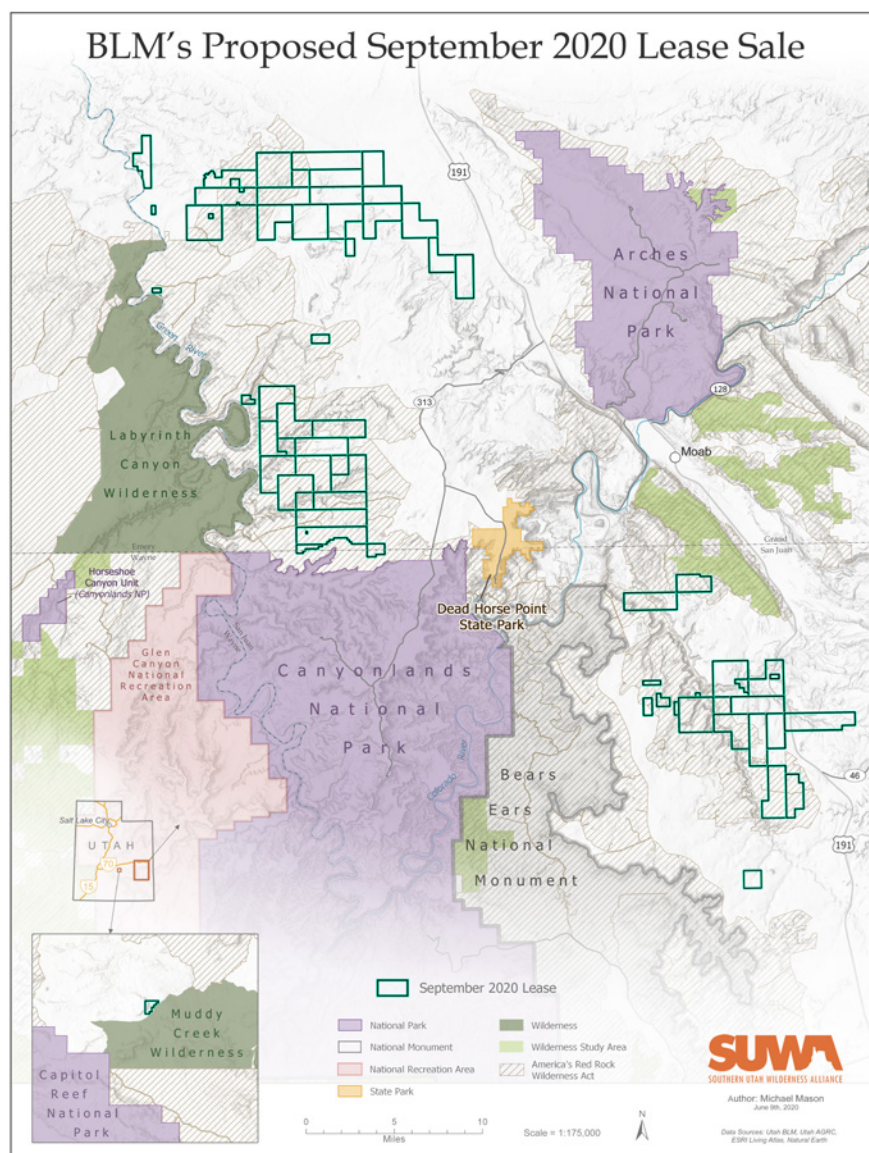
who can't produce economically from the leases they already have in the same area. This is little more than a handout to the industry. The world is awash in cheap oil and all this highlights the absurdity of the Trump administration's "energy dominance" agenda.

Looking beyond the immediate threat to Utah's redrock landscapes, the BLM

must end all new leasing of public lands if we are to have any hope of blunting the worst impacts of a changing climate.

SUWA is actively preparing to fight this leasing proposal. We'll keep you posted and let you know how you can help.

—Landon Newell



RS 2477: OUR ENDLESS TRIP CONTINUES ON THIS LONG AND WINDING . . . ROAD?

Revised Statute (RS) 2477 is an obscure part of the Mining Act of 1866 that granted "highway" rights-of-way across public lands to encourage homesteading in the West. Though the statute was repealed in 1976, rural politicians resurrected its grandfather clause as a means of preventing wilderness designation and asserting local control over federal public lands.

SUWA's journey on the seemingly endless treadmill of RS 2477 litigation continued through the first half of 2020 with more legal filings that have left us standing in pretty much the same place we started.

The RS 2477 "bellwether case" continues to grind ahead. This case is meant to provide a roadmap for dealing with the 20+ suits waiting in the wings in this massive land grab. It involves 15 claimed RS 2477 rights-of-way in Kane County, most of which cross Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

The county and the State of Utah belatedly filed their first round of post-trial briefs on July 3rd, more than two months later than they initially proposed. That delay, along with more extensions we expect to see as the post-trial briefing process continues, means the parties won't be ready to present closing arguments to the court until late 2020 at the earliest. And any decision on these claims almost certainly won't come until 2021, followed by appeals.

After successfully establishing our right to have a seat at the table as a co-defendant in a related Kane County RS 2477 case, SUWA filed a renewed motion to intervene in the bellwether case. We're waiting for a decision on that motion and

(Continued next page)

HOW NICE OF YOU TO SAY SO, LT. GOV.

It is gratifying to hear high praise of SUWA's endurance and effectiveness in the RS 2477 fight, even when it is accidental. Apparently there is a Utah Constitutional Defense Council. Who knew the constitution needed defending?

At a recent defense council meeting, Utah Lieutenant Governor Spencer Cox was briefed on the latest RS 2477 coming and goings, and in particular SUWA's work over the past few years to secure its seat at the table for these cases. After a long pause, Cox announced: "My head just exploded again. It never ends with these guys [SUWA]."

That sums it up just about perfectly. We're in it for the long haul and we do not intend to fail.

Thanks for the kudos, Mr. Cox.



A BARELY VISIBLE RS 2477 CLAIM IN THE DARK CANYON PROPOSED WILDERNESS. © SUWA

intend to move for a new trial once we're allowed into the case. We will highlight the prejudice we suffered from not being allowed to participate in the bellwether trial.

Then there is the state's and counties' long-running effort to preserve the testimony of every possible witness who can speak to (or claim to recall) the use of dirt roads and trails from more than 40 years ago. These are the so-called "preservation depositions." That effort has run into the reality of COVID-19. All these depositions are indefinitely postponed, perhaps, according to the state's lawyers, until there is a vaccine for the coronavirus.

—Steve Bloch

BLM SEEKS TO APPROVE ILLEGAL MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL IN THE SWELL

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Price field office is again proposing to designate a 15-mile, user-created mountain bike trail that runs the length of the Good Water Rim canyon in the San Rafael Swell.

The proposal has several flaws. First, it's illegal, built by a former Emery County sheriff sometime in the mid-2000s. The BLM has never approved the Good Water Rim Trail—never planned it and certainly never completed the analytical work it must do to conform to federal environmental

laws. Now, after a decade of foot-dragging, the BLM has put the trail approval on a fast-track.

In its 2019 designation of the San Rafael Swell Recreation Area, which includes the illegal trail route, Congress directed the agency to write a management plan based on a landscape-level look at where recreational facilities are appropriate in the area. The agency is ignoring that directive and is instead dealing piecemeal with recreation projects completely outside the larger planning process, due to be completed within the next two years.

We have serious concerns about the appropriateness of the Good Water Rim Trail as the BLM proposes it. The route is home to the threatened Mexican spotted owl and the endangered San Rafael cactus. The BLM has never surveyed the canyon rim for the Mexican spotted owl, and does not know the adverse impacts the trail has had and will have on either the owl or the cactus.

Finally, we fear that by approving the Good Water Rim Trail, the BLM sends a message to trail builders—most of whom go to great lengths to work with land management agencies to construct well-planned, legal trails—that they will not be punished for building unauthorized trails in sensitive desert ecosystems.

We will keep you updated as the BLM presses forward with this ill-conceived and ill-timed trail project.

—Oliver Wood

APPOINTMENT OF NEW STATE BLM DIRECTOR BODES ILL FOR UTAH PUBLIC LANDS

Just as we've been getting ready to usher the Trump administration and its cronies out of office, they have been working to saddle the American public with unqualified political appointees to important public land jobs. Case in point is the BLM's recent appointment of Greg Sheehan as the agency's new Utah state director. Frankly, Sheehan is not up to the task.

Sheehan's resume and career is littered with the hallmarks of someone driven by a parochial agenda of catering to county commissioners, ranchers, and high dollar hunters. There is little reason to believe that Sheehan will hew to the BLM's mission of managing Utah's remarkable redrock wilderness and other federal public lands on behalf of all Americans when he has spent his career catering to a select few local interests.

Prior to this recent appointment, Sheehan directed the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources from 2012 to 2017 before being tapped by Trump to serve in the newly created position of Principal Deputy Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. One of Sheehan's lowlights at DWR was promoting chaining and other vegetation removal projects that SUWA has long opposed. Under the guise of "restoring watersheds," these projects largely benefit private ranchers by removing native vegetation in favor of introduced grasses for cows.

"SUNSHINE LAWS" LAY BARE WHAT GOVERNMENT PREFERS TO HIDE

The Trump administration has sought to roll back public land protections in every conceivable way, especially in Utah. One of SUWA's constant tasks is simply keeping abreast of what Interior Department agencies, and their bedfellows in industry and state and county government, are plotting.

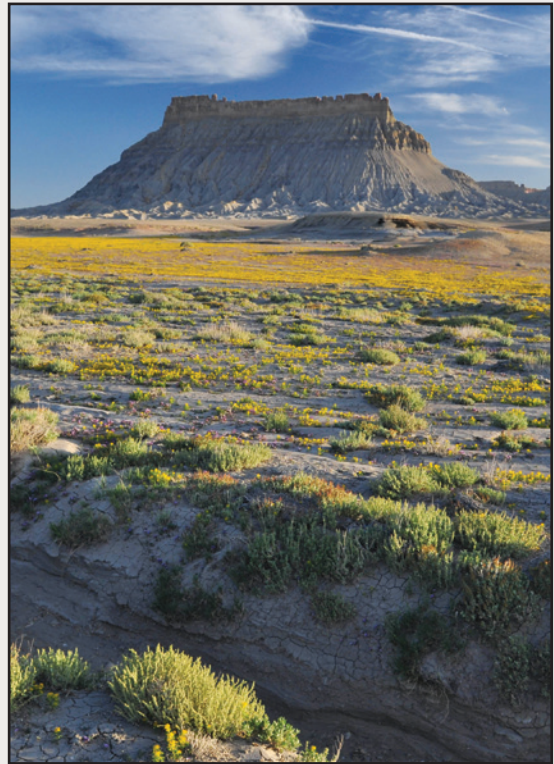
This is no easy task. We have seen time and time again that this administration prefers to deal in back rooms, away from public view and oversight. As a consequence, SUWA uses state and federal public records laws—the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) at the federal level and Utah's Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA)—to better understand the threats facing Utah wilderness. These acts, coined “sunshine laws,” allow us to request and receive government documents that would otherwise never see the light of day.

Many of the documents we receive, such as calendars and lists of high-level agency staff meetings, seem unremarkable but often turn out to be important for tracking key decisions in the bureaucratic pipeline. Other documents help us in court. Many of our legal challenges rely on the “administrative record,” the paper trail of emails, drafts, and reports documenting how an agency like the Bureau of Land Management reaches certain decisions. Courts look to the administrative record to evaluate the legality of the agency's decision. Using information gathered from FOIA requests, we have stopped the Department of Justice's new trend of withholding damning documents from judicial scrutiny.

And sometimes, the records requests themselves lead to litigation. We have filed multiple cases in federal court to force agencies that stonewall our requests to produce documents.

To boost those efforts, we have enlisted the help of some of the brightest public records attorneys in the nation. Our outside legal team includes Maya Kane of the law firm Southwest Water and Property Law, LLC; Dave Becker (who, on behalf of SUWA, won a seminal GRAMA case at the Utah Supreme Court in 2008); Dave Bahr; and William “Nick” Lawton of the law firm Eubanks & Associates, LLC. Our running fight for government transparency and accountability is in good hands.

—Joe Bushyhead



FACTORY BUTTE. © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA

SUWA APPEALS FACTORY BUTTE DECISION

SUWA's fight against destructive off-road vehicle (ORV) use in the Factory Butte area continues. In April, a federal judge in Utah dismissed our lawsuit challenging the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) 2019 decision to allow cross-country ORV use in the spectacular Factory Butte area. SUWA, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and The Wilderness Society have appealed that dismissal to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals.

The federal district court judge ruled that the BLM was not required to perform any environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act before it lifted a long-standing closure order prohibiting cross-country ORV use in the Factory Butte area. We strongly disagree with the judge's reasoning and believe the BLM was required to analyze the environmental impacts of its decision before opening the area to what will certainly be extensive damage to sensitive resources.

SUWA APPEALS HUGE DEFORESTATION PROJECT IN BOOK CLIFFS

SUWA has filed an appeal with the Interior Board of Land Appeals challenging a 20,000-acre devegetation project south of Vernal in the Seep Ridge area of Utah's Book Cliffs. If this project moves forward, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will reduce nearly 20,000 acres of piñon-juniper forest to stumps.

Much of the land is proposed for wilderness designation in America's Red Rock Wilderness Act or is otherwise of wilderness quality. The BLM trots out its usual justifications, claiming the massive project will benefit wildlife and reduce wildfire risk. Science, of course, supports neither claim.

The BLM bills this as a "maintenance" project to clean up an earlier project that cut piñon pine and juniper trees for similarly specious ecological reasons.

Our main concern is that, once again, the BLM essentially ignored the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by failing to complete any environmental analysis for the project. Instead, the agency cobbled together three earlier environmental assessments (EAs) and offered that as NEPA compliance. But those analyses barely overlap with the massive new project. Approximately 2,400 of the 20,000 targeted acres are common to the old EAs and the new project.

In other words, the BLM has never considered or analyzed environmental impacts on 17,600 acres of the public lands that this project will affect.

Notably absent from these existing analyses is any consideration of the harmful impacts the removal of piñon and juniper would have on the wilderness-quality lands the project encompasses.

We will update you as this appeal moves forward.

—*Oliver Wood*



THE BLM IS PROPOSING A MASSIVE DEVEGETATION PROJECT IN A REMOTE AND PREDOMINANTLY WILD AREA OF THE BOOK CLIFFS REGION. © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA



VOLUNTEERS PRACTICE SOCIALLY DISTANCED LAND STEWARDSHIP WHILE MITIGATING OFF-ROAD VEHICLE IMPACTS IN UTAH'S DEEP CREEK MOUNTAINS. © JACK HANLEY/SUWA

THE ETHIC OF STEWARDSHIP ENDURES

As I sit down to write, the sky breaks open over southern Utah, releasing two torrents—the second greater than the first. Fallstreaks rush upon the valley soaking the earth with reprieve. In the powerful weather of southern Utah summers, we find an apt metaphor for our Stewardship Program's evolving paradigm: one which embraces natural cycles while setting the stage for systemic change. Periods of drought prove to be opportunities to study the depths of yesterday's flood-carved landscape.

Our stewardship field season was slated to begin mid-March, just as the pandemic set in. We postponed until June. In the meantime, our staff took to the field to assess compounding needs—those that preceded the pandemic and those spurred by its onset. While some lands experienced a brief reprieve, others were stormed by the restless masses. We have used this time to build a better program, one more capable of identifying and directing priority restoration efforts on Utah's public lands.

Since June, with new protective protocols in place, we are once more running crews to address impacts to public lands across Utah. We're tackling natural resource damage in the Canaan Mountain Wilderness, ORV impacts in the Deep Creek Mountains and Bears Ears National Monument, spring preservation in the Book Cliffs, and camping impacts in the High Uintas Wilderness.

We currently plan to continue our efforts through the fall so long as we can safely accommodate the people (*you*) whose volunteer efforts make our restoration work possible. Our approach is steady, measured, and adaptable. Securing a more just and resilient long-term future requires acknowledging the uncertainty of the near-term—and persisting.

Learn more about the Stewardship Program and register to volunteer at suwa.org/stewardship.

—Jeremy Lynch



THANK YOU AMERICORPS VOLUNTEER CRISTINA CHIRVASA

SUWA's excellent volunteers bring a variety of skills to our work. Some are great communicators, others good writers, still others terrific backcountry stewards. Americorps volunteer Cristina Chirvasa is all of those and more.

Cristina was with us from August 2019 through July of this year. She began by talking with residents of Latinx-dense neighborhoods about their relationship with wild nature, helping us to appreciate new voices and ideas and helping them to better understand our mission. Next, she established newsletter pick-up locations in the Salt Lake Valley. When our world slowed down with COVID-19, Cristina did not. She threw her energy into helping schedule digital presentations to student groups.

Cristina will start her freshman year this fall at Utah State University, pursuing a dual major in fisheries and aquatic sciences and wildlife ecology and management.

Thank you, Cristina, for your exceptional civic service.

LONG-SERVING BOARD MEMBER DARRELL KNUFFKE STEPS DOWN

Ask Darrell Knuffke what year he joined the SUWA Board of Directors, and you get some uncharacteristic waffling. His best guess is 1986. Which means he wasn't around for the actual founding of SUWA, but came fairly close.

Whatever the actual date, Darrell was the heart and soul of our board for longer than some of our staffers have been alive. To our great regret, that is no longer the case as Darrell has chosen to take his leave from the board where he served as chair for quite a few years. We are left with the unhappy task of trying to replace the irreplaceable.

At the time he joined up, Darrell was a regional director in the West for The Wilderness Society. That storied land conservation organization provided the young SUWA with a great deal of expertise, development assistance, and instant cachet. In addition to Darrell, two Wilderness Society board members, Bert Fingerhut and Hansjoerg Wyss, also came on to the SUWA board.

Building a relationship between a well-established national group that operated across many states and issues and a fledgling grassroots organization that was (and is) solely devoted to protecting wilderness-quality federal lands in Utah was "the most satisfying" aspect of his long tenure, Darrell says. That, and helping



SUWA IS ENDURINGLY GRATEFUL TO DARRELL FOR HIS DECADES OF COUNSEL, LEADERSHIP, AND UNWAVERING DEFENSE OF THE REDROCK.

form the Utah Wilderness Coalition that brought SUWA together with the Wilderness Society, Sierra Club, and the National Parks Conservation Association among others. In 1989 the coalition published *Wilderness at the Edge*, an encyclopedic description of the citizens' plan for protecting Utah wilderness.

That, says Darrell, "put the organization and the coalition on the map."

Darrell's lifelong fierce defense of wilderness has been a source of strength and guidance for many SUWA board members and staffers. He's a warrior, always has been. He is a good part

of the reason that SUWA has long been known for its uncompromising advocacy for the redrock. But he also brings to the table a vast knowledge of the big sweep of environmental history, and a grand and piercing sense of humor. He's flat out great company.

Lucky for us, Darrell will continue to edit our *Redrock Wilderness* newsletter. He'll also continue to offer us guidance when we ask for it. Without him sitting at our board conference room table during our thrice yearly meetings, we're going to need it.

Many, many thanks Darrell. We are enduringly grateful.

SUPPORTING THE REDROCK IN CHALLENGING TIMES

SPECIAL OFFER FOR NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

Your membership provides both the political and financial strength needed to defend our redrock wild lands. If you are facing financial hardship due to the coronavirus pandemic, please consider the \$20 membership level when joining SUWA or renewing your membership. This level is typically reserved for students or those on a fixed income, but in light of these difficult times, we are making an exception. Just visit our website at suwa.org/donate and select "\$20 Student Membership" to keep your membership active.

CARES ACT TAX DEDUCTION

Thanks to federal stimulus legislation passed this March, you can deduct your 2020 gifts to SUWA when you do your taxes next year, even if you take the standard deduction. This legislation allows for up to \$300 per taxpayer (\$600 for a married couple) in an above-the-line deduction for charitable gifts made in 2020. Please visit our CARES Act information page at suwa.org/caresact to learn more.

MONTHLY GIVING

If you are able, one especially helpful way to support SUWA today is our monthly giving program. You can protect the redrock year-round with a \$5 or \$10 gift every month. That adds up to \$60 or \$120 a year and goes a long way to helping keep your public lands wild. For more details on joining SUWA's monthly giving program, please visit our website at suwa.org/monthly.

Your support is what makes our work possible. Thank you!

DC INTERN KASEY LINDSTROM HELPS ELEVATE RED ROCK BILL

Kasey Lindstrom became a SUWA intern in our Washington, DC office in January. She was an instant star, helping to organize Wilderness Week and tackling a range of projects to bring America's Red Rock Wilderness Act into the spotlight.

Originally from Chicago, Kasey now calls Utah her home. She attends the University of Utah Honors College and majors in environmental and sustainability studies with an emphasis on land management. Before she came to SUWA, Kasey worked on environmental justice and restoration projects in the Salt Lake City area.

Kasey has decided she wants to dedicate her life to environmental causes. She intends to pursue a law degree in the environmental field and potentially return to Washington to explore opportunities consistent with her love for the environment.

We wish you all the best in a bright future, Kasey, and you have our deepest thanks.



THANK YOU SUWA BUSINESS MEMBERS!

SUWA's Business Membership Program is a great way for your small business or company to support the protection of Utah's redrock country. For an annual donation of \$150 or more, we'll print your company's name in our newsletter once a year and on our website at suwa.org/businessmembers. At higher levels of support we offer additional benefits, such as a featured spot in our monthly e-newsletter. For more information, please contact Maddie Hayes at (801) 428-3972 or maddie@suwa.org. Listed below are businesses from Utah and across the country that currently support Utah wilderness through SUWA's business member program.

KAYENTA MEMBERS

(\$1,000+)

Holiday River Expeditions, UT	Powderhound Marketing, CO
Imlay Canyon Gear, UT	Stone Forest, Inc, NM
JSA Sustainable Wealth Management, NY	Tailwind Nutrition, CO
Mosaic Real Estate LLC, CO	

WINGATE MEMBERS

(\$500-\$999)

Camel's Garden Hotel, CO	Glenn Randall Writing and Photography, CO	The Wildland Trekking Co, AZ
Chris Brown Photography, CO	Injoy Productions, CO	Words and Photographs by Stephen Trimble, UT
Dabney & Dabney PLLC, UT	Pack Rat Outdoor Center, AR	

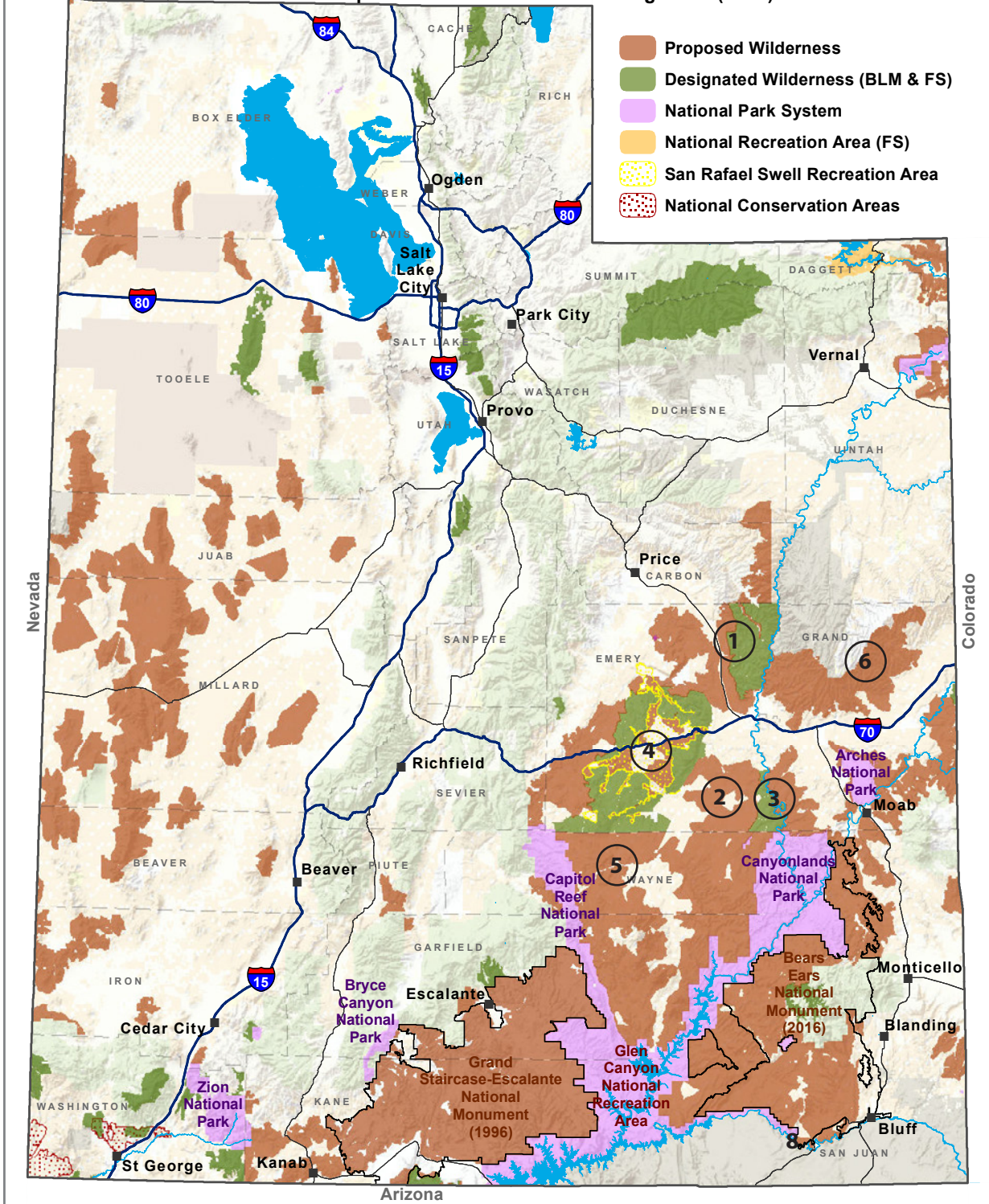
MOENKOPI MEMBERS

(\$150-\$499)

57hours, NY	Four Crows Photography, MA	Rupestrian CyberServices, AZ
Action Photo Tours, UT	Gospel Flat Farm, CA	Select Stone, Inc, MT
Alta Lodge, UT	James Kay Photography, UT	Streamline Industries Inc., MT
Brown Bag Farms, CA	Kali Creative, UT	Tourmaline Capital Management, LLC, CA
Caffe Ibis Coffee Roasting Co, UT	LAG Visual Arts, CO	Valley View Anesthesia, ID
Carol Montgomery Drake CPA PLLC, NY	Leslie Peterson, ND, Naturopathic Physician, UT	Wagenschmitt VW Service, WA
Clayhaus Photography, UT	Malach Consulting, LLC, UT	William Stone Photography, NM
Consulting Psychologists, AZ	Matheson Design, OR	With Gaia Design, UT
Escape Goats, UT	Ody Brook Enterprises, MI	Workspace Installations LLC, CT
Fisher Brewing Company, LLC, UT	Pinnacle Peak Eye Care, AZ	ZAK Construction, OR
	Robert D Barewin, Attorney at Law, IL	

America's Red Rock Wilderness Act

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



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|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ① Book Cliffs/Lila Canyon (p. 6) | ④ San Rafael Swell (p. 12) |
| ② San Rafael Desert (p. 8) | ⑤ FactoryButte (p. 13) |
| ③ Labyrinth Canyon (p. 10) | ⑥ Seep Ridge (p. 14) |



VISIT US ONLINE FOR SOME GREAT SUWA GEAR AND MORE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

CHECK OUT OUR ONLINE STORE

Head to our online store at suwa.org/goodies to browse our latest selection of SUWA T-shirts, hats, and tank tops. Our newest hat features the orange SUWA logo embroidered on a charcoal cotton/poly blend "trucker" style cap (see photo). The back of the hat is mesh to keep you cool and comfortable on all your outside adventures. Buy yours today for \$28 only at the SUWA online store.

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR PODCAST

SUWA's *Wild Utah* podcast takes an in-depth look at the issues affecting Utah's redrock country. Find the latest episodes at www.suwa.org/podcast or search for it on Spotify, iTunes, and other popular podcast apps.

SIGN UP FOR TEXT ALERTS

If you haven't already, please take a moment to join our mobile action network in defense of Utah's wild places. **Simply text SUWA to 52886** and we'll send text alerts to your phone so you can act fast when Utah's wilderness or national monuments are threatened.



DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE KATHERINE INDERMAUR MODELS THE "TRUCKER" STYLE SUWA CAP. © JOYELLE HATCH/SUWA