

REDROCK

W I L D E R N E S S

The Newsletter of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
VOLUME 38, NUMBER 2 • SUMMER 2021

**ACCESS VS. EXCESS: BLM TRAVEL PLANS MAP THE
FUTURE OF UTAH'S REDROCK COUNTRY**

INSIDE!

Report on Climate
and Vegetation
Removal



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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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, Madison Daniels, Scott Groene, Travis Hammill, Katherine Indermaur, Olivia Juarez, Jeremy Lynch, Kya Marienfeld, Landon Newell, Dave Pacheco, Laura Peterson, Chris Richardson, Jen Ujifusa, and Michelle White. It was edited by Darrell Knuffke and laid out by Diane Kelly. Newsletter design by Amy Westberg.

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

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A LONG, HOT SUMMER

Summer landed hard in southeast Utah this year. Scant precipitation during the traditional wildflower season did nothing to ease a worsening drought. The low spring run-off in the Colorado and Green Rivers offered only a sad comparison to the roaring flows of other years, when muddy torrents lashed boulders and rebuilt beaches as they brawled their way downstream.

Meanwhile, the distance between Lake Powell's bone-white bathtub ring and its dwindling water surface continues to grow. As the reservoir drops, it reveals wrecked boats and dead ghost forests. Temperatures topped 110 degrees in June, and commercial flights from the Canyonlands airport were canceled: it was too hot to fly. Here in the Moab valley we choked on the smoke from wildfires burning the western flanks of the La Sal Mountains. That same smoke gives us the apocalyptic red sunsets that are now so familiar a part of Western summers.

Climate change and its impacts are here. Now. And it is critical that we recognize the central part that America's Red Rock Wilderness Act can and must play in addressing climate change. We have long looked to wilderness for beauty, habitat, solitude, and freedom. It is time to add planetary survival to that list.

30x30: START OR A STUMBLE?

President Joe Biden recognized the climate threat from day one. We were encouraged by the strong initial steps his administration took toward 30x30, the science-backed effort to protect 30 percent of our land base by 2030 to address climate change.

We were admittedly disappointed when the administration next released the underwhelming "America the Beautiful" document, which was supposed to serve as a vision for achieving the goals of the 30x30 initiative in the next decade. Instead, it seems to be a political document written to mollify opponents.

The only way for the U.S. to reach 30x30 goals is through meaningful conservation on lands the Interior Department manages, particularly its Bureau of Land Management, the largest federal land manager. The document came nowhere near acknowledging that fact.

Still, we nurture hope. There are many good people in this administration. They, too, seek change. Perhaps this episode is but a misstep on the way to needed action to save the planet and all who live here.

FORBEARANCE IS HARDER CLOSE TO HOME

Elsewhere, we find it harder to keep the faith. To wit, when Utah Representative John Curtis announced that he was starting a Republican caucus to address climate change we wanted to be encouraged.

True, Curtis seemed an unlikely leader here given his awful voting record on the environment and his lead role in trying to block President Biden from restoring Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments. But we hoped this might be a long overdue crack in what has been a near-monolithic wall of opposition by Curtis's party to even begin accepting the reality of climate change, never mind actually doing something about it.

The good vibrations lasted for all of two days, when Curtis voted against a bipartisan measure to control methane leaks, a powerful greenhouse gas. Unions supported the measure. Some oil and gas companies supported the measure, seeking a level playing field in addressing pipeline leaks. A dozen Republican House members supported the measure, though not many were members of Curtis's climate caucus.

There may very well be tough votes on matters involving climate change, but this wasn't one of them. And Curtis's vote suggests his caucus may just be political cover for his party.

THERE'S NO TIME FOR POLITICAL SUBTERFUGE

I was infuriated that on the very heels of the high-profile announcement of his new caucus, Curtis sought to block a meaningful step forward on climate change. We don't have time to waste on political games. Curtis and other politicians like him must know that many young people, including young Republicans, are justifiably angry at Congress's inaction. Because of it, the next generation will inherit a world that is hotter, drier, and less livable than today's and whose problems are even more intractable. The correct response here is serious action, not cynical theater.

The Utah congressional delegation has long served as an impediment to land protection and anti-climate change measures. Representative Curtis and his peers can repent of both behaviors by helping protect 8 million acres of land through America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. It's a key part of the solution for mitigating and adapting to climate change, sequestering carbon, and creating resiliency. And it is one of the most cost-effective tools to boot. That is something a conservative should appreciate.

For the Redrock,



Scott Groene
Executive Director

ACCESS VS. EXCESS: BLM TRAVEL PLANS MAP THE FUTURE OF UTAH'S REDROCK COUNTRY

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is in the process of deciding where motorized vehicles will be allowed to operate on more than six million acres of public lands in eastern and southern Utah. And while travel management planning may not sound very exciting, there is an easy way to emphasize its critical importance: the use of off-road vehicles (ORVs) in Utah has nearly doubled in the last 15 years.

The BLM's planning process will designate motorized access routes to trailheads, scenic overlooks, and other recreation opportunities. These routes are largely uncontroversial. But the process will also determine the fate of the thousands of miles of wash bottoms, two-tracks, cow paths, and lines on a map that the agency contends are motorized vehicle routes. These designations could have significant impacts on Utah's natural and cultural resources. Many of the supposed "routes" do not exist on the ground or are being naturally reclaimed. If they get any use at all, it is often illegal use by certain types of ORVs, including all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), utility task vehicles (UTVs or side-by-sides), and dirt bikes.

Today, more than 195,000 ORVs are registered in Utah alone. That figure does not include the tens of thousands

of ORVs that out-of-state recreationists haul to the redrock every year.

While these machines undoubtedly provide outdoor recreation for some, they can have a disproportionately large impact on public land resources and on the experiences of other recreationists. ORVs cause stream erosion and water pollution, exacerbate dust and soil erosion, harass wildlife and fragment habitat, and damage cultural sites. Because of the damage ORVs inflict on sensitive resources, it is imperative that their use be carefully planned and reasonably managed.

The BLM's planning effort will ultimately determine where motorized vehicles will be allowed to travel in some of Utah's most stunning and remote wild places, including the Dirty Devil, the San Rafael Swell, and Labyrinth Canyon.

HOW WE GOT HERE

In the waning days of the George W. Bush administration, the BLM released six resource management plans to guide the administration of 11 million acres of public lands span-



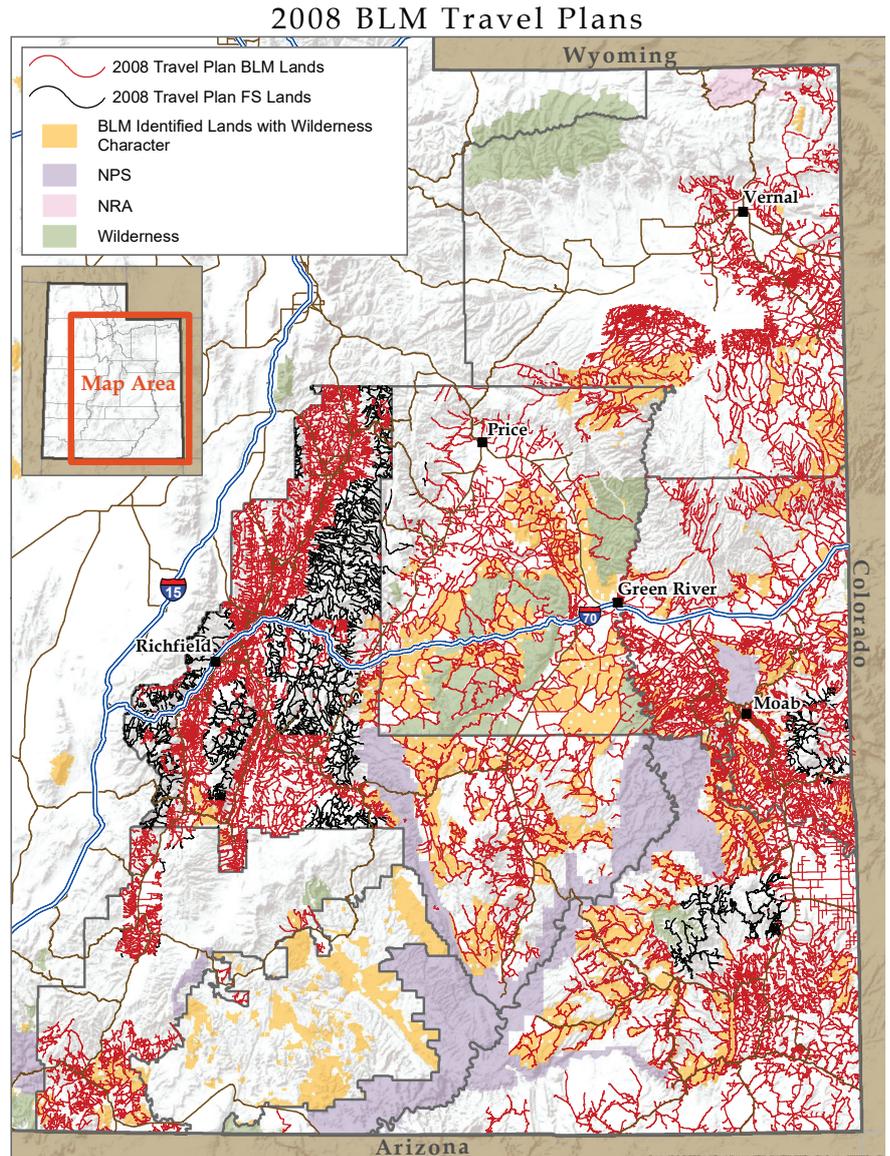
A "ROUTE" THE BLM IS CONSIDERING OPENING TO MOTORIZED VEHICLES IN THE SAN RAFAEL SWELL. © RAY BLOXHAM/SUWA

ning much of eastern and southern Utah. Those plans smothered Utah's public lands with a dense web of routes, ultimately designating 30,926 miles for motorized vehicle use (see map at right).

Media outlets ranging from the *Salt Lake Tribune* to the *New York Times* decried the excessive designation of ORV routes and the BLM's prioritization of ORV use at the expense of basically every other value on our public lands, including cultural and natural resources. Designated routes plow directly through cultural sites considered sacred by Native Americans and fragment wildlife habitat valued by Utah's hunters and non-hunters alike. The Bush-era plans also exacerbated conflicts between motorized and non-motorized public land users.

SUWA and its conservation partners challenged those plans in federal court. In 2013, the court found that the travel plan for the BLM's Richfield field office—the first to be considered—violated the law by failing to minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources. Following our court victory, the SUWA-led conservation groups entered into negotiations to resolve our claims against the remaining travel plans.

Under the ensuing settlement agreement between the BLM, conservation organizations, and ORV groups, the BLM is required to rewrite travel plans for 11 travel management areas over the course of eight years. As it prepares these new plans, the agency must engage in a transparent process that expressly considers the impacts that motorized route designations pose to wilderness-quality lands, sensitive natural resources, and cultural resources. The agency must also minimize impacts to those unique resources in its designation of routes.



WHY THIS MATTERS

Much has changed in the decade-plus since the BLM released its irresponsible travel plans. Visitation has skyrocketed—fueled by the state's unrelenting tourism advertising campaign and the rise of social media—and shows no sign of diminishing. At the same time, many of these visitors are riding ORVs designed to go more places faster than ever before. We are also grappling with the climate crisis, which only compounds the impacts motorized vehicles have across the landscape. Precisely because of these

challenges, thoughtful and deliberate travel planning is critical.

The travel plans offer the BLM a second chance to get things right. Instead of catering to ORV interests, the agency can develop reasonable, manageable, and forward-thinking blueprints that preserve the backcountry and minimize damage while allowing public access where appropriate.

PLACES AT RISK

By the terms of the settlement agreement, the BLM has until 2025 to

complete 11 new travel plans across five field offices. So far, the agency has completed two: the San Rafael Desert plan (Price field office) and the Canyon Rims plan (Moab field office), discussed below. That leaves nine to be completed:

- San Rafael Swell (Price field office)
- Nine Mile Canyon (Price and Vernal field offices)
- Dinosaur North (Vernal field office)
- Book Cliffs (Vernal field office)
- Henry Mountains/Freemont Gorge (Richfield field office)
- Labyrinth Rims/Gemini Bridges (Moab field office)
- Dolores Triangle (Moab field office)
- Trail Canyon (Kanab field office)
- Paunsaugunt Plateau (Kanab field office)

The remaining plans encompass some of Utah's most remote and spectacular wild lands. From the sinuous slot canyons of the San Rafael Swell and the soaring redrock buttes of Labyrinth Rims/Gemini Bridges to the rugged ridges of the Book Cliffs, the travel plans contain prime wildlife habitat, irreplaceable cultural sites, and immensely popular backcountry recreation areas.

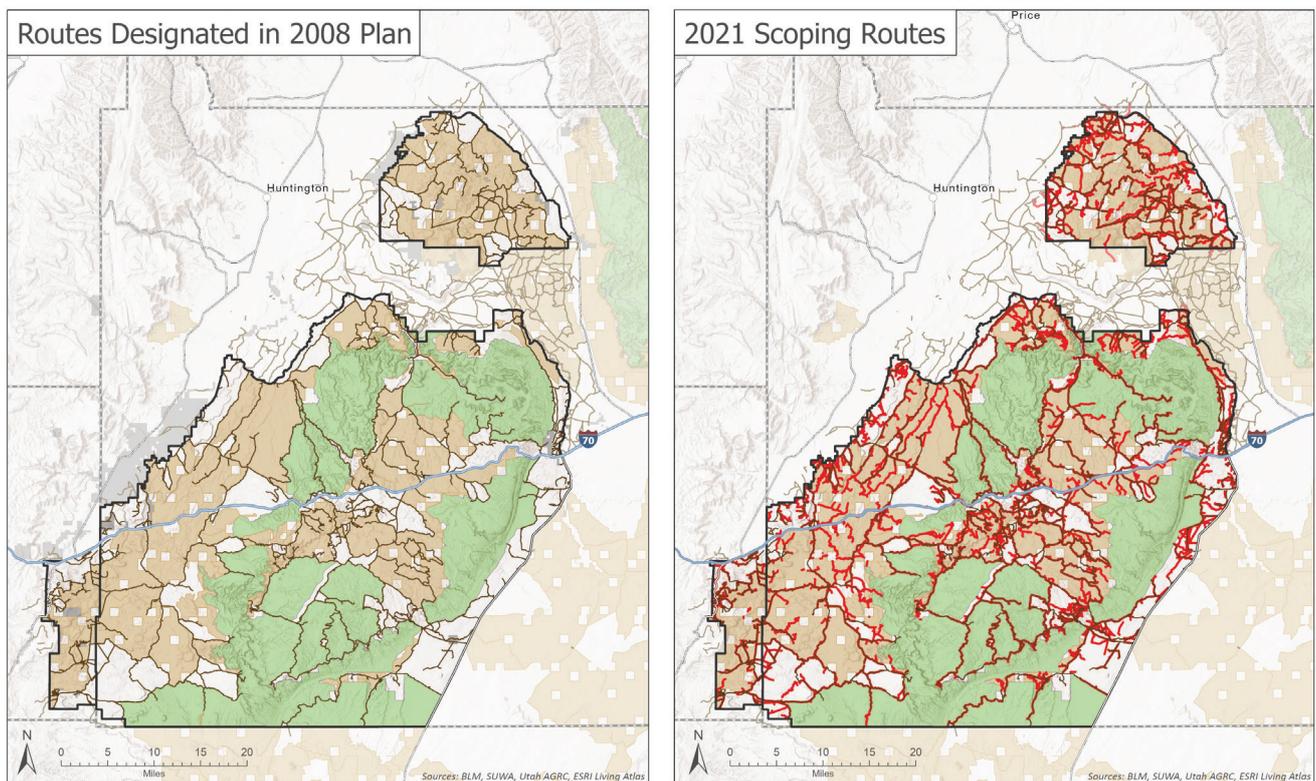
A FORK IN THE ROAD

The two completed plans—San Rafael Desert and Canyon Rims—represent very different approaches to travel planning. Which of the two the agency embraces as a model for the next nine will tell us whether the BLM intends to double-down on off-road vehicle damage or finally institute balanced motorized vehicle management in redrock country.

BLM TAKES WRONG TURN IN GREEN RIVER DISTRICT

The San Rafael Desert travel management plan—the only plan finalized during the Trump administration—was predictably terrible. Released in August 2020, the plan inundated the remote and stunning San Rafael Desert with ORV routes, more than doubling the route mileage from 300 to 766. By its own admission, the BLM chose to “emphasize maximum mileage available for [ORV] recreation.” True to form, the agency designated virtually every wash bottom and line on a map as open to ORVs.

San Rafael Swell TMA Designated Routes vs. Scoping Routes



- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| Designated Routes | Wilderness |
| Scoping Routes | San Rafael Swell TMA |
| BLM-Identified Wilderness Quality Lands | Counties |



SUWA and The Wilderness Society have challenged the BLM's destructive and illegal San Rafael Desert travel plan in federal court. That litigation is ongoing.

The BLM's Green River District, which encompasses the Price and Vernal field offices, appears to be especially committed to sacrificing every acre of Utah's public lands to ORV travel. Beyond the San Rafael Desert travel plan, the district has released initial scoping maps for the San Rafael Swell and Book Cliffs travel plans. Rather than instituting some balance in ORV management, the BLM is considering designating over 1,000 miles of new routes in the San Rafael Swell (see map on page 8) and over 700 miles of new routes in the Book Cliffs.



To call the BLM Green River District's travel planning to date disappointing would be a massive understatement. If the agency continues down this path, it will forever change Utah's wild places."

Enshrining any of these new routes in the travel plans would simply make a bad situation even worse and further prioritize ORV use at the expense of wildlife, wilderness, and other recreationists. Adding these new routes would also violate the BLM's legal duty to minimize damage to natural and cultural resources both on a route-by-route basis, and at the broader plan level.

To call the BLM Green River District's travel planning to date disappointing would be a massive understatement. If the agency continues down this path, it will forever change Utah's wild places and will ensure endless litigation.

CANYON RIMS: A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

While the travel planning in the BLM's Green River District has been unacceptable, the Moab field office's Canyon Rims travel plan offers a more sensible and balanced approach.

The Canyon Rims travel plan covers 91,000 acres of BLM-managed land in northern San Juan County, including the well-known and scenic Needles, Canyonlands, and Anticline overlooks. In its final plan, released this past

(Continued next page)

REACHING CLIMATE GOALS

Shortly after taking office, President Biden signed a series of executive orders highlighting the dire threat that climate change poses to humanity and directing federal agencies to help combat the climate crisis. The orders directed federal agencies to bolster resilience to the impacts of climate change and to conserve lands, waters, and biodiversity. How the BLM manages ORVs across the nation's public lands will play an important role in reaching the Biden administration's climate goals.

ORV use fragments wildlife habitat and harasses wildlife, accelerates dust and soil erosion, and causes stream erosion and water pollution. The damage from poorly planned route systems exacerbates the effects of climate change and can harm climate refugia. Despite this, the BLM's environmental analyses for the San Rafael Desert and Canyon Rims travel plans did not even mention climate change. The agency must account for climate change impacts in its travel planning and designate a route network that minimizes surface disturbance and protects large landscapes.

PROTECTING CULTURAL SITES

Utah's public lands contain countless irreplaceable cultural sites and artifacts. Ancient dwellings, intricate petroglyphs, potsherds, and stone tool fragments reflect thousands of years of human history. Unfortunately, these sites are particularly vulnerable to damage from ORVs.

These vehicles damage cultural resources by driving directly over sites, by exacerbating erosion that in turn erodes cultural deposits, and by generating dust that then settles on rock art panels. Studies have also shown that sites are more likely to be vandalized or looted if they are visible from an ORV route.

In its 2008 travel plans, the BLM refused to survey for the presence of cultural and historic sites before designating motorized vehicle routes. As a result, many authorized routes travel directly through cultural sites and areas considered sacred by Native Americans. The agency's new travel plans must remedy this failure and protect Utah's cultural resources.

May, the agency used the 2008 travel plan as the “ceiling” for motorized route designations. Rather than attempting to add countless two-tracks and illegally-traveled routes to the already excessive motorized network, the BLM closed about 46 miles of unnecessary routes. Many had naturally reclaimed or are in the process of naturally reclaiming due to lack of use. Others are redundant to routes designated in the plan. The agency could have—and should have—closed more routes, but the plan was nevertheless a step in the right direction.

A PATH FORWARD

As it works to complete the remaining nine travel plans, the Utah BLM should ensure that the 2008 plans—which a federal court has already ruled were illegal and failed to minimize damage to natural and cultural resources—represent the upper limit of motorized vehicle routes the agency will designate. Instead of straining to add every wash bottom to the motorized vehicle network, the agency should focus on removing duplicative routes, those routes that nature has reclaimed or is reclaiming, routes that are non-existent on the ground, and routes that damage sensitive resources.

This travel planning process is the BLM’s best chance to shape the public’s experience of Utah’s remarkable public lands. Rather than viewing this process as a burden, the BLM should take advantage of this opportunity to protect our shared heritage.

SUWA will continue to hold the BLM accountable and do our best to ensure that the agency completes and implements plans that do justice to these landscapes and cultural sites.

—Laura Peterson

TRAVEL PLAN SPOTLIGHT: LABYRINTH RIMS/GEMINI BRIDGES

The Labyrinth Rims/Gemini Bridges area outside of Moab encompasses the internationally-recognized Labyrinth Canyon section of the Green River as well as its many side canyons, including Hell Roaring and Ten Mile. The area’s unobstructed views, soaring redrock cliffs, and Green River corridor provide endless opportunities for hikers, river runners, photographers and campers. The area is also a prime example of the excesses of the BLM’s 2008 travel plans.

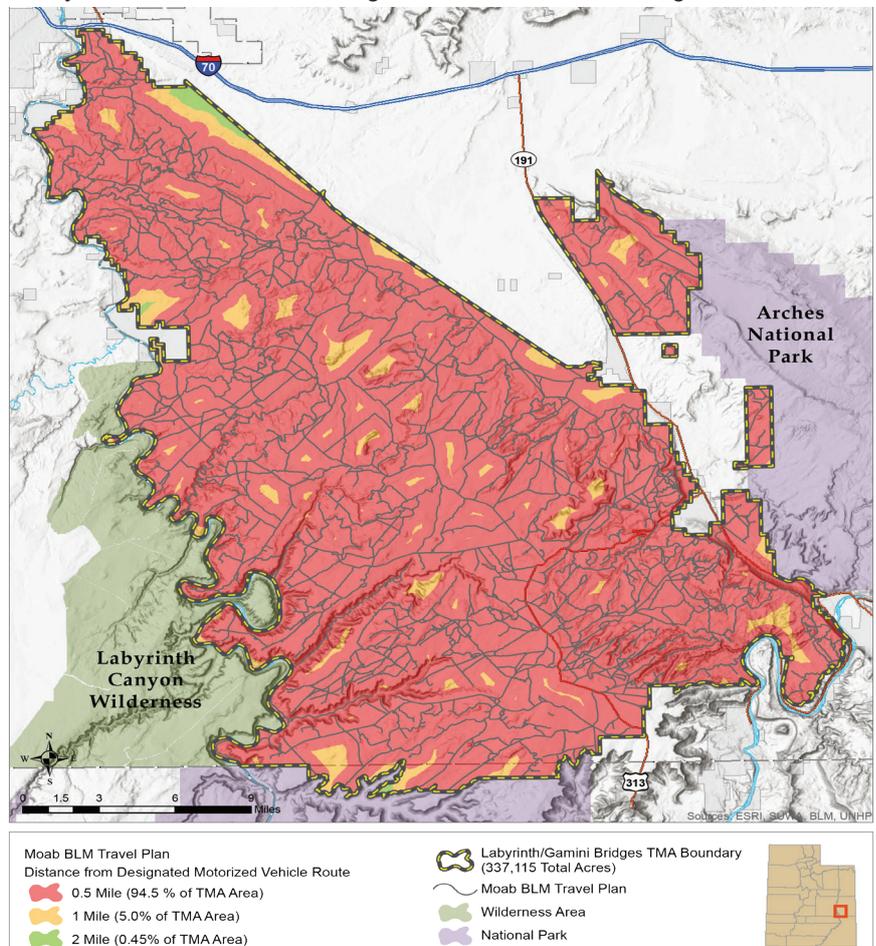
In its last go-round, the agency smothered the area with 1,232 miles of motorized vehicle routes. Currently, 94 percent

of the lands in the Labyrinth Rims/Gemini Bridges area are within half a mile of a designated off-road vehicle route while less than 1.5 percent are two miles or more from a designated route.

In its upcoming travel plan, which the BLM hopes to complete by 2023, the agency must significantly reduce the motorized route network in this area to protect public land resources and balance motorized and non-motorized recreation. Visit www.suwa.org and subscribe to our email list to stay informed and make your voice heard.

—LP

Labyrinth Rims/Gemini Bridges: Distance from Designated Routes



GOOD NEWS

RED ROCK BILL REINTRODUCED IN HOUSE, SENATE

Our flagship legislation, America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, has now been reintroduced in both the House and Senate. With the help of our redrock champions, Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Representative Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), we've already won the endorsements of 16 cosponsors in the Senate and 66 in the House. Visit suwa.org/cosponsors to see if your legislators are among them.

This congressional session we celebrated reintroduction with a bang by hosting a webinar with our activists to toast the future of the Red Rock bill. Our legislative director, Jen Ujifusa, and Latinx community organizer, Olivia Juarez, spoke to more than 200 attendees, highlighting the importance of our work with Congress and the crucial role of grassroots activists in defending Utah's wild lands. We also used the occasion to debut SUWA's short video highlighting the Red Rock bill's enormous potential to help mitigate climate change, preserve biodiversity, and protect indigenous culture.

We offer a special thanks to members cosponsoring the Red Rock bill for the first time in this Congress: Karen Bass (D-CA-37), Cori Bush (D-MO-1), Marie Newman (D-IL-3), and Marilyn Strickland (D-WA-10). If any of these legislators represent you, please be sure to thank them.

—Chris Richardson

VIRTUAL LOBBYING HAS ITS ADVANTAGES

With Washington congressional offices still not open for in-person meetings with constituents, virtual lobbying is all the rage. And no one has mastered the new protocols faster or more effectively than Utah wilderness advocates.

Small groups of redrock activists from around the country have held more than 65 virtual meetings with congressional staff in the past few months. That's impressive, and there are more meetings on the way. The success of those meetings is reflected most accurately in the number of cosponsors of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act (see article above).

These virtual meetings aren't ideal. But if they present challenges (and they do), they also offer some unexpected bonuses. For example, many offices are able to set aside as much as 30 to 40 minutes to discuss redrock wilderness, whereas in-person meetings typically last only 10 or 15 minutes. The added time allows activists to build rapport with the legislative staff, and that's invaluable. Also, because meetings are virtual, we've been able to bring more local constituents to the meetings—and their personal stories have extra resonance with legislators.

If you'd like to join a virtual meeting with your representatives, contact Travis Hammill at travis@suwa.org and we'll get you set up!

—Dave Pacheco

SENATOR LEE GOES ALL IN FOR ENGINES

Here's some news that shouldn't surprise our readers: Senator Mike Lee is busily introducing bills that attack Utah wilderness and public lands.

In June alone, three Lee bills received hearings in the narrowly split Senate, all involving the senator's dreams of making sure freedom and liberty are preserved by ensuring that more of our public lands can be overrun with some kind of tire.

One bill, S. 1526, would authorize the use of off-road vehicles on many of the roads in Capitol Reef National Park. Another, S. 1527, would allow state law to determine where ORVs could go in *every* national park.

In testimony submitted to the Senate subcommittee, SUWA stressed that ORV use "is simply incompatible with the purpose for which America's national parks and monuments are established, and [they] are especially inappropriate in areas of national park system units that are managed for wilderness values or for primitive recreation."

It's worth noting that Lee also introduced S. 1686, which promotes the use of bikes in wilderness, a direct contradiction to the 1964 Wilderness Act.

They may have received hearings, but we're confident these bills, unlike the conveyances they favor, aren't going anywhere soon.



THE BLM'S LARGE-SCALE VEGETATION REMOVAL PROJECTS LACK SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT AND ARE LIKELY TO EXACERBATE CLIMATE CHANGE. © TWIG MEDIA/SUWA

SUWA CONTINUES PUSHING BACK ON VEGETATION REMOVAL, RELEASES REPORT ON CLIMATE IMPACTS

SUWA members have become increasingly familiar over the last several years with the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) destructive practice of vegetation removal. SUWA continues to oppose these machinery-heavy projects because of the long-lasting effects they have on biological soil crusts, wildlife, native plants, cultural resources, and other irreplaceable values on our public lands, including those proposed for wilderness designation under America's Red Rock Wilderness Act.

But these projects, which often include bulldozing and mulching native forests and shrublands, can also have a significant negative effect on the global fight against climate change.

We've included a special report in this issue of *Redrock Wilderness* that sets out the case. *Moving Backward on Climate and 30x30* presents scientific connections between chaining, mastication, and other surface-disturbing vegetation removal actions and the rampant desertification on the Colorado Plateau. Consequences of this activity include aerial dust, increased premature snowmelt in the Rockies, and water loss in the Colorado River basin.

The report also explains the surprising importance of dryland ecosystems—i.e., piñon pine and juniper forests

and sagebrush shrublands with biological soil crusts—in sequestering large amounts of carbon, a critical element of the fight against worsening climate change. This report will be the basis for discussions with agency staff, congressional leaders, and media in the coming months.

Encouraged by the Biden administration's commitment to fighting climate change, SUWA also recently coordinated a letter to the Department of the Interior regarding climate and vegetation removal on public lands. The letter, signed by nearly 40 regional and national conservation organizations and former agency staffers, requested that Interior halt several last-minute Trump-era decisions that would accelerate devegetation projects without public or scientific review and asked for a desperately-needed review of the BLM's vegetation removal program—in particular, its effects on climate, native ecosystem health, and drought.

Our message to the land managers is simple: stop using heavy machinery to rip, chain, and crush native vegetation, especially on wilderness-quality lands. It is an easy and scientifically verified way to ease at least some of the deadly impacts of climate change, and we are hopeful that the new administration will listen.

—Kya Marienfeld

TEN YEARS ON, STATE AND COUNTIES STILL LACK EVIDENCE IN RIGHT-OF-WAY CASES

As SUWA members are well aware, the state of Utah and many of its counties continue their quixotic quest to wrest control of public lands from federal land managers through use of an arcane statute known as Revised Statute (RS) 2477. This obscure provision was passed in 1866 as part of the Mining Act and granted "highway" rights-of-way across public lands. Although the statute was repealed by Congress in 1976, Utah's politicians seized on it in the 1990s and early 2000s as a means of preventing wilderness designation and asserting local control over federal public lands. In 2012, the Utah Attorney General filed lawsuits in federal district court claiming roughly 14,000 RS 2477 rights-of-way across 22 counties.

AN EXPENSIVE BUST

The law requires the state and counties to prove by "clear and convincing" evidence that each claim was in use as a public highway for a continuous 10-year period before October 21, 1976. So, for nearly a decade now, the state and counties have sought out witnesses willing to provide deposition testimony regarding when, where, how often, and for what purpose they traveled the public lands more than 30, 40, or 50 years ago.

Despite the expenditure of millions of taxpayer dollars, the state and its counties have failed to uncover even the most basic evidence to support most of their claims. Thousands of claims do not have a single witness who can testify to traveling it prior to the cutoff date. Despite its low success rate, the state is resuming its effort to find new witnesses.

The lack of evidence clearly illustrates the disingenuous nature of the state's "sue first, ask questions later" approach. The bottom line is that thousands of the claims were not and are not "highways" vital to public transportation needs, but rather they are cow paths, abandoned mining trails, or occasionally traveled paths that became obsolete over the decades.

Until Utah's politicians stop tilting at windmills, SUWA will hold them to their burden of proof in court.

—Michelle White



STATE AND WASHINGTON COUNTY WITHDRAW CLAIM TO MANGANESE ROAD

Over the years, Utah and its counties have sought to gain title to their RS 2477 claims through a likely unlawful mechanism known as a "recordable disclaimer of interest" (RDI), rather than having to prove their claims in court.

The state and Washington County renewed this effort in 2019, submitting an application for title to the Manganese Road, which is located in a corner of southwest Utah. SUWA obtained documents through a successful Freedom of Information Act lawsuit that show the BLM actively collaborated with the state and county to develop the application requirements and select the road, which they hoped would serve as a "test balloon" for a large-scale RDI process in the future.

SUWA submitted extensive comments to the BLM at the end of 2019, arguing that both the process the BLM was using and the "evidence" the state and county offered in support of their claim were highly problematic. We're happy to report that shortly after President Biden took office the state and county withdrew their application, putting the process to rest for the time being.

BLM RESURRECTS DINOSAUR AREA DRILLING PROPOSAL

Last fall, SUWA successfully challenged a decision by the Trump administration's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to approve oil and gas drilling on the doorstep of Dinosaur National Monument in Utah's northeast corner. Our victory granted a reprieve to one of Utah's wildest and most scenic landscapes. Unfortunately, the reprieve was short-lived.

Now, the Biden administration, rather than distance itself from the last administration's unlawful decision, is poised to okay the same drilling proposal. That will open this wild and highly scenic area to industrialization, with construction of new access roads, well pads, and the drilling of two

wells—all about a quarter of a mile from the monument's boundary.

The BLM's Green River District is not merely on the verge of approving the project, it is bending over backwards to make it happen. The drilling and related development will take place on public lands that are currently subject to a “no surface occupancy” stipulation, which prohibits all surface disturbing activities. However, at the project proponent's request, the BLM is proposing to waive that important stipulation and allow development of the area rather than require the company to operate in a less sensitive place.

SUWA, along with thousands of members of the public, recently commented on the BLM's draft environmental assessment for the project and demanded that the agency deny the waiver. In fact, the proposal is so egregious that even Utah's Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office,

which rarely, if ever, opposes oil and gas development, requested that the BLM deny the waiver in order to protect “the unique visual resources in Dinosaur National Monument.”

Dinosaur National Monument is world-renowned for its remarkable density and diversity of prehistoric sites and artifacts and paleontological resources. In addition, according to the National Park Service, the monument “is one of the darkest places remaining in the United States. Because there is little light pollution here, you can see the stars of the Milky Way galaxy with startling clarity.”

SUWA will fight this proposal at every step of the process to ensure that the monument and surrounding wilderness-caliber lands remain unspoiled.

—Landon Newell

SUWA, ALLIES RENEW PUSH TO KEEP E-BIKES OFF NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS

If a bike has what looks like a motor, works like a motor, and provides power like a motor, then it is motorized and doesn't belong on non-motorized trails. Electric bicycles (e-bikes), which have an electric motor, fall squarely within the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) definition of “off-road vehicle,” which is “any motorized vehicle capable of, or designed for, travel on or immediately over land, water, or other natural terrain.”

Nonetheless, in 2020, over the objections of SUWA and dozens of conservation and recreation organizations, the Trump administration finalized the “e-bike exemption,” a rule that exempts e-bikes from the definition of off-road vehicle and allows the BLM to authorize the use of e-bikes on non-motorized trails. The result has been increased user conflicts and safety concerns; harmful impacts to soils, vegetation, wildlife, and cultural resources; and an untenable management situation that threatens the future of all non-motorized areas.

Now, with new BLM leadership that values conservation, sound science, and public participation—three things definitely missing from the e-bike exemption rulemaking—SUWA has determined that it's time to reverse the e-bike exemption and return the

BLM to its long-standing travel management laws and policies established specifically to protect natural and cultural resources, promote public safety, and minimize user conflicts.

In June, SUWA and 24 of our conservation allies sent a letter to the BLM asking the agency to (1) immediately pause the authorization of e-bike use on non-motorized trails on all BLM-managed public lands, and (2) initiate rulemaking to reverse the agency's e-bike exemption.

We recognize that e-bikes are a growing part of the recreational mix on public lands and that additional management guidance is prudent. Opportunities for such use can be readily provided by designating appropriate motorized trails and limiting their use to e-bikes.

In the meantime, we look forward to working with the Biden administration on reversing the e-bike exemption.

—Judi Brawer



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PROGRESS ON THE GROUND: A STEWARDSHIP REPORT FROM THE SAN RAFAEL SWELL

This spring SUWA's stewardship team began working with the Bureau of Land Management's Price field office—the office responsible for ensuring the integrity of designated wilderness in the region. Among those protected places are Muddy Creek, Labyrinth Canyon, Mexican Mountain, and many more of the San Rafael Swell's spectacular landscapes. We focused our work this spring along the eastern and western boundaries of the Mexican Mountain Wilderness, as well as in locations along the eastern flank of the Sid's Mountain Wilderness. Volunteers made two trips to the Swell and devoted over 200 hours of work to the projects. With that remarkable effort, we've completed the first stage of work aimed at reducing ORV intrusions into these designated wilderness areas.

Throughout the summer we will assess work needs in the San Rafael Reef Wilderness. We plan to tackle multiple fall projects beginning with a run of three weekends surrounding National Public Lands Day (September 25). Those dates are September 11-12, September 25-26, and October 2-3. Looking further ahead, we have plans to take our volunteers into the Labyrinth Canyon Wilderness in spring of 2022 and Muddy Creek Wilderness that fall.

While we are pleased to report that 95 percent of the work we've completed to date in the Swell survived the onslaught of this year's Memorial Day weekend visitors, we recognize that these projects are only the first steps in a years-long commitment to SUWA's broader effort to ensure lasting and effective management of wilderness in the Swell. As recreation and travel plans for our public lands are developed, and as industrialized recreation itself poses new challenges for wild places, our stewardship work will require continuous review, redesign, and reinforcement.

We intend to be in this for the long haul and we hope that you and others will join us in the work of caring for these national treasures.

If you are interested in being part of this essential and highly rewarding volunteer work, you can find all the information you need at suwa.org/stewardship.

—Jeremy Lynch

UTAH MONUMENTS: COULD RESTORATION BE IMMINENT?

We think all signs continue to point toward President Joe Biden soon restoring Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and restoring or expanding Bears Ears National Monument.

In early June, the Interior Department delivered Secretary Deb Haaland's report and recommendations on this subject to the White House. And while both Interior and the White House have kept Secretary Haaland's report under tight wraps, media accounts from the *Washington Post* and others indicate that full restoration (if not expansion) is the recommended course of action.

That puts the ball squarely in the President's court to use his authority under the Antiquities Act and re-establish these two monuments. Doing so is the right thing to preserve the cultural sites, geologic and biologic wonders, and other significant monument "objects" that abound in these places. This important step will also further the president's goal of protecting 30 percent of the nation's lands and waters by 2030 to mitigate the worst effects of the climate crisis.

This protection can't come a moment too soon. As things currently stand, the landscapes illegally excluded from these two monuments are managed as garden variety public lands and without an overarching protective mandate that will come in President Biden's new proclamations. Even the shrunken, fragmented Trump-era replacements for Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears are managed to a lower standard than before.

In short, rather than treating these landscapes and their irreplaceable features as the crown jewels of our public lands, Trump's legacy—as in so many things—was to sow confusion and leave degradation in his wake. We're counting on President Biden and his administration to right this ship and look forward to celebrating with all of you when he does.

Stay tuned and follow us on social media for breaking news on this topic.

THANKS AND HAPPY TRAILS, JOE BUSHYHEAD

We said goodbye this summer to SUWA staff attorney Joe Bushyhead who has moved on to other adventures. Joe started at SUWA in 2013 and immediately seized the reins of our RS 2477 docket, just as the State of Utah was scaling up its assault on public lands by claiming countless cow paths and stream bottoms as “highways” in almost every county across the state.

Over the next five years, Joe logged thousands of miles traveling across the state to “defend” depositions of aged witnesses by the state and counties. From Eskdale (Millard County) to



Callao (Juab County) to Enterprise (Iron County), Joe was the face of SUWA.

Joe took a brief hiatus from SUWA in 2019-2020 and clerked for a federal district court judge. He came back for another 18 month stint just when we needed him the most, as the Trump administration’s attack on Utah’s red-rock country reached its peak.

We already miss Joe’s love of fast food, his tinkering on a small fleet of vintage mountain bikes, and his ability to drive hundreds of miles over the course of a single weekend to paddle, bike, or ski and still be at work first thing Monday morning. Most of all, we miss our good friend and fierce advocate for Utah wilderness.

Take care, Joe. Best wishes and happy adventuring!

ATTORNEY JUDI BRAWER JOINS MOAB STAFF

We are delighted to welcome Judi Brawer to the SUWA team as our new wildlands attorney. She will work from our Moab office.



Judi is no stranger to public lands advocacy, bringing with her a wealth of experience drawn from nearly 25 years of working for both conservation organizations and as a sole practitioner. She is a tireless advocate who has worked on issues spanning all federal land management agencies—from grazing to off-road vehicles to the protection of endangered species.

Judi has lifelong connections to southern Utah and a fierce love of the redrock, so she is thrilled to be back living and working in the place that first jumpstarted her interest in wilderness and conservation nearly three decades ago.

She and her pup, Callie, recently relocated to Moab from Boise, Idaho. We’re excited to have her on board.

LATINOS IN ACTION BRING WILD UTAH TO LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS

In the same way that each grain of sand matters for the integrity of a great redrock wall, each person matters for the strength of America’s movement to protect wild Utah. This spring, Latinos in Action at Kearns High School and Stansbury High School helped spark passion and inspire change, moving us closer to the goal protecting Utah’s public lands in their natural state.

Coaches and teachers at the schools shared several days of class time to allow their majority Latinx students to see SUWA’s award-winning film, *Wild Utah: America’s Red Rock Wilderness*, use art to discuss climate change, and recognize the strength they have as rising leaders in the Latino community to protect our futures through *querencia* (care) for America’s wild places. We were privileged to acquaint 242 Latinx youths with their *herencia* (inheritance and heritage) of public land and to promote leadership and service for land stewardship. Thank you, Latinos in Action!

DIGITAL ORGANIZERS RATCHET UP SUPPORT FOR THE REDROCK

SUWA launched our first digital organizing internship program in January. The program exceeded our highest hopes as the interns used Zoom to bring the wilderness message to activists around the country. Below are the interns and a brief look at what they achieved.

Maria Cantwell, a recent Utah State University graduate, organized to show Utah Representative Blake Moore that his constituents love wild Utah. She turned out fellow students and desert aficionados to virtual town halls to query the congressman about his environmental positions. She also held online workshops to organize personal letters from constituents expressing their love of the canyon country.

Alexis Smith, a psychology student at Utah State University, organized to demonstrate to Interior Secretary Deb Haaland the Diné people's deep concern for the redrock. She gave an online presentation to students at White Horse High School in Montezuma Creek, UT; wrote an opinion letter printed in the *Navajo Times* recognizing the significance of Secretary Haaland's confirmation; and spoke to a group of students and leaders in Bluff, UT, as the secretary visited Bears Ears National Monument.

Outside of Utah, four interns spent many hours organizing congressional meetings and putting together presentations of SUWA's film, *Wild Utah: America's Red Rock Wilderness*.

Saskia Braden (Maryland), a student in environmental studies and global affairs at Yale University, recruited new activists from across Maryland to attend film presentations. Even after her internship, Saskia continued to work on additional meetings with our Maryland teams.

Tenaya Bearmar (Southern California), a sustainability major at San Diego State University, used her relationships with the Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve to draw people into the Redrock Nation. Her coalition building experience was especially valuable in an area where SUWA has long sought to establish an activist network.

Elise Pickar (Michigan), an environmental science major at Northern Michigan University (NMU), used her connections to on-campus organizations to present SUWA's film. Her professors at NMU have also been working with SUWA and we look forward to continuing to work with Elise and the teams she has built.

Graham Rex (Texas), an environmental law student at the University of Texas-Austin, assembled a prolific meeting schedule with members of Congress. Legislative offices SUWA had not yet had a chance to visit are now potential supporters of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act.

This wonderful group laid solid groundwork for the next batch of interns that will start in late August. Our thanks to all!

THANKS TO OUR BRISTLECONE FIRESIDES INTERN, EVAN JONES

Evan Jones was the social media intern for our Bristlecone Firesides blog this spring (see bristleconefiresides.com). He is a senior at Utah Valley University majoring in Religious Studies and Psychology and minoring in Philosophy.

Originally from Northern Virginia, Evan has come to love the physical landscape of Utah and realizes the importance of preserving it. He enjoys bringing friends to new and unusual natural spaces while teaching them the importance of cryptobiotic soil.

Evan hopes to make several more trips to Escalante, his favorite protected landscape, before likely leaving the state for graduate studies in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.

Thanks for your help, Evan. We wish you the best of luck!



THANK YOU, SUWA BUSINESS MEMBERS!

SUWA's Business Membership Program is a great way for your small business or company to support the protection of Utah's redrock country. For an annual donation of \$150 or more, we'll print your company's name in our newsletter once a year and on our website at suwa.org/businessmembers. At higher levels of support we offer additional benefits, such as a featured spot in our monthly e-newsletter. For more information, please contact us at membership@suwa.org or (801) 486-3161. Listed below are businesses from Utah and across the country that currently support Utah wilderness through SUWA's Business Membership Program.

KAYENTA MEMBERS

(\$1,000+)

Caffe Ibis Coffee Roasting Co, UT
Chris Brown Photography, CO
Holiday River Expeditions, UT

JSA Sustainable Wealth Management, NY
KÜHL Clothing, UT
Mosaic Real Estate LLC, CO

Powderhound Marketing, CO
Stone Forest Inc, NM
Tailwind Nutrition, CO

WINGATE MEMBERS

(\$500-\$999)

Action Photo Tours, UT
Glenn Randall Writing and
Photography, CO
Ifrah Financial Services, AR
Imlay Canyon Gear, UT

Injoy Productions, CO
KroescheSchindler LLP, CA
Leslie Peterson, ND, Naturopathic
Physician, UT
On the Trail Financial Planning LLC, CA

SLC Qi Community Acupuncture, UT
State 45, IN
Tourmaline Capital Management LLC, CA
Yoga Del Mar, CA

MOENKOPI MEMBERS

(\$150-\$499)

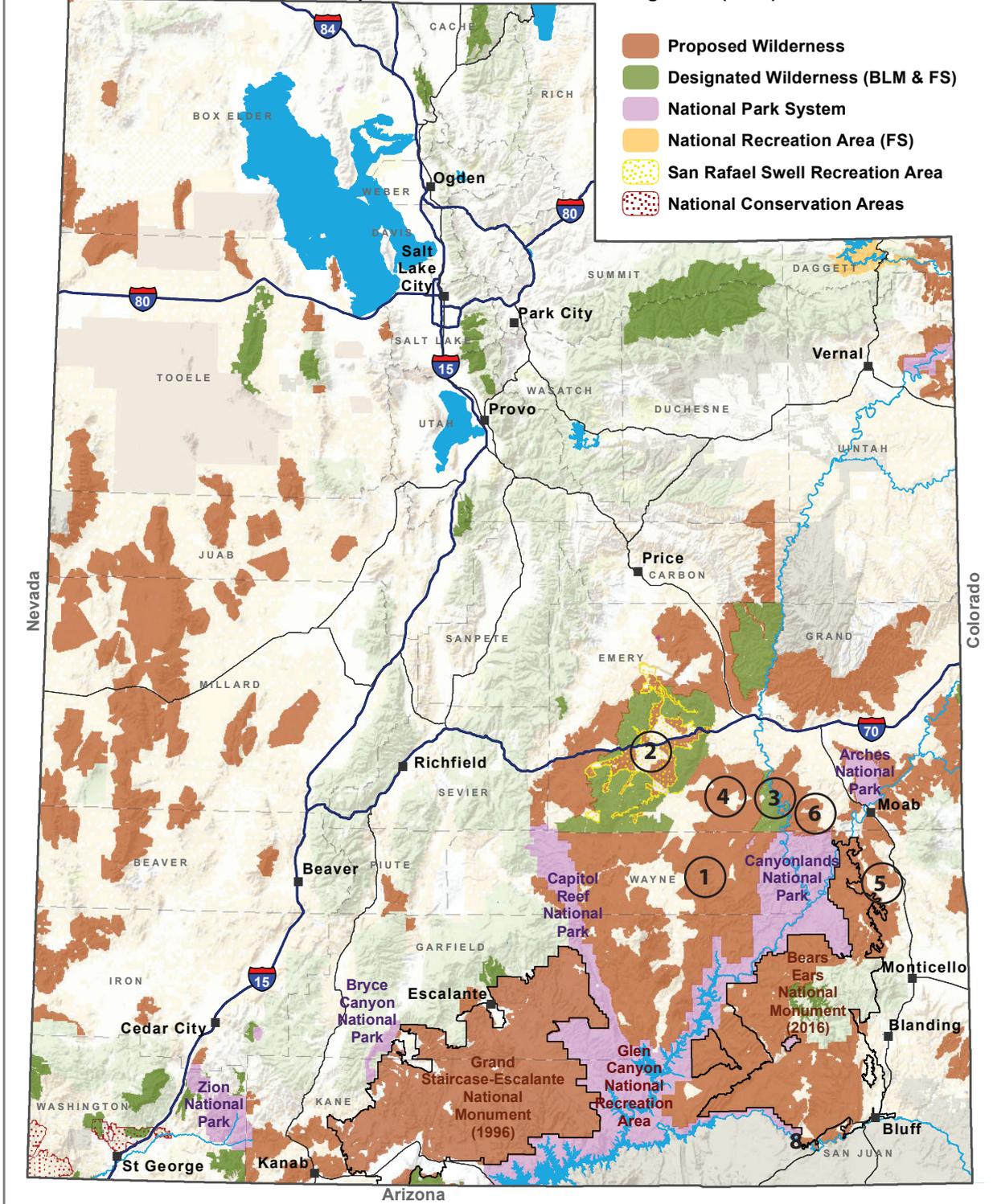
57hours, NY
Alta Lodge, UT
The Bicycle Therapist, MD
Bret Webster Images, UT
Brown Bag Farms, CA
Camel's Garden Hotel, CO
Carol Montgomery Drake CPA PLLC, NY
Clayhaus Photography, UT
Consulting Psychologists, AZ
David Hamilton, NV
Dudley's Bookshop Café, OR

Escape Goats, UT
Githens Properties LLC, CO
Gospel Flat Farm, CA
James Kay Photography, UT
LAG Visual Arts, CO
Malach Consulting LLC, UT
Matheson Design, OR
Maui Mountain Coffee Farm, HI
McGrath + McKenna Design Group, CO
Mountain West Hard Cider, UT
Ody Brook Enterprises, MI
Pinnacle Peak Eye Care, AZ
Ruprestrian CyberServices, AZ

Wagenschmitt VW Service, WA
Waterwise Design & Landscapes LLC, UT
Westside Flats, UT
The Wildland Trekking Co, AZ
William Stone Photography, RI
Words and Photographs by Stephen
Trimble, UT
Workspace Installations LLC, CT
XMission, UT
Yourstory, IN
ZAK Construction, OR

America's Red Rock Wilderness Act

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



1 Dirty Devil (p. 6)

4 San Rafael Desert (p. 8)

2 San Rafael Swell (p. 6)

5 Canyon Rims Area (p. 8)

3 Labyrinth Canyon (p. 6)

6 Labyrinth Rims/Gemini Bridges (p. 10)



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2021 STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS IN THE SAN RAFAEL SWELL. © SUWA

LONG-TERM PROTECTIONS FOR THE REDROCK REQUIRE LONG-TERM INVESTMENTS

If you'd like a convenient, hassle-free way to help SUWA over the long term, please consider our monthly giving program. Monthly giving of any amount is easy and secure; includes all the benefits of membership; and provides SUWA with reliable, year-round funding for our legal, legislative, and organizing work. It also helps sustain our popular Stewardship Program, which puts volunteers on the ground to help protect and rehabilitate wild places at risk. For more details on joining SUWA's monthly giving program, please visit our website at suwa.org/monthly.