



REDROCK

W I L D E R N E S S

The Newsletter of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Volume 20, Number 2 • Summer 2003

The Bush Administration's
War on Wilderness

Cover Photo: Mount Ellen in the Henry Mountains provides a dramatic backdrop for the vivid colors and intricate erosional patterns of the Blue Hills. Both areas are proposed for wilderness designation under America's Redrock Wilderness Act. **Photo by Chris Schiller** (redbudimages@earthlink.net).



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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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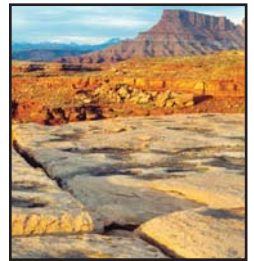
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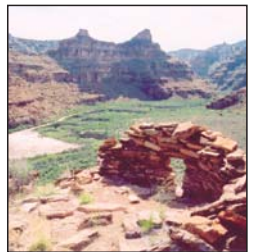
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This issue of *Redrock Wilderness* was written by the following staff and outside contributors: Steve Bloch, Bob Brister, Michael Engelhard, Margi Hoffmann, Gail Hoskisson, Diane Kelly, Heidi McIntosh, Herb McHarg, Lindsey Oswald, Dave Pacheco, Bill Raleigh, Sean Saville, Liz Thomas, Tim Wagner, Tom Wheatley, and Larry Young. It was laid out and edited by Diane Kelly and proofread by Lindsey Oswald.

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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 with SASE to Editor, SUWA, 1471 South 1100 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84105.

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**Moving? Please send your change of address to:
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wilderness notes

Dark Days for Wilderness

Our feature article begins with the startling contention that the Bush administration, in cahoots with Utah Governor Mike Leavitt, has declared war on western public lands, with America’s redrock wilderness at ground zero. It is a bold assertion, but sadly, the facts support the charge. In two separate agreements, signed secretly in April, the Bush and Leavitt administrations aim to undercut wilderness protection throughout the West by facilitating the approval of thousands of bogus RS 2477 claims across public lands and by rescinding the BLM’s authority to identify and protect millions of acres of wilderness-quality lands under its jurisdiction.

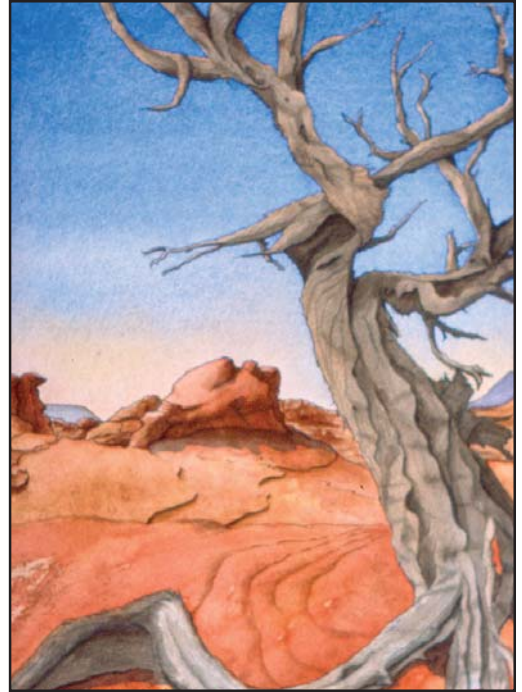
Communicating the gravity of the Bush-Leavitt attack is challenging because their efforts to undercut wilderness have taken place behind closed doors. But the threat is very real, and if you care about the future of wilderness in Utah or anywhere else in America, then it is worth your time to read our lead story which details these two unprecedented agreements and exactly what they mean for the future of the American West.

The good news is that SUWA has joined with other conservation groups to mount a counter-attack on all fronts, including media outreach, legal action, and grassroots pressure to encourage congressional dissent. SUWA will stay the course on this one, allocating whatever resources we have to fight the battle. Our capacity to do so is largely due to our members—people like you who continue to provide the financial resources, grassroots energy, and overall passion that fuels SUWA’s efforts.

We have no choice but to fight these attacks tooth and nail. Utah’s redrock wilderness demands no less than complete commitment to its protection, especially now that the Bush administration and Governor Leavitt have shown that they would rather pander to their rightwing ideological base than protect some of America’s most spectacular natural resources. Now more than ever we need your help to ensure that the future of America’s redrock wilderness is one worthy of passing on to our children.

With your help we can keep it wild!

—Larry Young



“Gnarled Juniper,” pen & ink / watercolor by Pat Priebe.

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The Economic Value of Utah Wilderness

Where the Jobs Are

Due in large part to its scenic beauty and excellent recreational opportunities, Utah has become a world-class tourist destination and a magnet for new businesses ranging from mom-and-pop restaurants to high tech corporations. Though the state's economy has suffered recent setbacks due to a national economic downturn, Utah typically outperforms the nation in job growth and is expected to reclaim that distinction over the next couple of years.

According to the Utah Department of Workforce Services, jobs are projected to grow at an average rate of 2.3 percent annually between 2000 and 2005 (a full percentage point above the national average). All new jobs and 80 percent of total employment during this five-year period will be in the sectors of transportation, communication and utilities; trade, finance, insurance and real estate; services; and government. The services industry alone, which accounts for nearly 30 percent of all employment in Utah, is expected to contribute 48 percent of all new jobs in the state. Contrary to popular belief, much of the employment in services is in higher paying professional and technical occupations, including healthcare, engineering, architecture, accounting, business services (advertising, data processing, etc.), and public and private education.

Sign of the Times

As Utah's economic base has expanded and diversified in recent years, extractive industries (e.g. mining, oil and gas development, and timber production) have played an increasingly smaller role in the state's economic health. In rural Utah, where local economies were once subject entirely to fluctuations in national and global energy markets because of a dependence on mineral production, recent growth is attributed largely to an increase in tourism. According to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, tourists pumped \$4.15 billion into the economy and generated \$332 million in taxes in 2002 (note: this is not just skiing; visitors to Utah's national parks double the number of visitors to Utah's ski resorts.). By con-

trast, mineral production contributed only \$1.8 billion to the state economy, a decline from 2001. In light of these economic trends, Utah's future prosperity will depend not on exploitation of the state's natural resources, but rather on the continued diversification of its economy and the long-term preservation of its outstanding public lands.

The Economics of Land Protection: An Investment in the Future

Protected landscapes have economic impacts far beyond their borders because they provide the high quality environmental backdrop that makes an area an attractive place to live, work, and do business. Research from Idaho State University and the University of Montana has shown that the "amenity value" of pristine places acts as a draw for both visitation and population growth. This is why wilderness counties tend to show such dramatic economic vitality. For example, the cluster of counties located in south-central and southwestern Utah (including Beaver, Garfield, Iron, Kane, and Washington counties) consistently ranks number one in Utah in terms of employment growth rate. According to the Utah Department of Workforce Services, "Nearly 50 percent of these new jobs will be concentrated in the trade [wholesale and retail] and services industries, reflecting the tourism, travel, and recreation economic base of the district."

Economic data aside, Americans have long valued their wilderness heritage as a precious asset in and of itself—a source of national pride in a world where few unspoiled places remain. In the words of late author and Utah resident Wallace Stegner: "We need wilderness preserved; as much of it as is still left and as many kinds, because it was the challenge against which our character as a people was formed. The reminder and reassurance that it is still there is good for our spiritual health, even if we never once in ten years set foot in it. It is good for us when we are young because of the incomparable sanity it can bring briefly, as vacation and rest into our insane lives. It is important to us when we are old simply because it is there; important, that is, simply as idea."

features

The War on Wilderness Administration Launches Two-Pronged Assault on Public Lands

You've read the headlines and, sadly, they're true: the Bush administration has declared an all-out war on western public lands, with America's redrock wilderness at ground zero. In cahoots with Utah Governor Mike Leavitt and allies in the oil and gas industry, the administration launched a two-pronged assault on Utah wilderness in early April, blindsiding the American public with a pair of disastrous closed-door agreements aimed at preventing future wilderness designations and giving away our public lands.

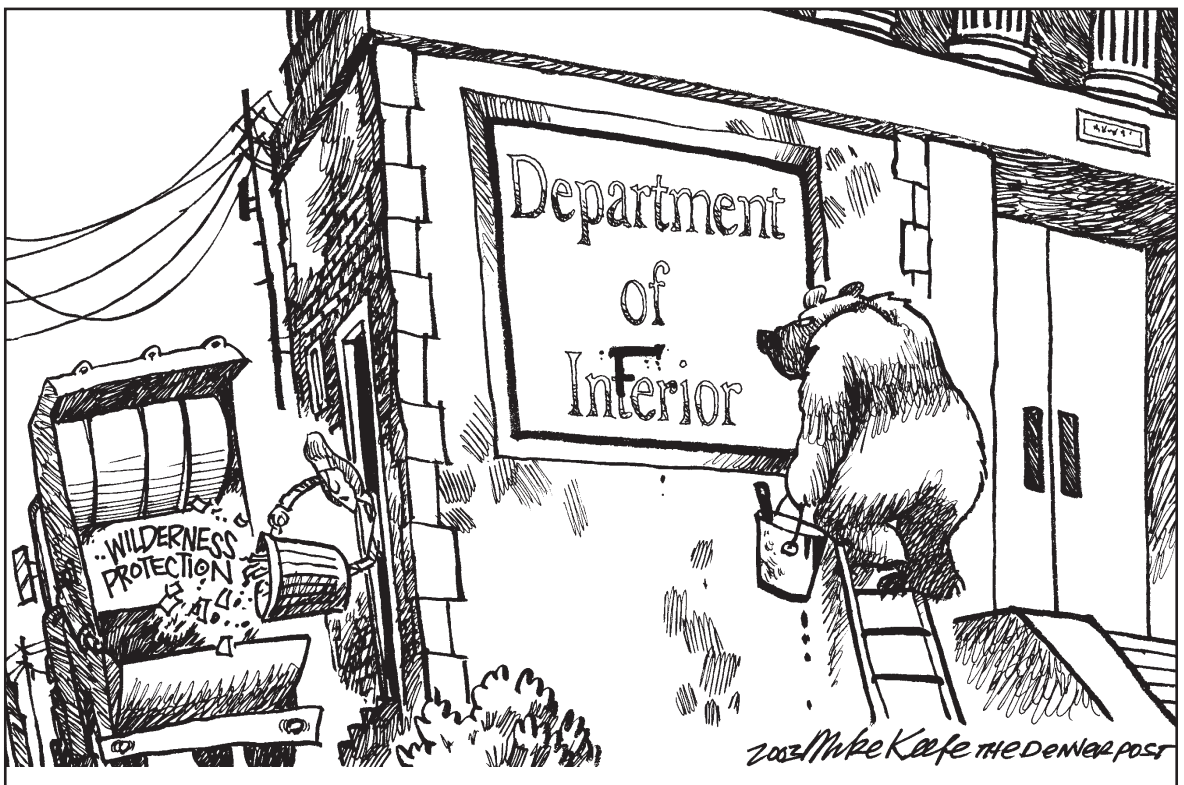
The first agreement, signed on April 9th, aims to disqualify vast wild landscapes from protection as federal wilderness. If implemented, it will grease the skids for state governments, individual counties, and others to obtain thousands of bogus RS 2477 rights-of-way across national parks, monuments, wildlife refuges, proposed wilderness areas, and even private property. The second agreement, quiet-

ly signed two days later on a Friday evening as Congress was about to adjourn for two weeks, rescinds the Interior Department's longstanding authority to review and protect BLM wilderness lands overlooked in earlier agency inventories. Both agreements could have a devastating impact on the future of the American West.

AGREEMENT #1: THE RS 2477 GIVEAWAY

Background

Revised Statute (RS) 2477, an archaic provision of the 1866 Mining Act, was intended to facilitate settlement of the West by granting rights-of-way across public lands for Civil War era homesteaders. The law states simply, "The right-of-way for the construction of highways over public lands, not reserved for public uses, is hereby granted." Although RS 2477 was repealed in 1976 by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act



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(FLPMA), valid existing claims were honored under a grandfather clause. Throughout the West, this short, seemingly simple statute has taken center stage in the debate over the future of our national parks, wilderness areas, and the incomparable lands proposed for wilderness protection in America's Redrock Wilderness Act (for more background, see spring 2003 issue, pp. 8-13).

Let's start with what this issue is not about: roads. Instead, the real debate is about whether dry creek beds, off-road vehicle tracks, hiking trails, and cow paths are really "highways" under federal law. The state and some counties say that as many as 15,000 of these tracks are RS 2477 highways, and they have spent \$8 million of Utah taxpayer money trying to prove it. Why? In the hope that these "highways" will disqualify vast, spectacularly scenic territory from congressional protection as wilderness. It's all about who will control the fate of America's public lands and whether these magnificent landscapes will—or will not—be protected in their natural state for generations to come.

The Backroom Deal

After more than two years of secret, closed-door negotiations, Interior Secretary Gale Norton and Utah Governor Mike Leavitt signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishing a process by which the Interior Department will grant RS 2477 claims across public lands. There will be no meaningful opportunity for public comment, environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act, or conformance with other environmental laws which require the Interior Department to balance use and preservation. Specifically, the MOU is harmful because:

1. It will loosen standards that could permit states to allege that cow paths and foot trails are "constructed highways" and thus subject to giveaway;
2. It will permit the State of Utah to turn jeep tracks into paved highways after simply notifying the BLM and getting the agency's approval, without public involvement;
3. It does not require any assessment of the environmental impacts of the wholesale giveaway of claimed routes;
4. It will use the Bush administration's new, controversial, and illegal "disclaimer of interest" regulation to facilitate the public land giveaway;



Ray Bloxham

This overgrown two-track in the Bitter Creek proposed wilderness unit is typical of the thousands of RS 2477 claims asserted throughout Utah.

5. It provides no real protection for national parks, wildlife refuges, or wilderness areas, since the state of Utah, counties, and ORV groups are free to pursue these claims in federal court;

6. It invites other states and counties to apply for similar deals (already, deals in Colorado and Alaska are in the works).

Conservation groups are not the only ones outraged by the MOU and determined to challenge it. Eighty-seven members of the House of Representatives, led by Rep. Mark Udall (D-CO) and Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), signed a letter urging Secretary Norton to suspend all processing of RS 2477 claims, stating:

...we are very concerned that the new regulations could open the door to undermining protection for some National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, and other sensitive parts of the Federal lands, including designated wilderness areas and areas being managed to protect wilderness values pending their designation.

Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) also sent a letter to Secretary Norton questioning the legality of the agreement and asking for the suspension of all RS 2477 claims pending further investigation. (For more on the national response, see page 10.)

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AGREEMENT #2: WILDERNESS—NOW YOU SEE IT, NOW YOU DON'T

The second backroom deal between Interior Secretary Gale Norton and Governor Mike Leavitt came to pass on April 11, 2003, when Secretary Norton renounced her department's well-established authority to conduct wilderness reviews of public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and rescinded the BLM's authority to use any inventories conducted after 1991 as the basis for new Wilderness Study Area designations (a decision that tosses out 2.6 million acres of agency inventoried wilderness lands in Utah alone and another 3 million or so acres of wilderness-quality lands in America's Redrock Wilderness Act).

Norton whitewashed the new policy as a settlement of a 1996 lawsuit which challenged then-Secretary Babbitt's inventory of BLM wilderness lands in Utah—lands that had been overlooked in a flawed review conducted more than 15 years earlier. What it all boils down to is this: there is now only one resource which the Interior Department can no longer evaluate in its management of the public's BLM lands—regardless of public opinion—and that's wilderness.

The conservation community, including SUWA, has responded on multiple fronts by chal-

lenging the settlement in court, by applying political pressure on federal and state legislators, and by inundating the White House and national media with voices of outrage over this absolute abuse of discretion. Below we provide some background on how the settlement unfolded and explain how SUWA and other conservation groups have responded thus far.

Events Leading Up to the Settlement

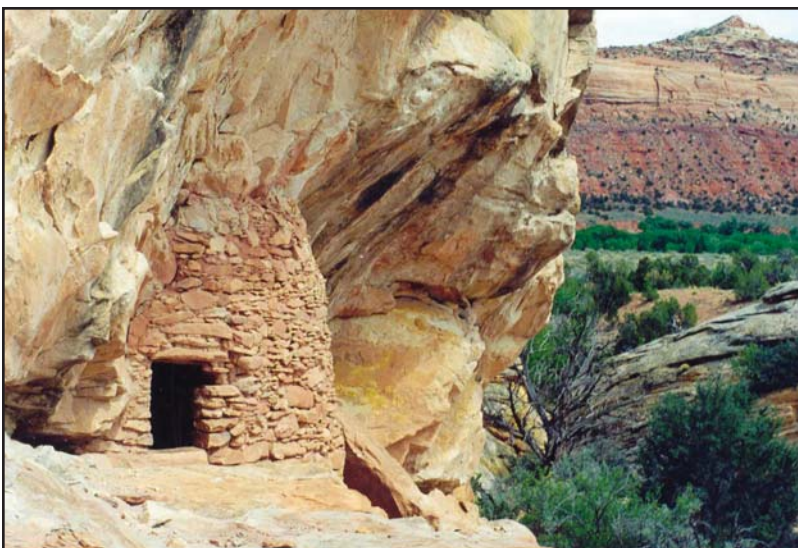
In 1996, the State of Utah, the Utah Association of Counties, and the Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (collectively "the State") filed a lawsuit challenging then-Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt's authority to reinventory roughly 2.6 million acres of BLM lands in Utah for their wilderness character. Ironically, Secretary Babbitt's decision to conduct this review came in response to a challenge from then-Rep. James Hansen (R-UT), who dismissed the notion that there were additional wilderness lands in Utah above and beyond the existing 3.2 million acres of BLM Wilderness Study Areas.

The State also challenged the BLM's decision to protect some of these lands from interim degradation, calling it "de facto" wilderness management. The case was assigned to Utah Federal District Court Judge Dee Benson, who granted the State's motion to immediately halt the BLM's inventory—without even allowing the government to brief one of the key legal issues on which the court ruled.

In 1998, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed Judge Benson's ruling and threw out all but one of the State's claims, reasoning that because inventories alone did not alter on-the-ground management, the State suffered no harm and therefore lacked standing to sue. With only the claim of "de facto" wilderness management remaining, the case was sent back to Judge Benson, where it languished until recently.

The Settlement

On March 28, 2003, after nearly four years of inactivity, the State filed what is called in legal terms an "amended complaint" which set forth new causes of action, including a challenge to Secretary Babbitt's revised "Wilderness Inventory and Study Procedures Handbook." Among other things, the Handbook has allowed SUWA and other conservation groups across the West to provide the BLM with "new or supplemental information" demon-



Ray Bloxham

The 600-foot-high Comb Ridge monocline (right) in Utah's archaeologically rich southeastern corner was deemed eligible for wilderness by the BLM in its 1999 inventory. Under the recent Leavitt/Norton wilderness settlement, it can no longer be considered for wilderness designation.

f e a t u r e s

strating that specific public lands possess wilderness character. The BLM is then required to evaluate those areas for wilderness potential as part of its resource management planning process (see article on page 21). Alarmed by the State's attack on the Handbook, SUWA, The Wilderness Society, and four other regional conservation groups quickly filed a motion to intervene in the suit on April 9th. Little did we know that this was just the tip of the iceberg.

On Friday, April 11th, just hours after Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) reintroduced America's Redrock Wilderness Act in the U.S. House of Representatives, the State and Secretary Norton filed a proposed settlement to end the 7-year lawsuit. This settlement is remarkable for a number of reasons, but chiefly because Secretary Norton rewrote federal law, ignored fifteen years of agency practice, and pronounced illegal her Department's well-established authority to conduct ongoing wilderness reviews. At the same time, she revoked the BLM's authority to use its own inventories as the basis for new Wilderness Study Area designations and mandated that the 2.6 million acres of wilderness-quality lands identified in the Babbitt inventory (completed in 1999) cannot be managed as wilderness.

As word spread throughout the country of this backroom deal, things went from bad to worse. Judge Benson, after having this landmark settlement on his desk for less than six business hours, approved it on Monday, April 14th, with a terse one-page order. The judge had not even ruled one way or the other on SUWA's motion to intervene. Already in the mail on April 14th was an additional motion to intervene filed by the Natural Resources Defense Council and five other western conservation groups. Just before this issue went to press, Judge Benson granted both motions to intervene.

Why Is this Settlement So Bad? Let's Count the Ways . . .

1. It attempts to roll back the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) which specifically requires the BLM to "prepare and maintain on a continuing basis an inventory of all public lands and their resource and other values [which shall be] kept current so as to reflect changes in conditions and to identify new and emerging resources and other values" (Section 201). FLPMA also requires the BLM to base its planning documents on those inventories (Section



Ray Bloxham

Another casualty of the Interior Department's wilderness settlement, this Indian Creek wilderness inventory unit is contiguous with an existing WSA and the Needles district of Canyonlands National Park.

202) and to "preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition" (Section 102).

2. It rescinds the 1999 Babbitt wilderness inventory which confirmed that the BLM had overlooked at least 2.6 million acres of wilderness lands in its original inventory of the 1980s. As a result, all of these lands, which the BLM itself determined eligible for wilderness protection, will be open to oil drilling, roads, off-road vehicle use, and other developments. The same applies to about 3 million acres of land in America's Redrock Wilderness Act which the Babbitt Interior Department never got around to inventorying.

3. It revokes the BLM's Wilderness Inventory and Study Procedures Handbook and related BLM instruction memos which simply require the agency to determine whether lands affected by various proposed activities or resource plans possess wilderness character. If the BLM determines that the lands are wilderness-eligible, it must decide whether to protect them as Wilderness Study Areas in a public planning process. Under the recent settlement, the BLM may not recognize or protect wilderness-quality lands, even in cases where they were admittedly overlooked by earlier BLM inventories.

4. It specifically instructs the BLM to amend its scoping notices for five field offices in Utah which are undergoing resource management plan revisions, and which originally notified the public

features

that wilderness protection would be considered. The BLM has re-issued these notices and expressly states that new plans will not address wilderness.

5. The agreement, with its broad and long-lasting public impact, was reached in a closed-door “settlement” by political figures with a long history of anti-wilderness, pro-development bias. Public citizens never had a chance to weigh in or influence a decision which will affect the wilderness lands they collectively own—lands their children and grandchildren will one day inherit.

6. Finally, while this settlement has no impact legislatively on America’s Redrock Wilderness Act, the on-the-ground impacts will likely be significant. Six million acres—a full two thirds of the wilderness-quality lands painstakingly inventoried and documented by Utah citizens—will be opened to any and all activities *except* the preservation of wilderness.

SUWA has joined together with other conservation groups to fight the Leavitt/Norton wilderness settlement from multiple angles—including grassroots pressure that has fueled dissent in Congress and media outreach that has already resulted in a deluge of anti-settlement editorials (more on these below). On the legal front, SUWA attorneys are working together with attorneys from Earthjustice, Natural Resources Defense Council, and The Wilderness Society to challenge the settlement’s legality. Not only do we believe that the settlement itself is illegal, but we hope to demonstrate that Judge Benson abused his discretion by approving the settlement in such a cursory fashion. Regardless of the outcome of our challenge before Judge Benson, there is no question that this matter will be resolved by a higher court.

A NATIONWIDE BACKLASH: OUTRAGE MOUNTS OVER INTERIOR’S SECRET DEALS

Governor Leavitt and Secretary Norton didn’t have to wait long for feedback on their two secret deals, and it wasn’t pretty. Both the national press and Congress responded in loud opposition to the agreements. They were joined by Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson, members of the Salt Lake County Council, leading members of the outdoor recreation industry, California Resources Agency Chief Mary Nichols, and New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson.

In the press, editorial writers from the *New York Times*, *Atlanta Constitution Journal*, *St. Louis*

Dispatch, *Arizona Daily Star* and others bemoaned the “end of wilderness” represented by these clandestine deals. The editorial board of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, under the headline “Assaulting Wilderness,” wrote: **“Utahns . . . should not celebrate the double-barreled attack on wilderness undertaken by their governor and the U.S.**

Secretary of the Interior. Most Utahns recognize that the jewels of the magnificent federal lands in this state . . . should be protected.” Similarly, the *New York Times* criticized the deals in an editorial headlined, “The End of Wilderness,” noting with “dismay” the secret wilderness settlement and the Secretary’s misguided decision not to protect wilderness lands in Utah and throughout the West.

The ink continued to flow as *USA Today*, the *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, Associated Press, MSNBC, *Denver Post*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Chicago Tribune*, National Public Radio and others all ran the same story. NBC Nightly News covered the debate in May, with a story to follow in June on PBS’s NewsHour with Jim Lehrer.

Dissent rang through the halls of Congress

as a bipartisan corps of 100 Congress members, led by Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), and Mark Udall (D-CO), all signed a letter to Secretary Norton objecting to these deals as an attack on wilderness and the public process. In reference to the two Leavitt/Norton agreements and policy changes regarding wilderness reviews in Alaska, the letter reads:

With these three decisions you seem to be trying to limit Congress’ future opportunities to exercise its exclusive authority to designate qualifying public lands as wilderness. You have effectively taken away an important management tool for the BLM to protect some of the finest remaining wild lands in America from environmental harm. And you have limited the public’s ability to be fully informed and to participate in a meaningful way in the planning process for our public lands.

State Governments across the West were quick to criticize the RS 2477 right-of-way agreement. Citing the need to protect its scenic landscapes and wildlife habitat and to uphold local and regional planning efforts, the California Resources Agency sent a letter to Secretary Norton in April asking that she leave California out of the Interior Department’s

National Report

The New York Times

FRIDAY, MAY 23, 2003

U.S.-Utah Land Accord Incites Unlikely Critics

Possible Harm to Pristine Country Is Cited

By MICHAEL JANOFSKY

SALT LAKE CITY, May 22 — Two recent agreements between Utah and the federal government, making the state the latest template for the Bush administration's public lands policy, drew a rapid and predictable response from environmental groups around the country.

They zeroed in on Gov. Michael O. Leavitt, a third-term Republican. They accused him of opening more pristine backcountry to off-road vehicles, economic development and natural resource exploration and of positioning himself for a cabinet-level

One agreement, which ended a bitter dispute over who has jurisdiction over historic rural roads, created a process to identify whether the state or federal government actually owns those roads. In effect, the agreement preserves the state's control over roads that were used for more than a century through 1976, a period before proof of ownership was needed for road maintenance and improvement.

The second agreement ended a 1996 lawsuit brought by Utah against the Clinton administration after the president unilaterally identified an additional 2.6 million acres in Utah to

OUR VIEW

Assaulting Wilderness

Two-pronged assaults seem to be in fashion these days. First, the U.S. Army and Marines launched one against Baghdad. Then, Mike Leavitt and Gale Norton mounted another against wilderness in Utah.

But while Utahns rejoice in the success of their troops in Iraq, they should not celebrate the double-barreled attack on wilderness undertaken by their governor and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. Most Utahns recognize that the jewels of the magnificent federal lands in this state — the towering red rock fins and canyons, the alpine fastnesses and the stark Great Basin vistas — should be protected. Any maneuvers that undermine that protection should be viewed with alarm.

Leavitt and Norton have cut two deals simultaneously that attack wilderness designation. One would settle a lawsuit between the state and the Interior Department in a way that would erase millions of acres of wilderness study areas from the map. The second agreement is supposed to make it easier for the state and federal governments to resolve disputes over old rights of way for state and county roads on federal land, but it, too,

federal land. According to Leavitt and Norton, the agreement should clear away legal clouds that threaten state and federal land management.

But there's a catch. Any new agreement that makes it easier for the state and counties to assert local ownership of rights of way on thousands of dirt roads and trails on federal land also

will make it easier to block them. The reason

Leavitt and Norton have cut two deals simultaneously that attack wilderness designation. One would settle a lawsuit between the state and the Interior Department in a way that would erase millions of acres of wilderness study areas from the map. The second agreement is supposed to make it easier for the state and federal governments to resolve disputes over old rights of way for state and county roads on federal land, but it, too, would undermine

THE NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIALS/LETTERS ST

The End of Wilderness

From the beginning, President Bush has been far more interested in exploiting the public lands for commercial purposes than in protecting their environmental values. On matters ranging from snowmobiles in Yellowstone to roadless areas in the national forests, his administration has tried steadily to chip away at safeguards put in place by the Clinton administration — largely in an effort to help the oil, gas, timber and mining industries, and often in cavalier disregard for environmental reviews mandated by law. Now comes another devastating blow: The revelation that his Department of the Interior is no longer interested in recommending any of the millions of acres under its jurisdiction for permanent wilderness protection.

The new policy has still not caused much of a stir. Like most of the bad environmental news emanating from this administration, it emerged in the shadows late on a Friday evening. There was no formal announcement — just a few letters to interested senators from Gale Norton describing the settlement she had reached earlier that day with the state of Utah. But a close reading of the letter showed it to be a blockbuster — a fundamental reinterpretation of environmental law, and a reversal of four decades of federal wilderness policy. At issue in the settlement were 2.6 million acres of federal land in Utah that were inventoried by the Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and designated as de facto wilderness — that is, land deserving of protection from commercial activity until such time as Congress, which has sole power to designate permanent wilderness, can decide whether to add it to the nation's 107 million wilderness acres. Mr. Babbitt's actions infuriated Utah, which has commercial designs on the land. But the state

efforts to stop Mr. Babbitt in court failed. About six weeks ago, however, Utah quietly filed an amended complaint, to which the administration quickly acceded. Under the settlement, Ms. Norton not only agreed to withdraw the 2.6 million acres from wilderness consideration but renounced the department's authority to conduct wilderness reviews anywhere in the country. In one stroke, Ms. Norton yanked more than 250 million acres off the table. Not all of those acres, of course, are worthy of permanent wilderness protection. But under the new policy settlement, those that are will no longer be placed in the pipeline for Congressional consideration. Ms. Norton's associates pushed the

Outdoor retailers vent ire at Leavitt

Group's chief warns show may leave Utah over wilds deal

By Donna Kemp Spangler
Deseret News staff writer

Gov. Mike Leavitt may find himself between a rock and a hard place over last month's deal with the federal government to cut back on wilderness protection in Utah.

Peter Metcalf, co-founder of Black Diamond Equipment Ltd., spoke out against Leavitt's deal, threatening to move the Outdoor Retailer semi-annual trade shows to another state.

Now he may have the backing of the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA), the exclusive endorser behind

Our Salt Lake Tribune
OPINION

The LEADER OPINION

SATURDAY | MAY 10 | 2003 | PAGE 4A

NATIONAL VIEW | ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

President's administration is paving paradise

The Fisher Towers, made of red sandstone, soar 900 feet above the badlands of Utah. They look like castles on Mars.

In Oregon, Steens Mountain is a "sky island" rising a mile above the surrounding landscape. Hikers find lakes, hot springs, playas, salt-desert scrub and sand dunes there.

country is blessed with extraordinary natural beauty and blessed with the extraordinary wealth to protect and preserve it.

Our nation recognized this more than a century ago when we began protecting national parks and wildlife refuges. The Wilderness Act of 1964 led to the designation of 106 million wild acres

features

RS 2477 designs. Likewise, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson has written twice to Secretary Norton asking her to preserve the wilderness remaining in that state.

In Salt Lake City, Mayor Rocky Anderson urged Governor Leavitt to “carefully evaluate the economic consequences of our environmental policy decisions. We no longer live in the ‘old West;’ we must recognize the power and promise of the modern economy.” A recent winner of the Environmental Protection Agency’s Climate Protection Award, Mayor Anderson stressed the importance of “thinking green,” and protecting wilderness lands from development until Congress has the opportunity to vote on a Utah wilderness bill.

Salt Lake County Council member Joe Hatch told the *Salt Lake Tribune* on May 5th, “Maybe it’s time to say we’re not being protected by the state, because they’re [*sic*] being driven by the rural counties.”

Angered by the Leavitt/Norton wilderness settlement, Utah businessman Peter Metcalf of Black Diamond Equipment (a Utah-based climbing and skiing equipment manufacturer) has threatened to move the established Outdoor Retailer trade show out of Salt Lake City to another, more conservation-oriented western venue. Metcalf, who helped bring the lucrative \$24 million trade show to Utah

seven years ago, and other leaders of the outdoor industry, met with Governor Leavitt on June 4th to discuss concerns that Utah may be the wrong place to hold a trade show that is focused on wilderness and backcountry recreation—the two things now jeopardized by the Governor’s secret settlements. In an op-ed which appeared in the May 4th *Salt Lake Tribune*, Metcalf criticized both backdoor agreements, saying that Governor Leavitt “need[s] to recognize that reducing protections on wild lands in Utah and elsewhere jeopardizes the health of recreation destinations, the outdoor recreation industry and the economies that depend on them.”

The \$64,000 Question: Do Governor Leavitt and Secretary Norton even care? Does the White House give a whit that while support for wilderness grows throughout the country, the Interior Department is serving up our last remaining wilderness landscapes to the oil industry, off-road vehicle groups, and mining companies? One thing’s for sure: the American public does care, and with one loud, clear voice we must tell the administration that we refuse to be shut out of important decisions that whittle away our public lands inheritance and threaten to destroy some of America’s most spectacular wild landscapes.

For breaking news, links to media coverage, and text of the congressional letters to Secretary Norton, visit our website at www.suwa.org.

All Fired up?

Good! Now channel that energy into one or both of the following actions:

1. Walk over to the phone and call both of your senators and your representative. Dial **(202) 224-3121** for the Capitol Switchboard and ask to speak with the appropriate office. Once you have the office on the line, say “I am a constituent and I would like to express my concern about the Bush administration’s recent environmental rollbacks. We absolutely need to protect our remaining wild places from oil and gas drilling, irresponsible off-road vehicle use, and other harmful activities. In particular, I urge you to support protection of wilderness in Utah by cosponsoring America’s Redrock Wilderness Act today.” (See page 16 for a list of current cosponsors.)

2. Grab a sheet of paper and a pen, or turn on your computer, and write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Letters to the editor are the best way to shape public opinion and send a message to elected officials that their constituents care about protecting wild Utah. When your letter appears in the paper, write to your elected officials in support of protecting Utah wilderness and include a clipping of your published letter.

Thanks for taking action! For more information, visit our website at www.suwa.org.

features



Inside the Office

State of Utah Governor Mike Leavitt



NEWS RELEASE
April 9, 2003

Contacts: Natalie Gochnour (801) 538-1503
Bridget Fare (801) 538-1509

National Parks and Wilderness Areas Protected in County Road Agreement
Department of Interior and State Agree to Process for Public Involvement

Vowing to protect Utah's most important scenic, natural areas **while securing the state's transportation infrastructure**, Governor Mike Leavitt today joined Secretary of Interior Gale Norton to announce a process to resolve many of the R.S. 2477 road claims in Utah. These claims have been disputed for nearly 30 years, **costing the taxpayers millions of dollars** and creating uncertainty for local officials and federal land managers. The agreement, which was formalized in a memorandum of understanding signed today, includes no roads in national parks, wilderness areas, wilderness study areas or fish and wildlife refuges.

"This is a defining moment for rural Utah," said Leavitt, who has spent nearly 10 years working to solve this problem. "This settlement secures the state's transportation system, honors the property rights of local governments and preserves Utah's most important scenic landscapes."

At issue is the legal title to thousands of roads crossing federal land prior to 1976. These roads, commonly referred to by the federal law that granted the rights-of-way (R.S. 2477), were never fully documented. The result is endless confusion, litigation and divisiveness among those who use, maintain and plan for these lands. Millions of dollars in legal bills have already been paid, and millions more could be spent without a negotiated alternative.

The Memorandum of Understanding creates an administrative process and framework to openly identify roads to be disclaimed by the Bureau of Land Management. The individual counties of Utah, along with the state, will choose which roads to submit to the BLM. **The public will then have a right to review and comment on all applications for a federal disclaimer on the rights to the roads.** The process does not eliminate valid existing rights. Rather, it empowers resolution outside of court for roads that meet the agreed criteria.

The agreement consists of seven touchstones that serve as filter for consideration. To be considered under the process, roads must meet these criteria:

- Have existed prior to 1976.
- Be able to be traveled by cars and trucks.
- Not be in a national park.
- Not be in a wilderness area.
- Not be in a wilderness study area.
- Not be in a fish and wildlife refuge.
- Not be expanded (a concept described as "where is, as is").

"The MOU defines a path for resolving the vast majority of disputed claims," said Leavitt. "This is a common sense, common ground solution that will preserve our natural areas, but give counties the economic certainty they need."

**RS 2477:
The Truth behind the
Double-Speak**

Most of the disputed claims are nothing more than dirt trails, abandoned tracks left by prospectors, dry wash bottoms, and cow paths.

That's right—the state has spent \$8 million for fancy computer equipment to make its case. That doesn't even count money spent on lawyers, or on footing the bill for counties making bogus claims.

The public would most likely have just 60 days to comment on a package of perhaps thousands of claims. The counties have had years—and millions of dollars—to prepare their claims.

While the governor says national parks, wilderness areas, and national wildlife refuges will be protected from RS 2477 claims, these public treasures are still vulnerable to state, county, and private litigation. Moreover, his list blatantly ignores a central legal requirement of the original statute and subsequent case law: that a "highway" actually be "constructed."

DC news

Wilderness Politics: One Step Forward and Two Steps Back

While America's attention was focused on the war in Iraq, Interior Secretary Gale Norton was gunning down over three decades of public policy directing the BLM management of wilderness-quality public lands. Much like her mentor, former Interior Secretary James Watt, Norton is blazing away at sensible land management like a gunfighter in the spaghetti westerns of the 1970s. Unlike Watt, Norton favors secret, behind-closed-door negotiations and settlements to move her anti-wilderness agenda forward. Given this hostile environment within the Department of Interior, the news from Washington, DC is more bad than good. Let's start with the good...

America's Redrock Wilderness Act Introduced in the 108th Congress

In keeping with tradition, America's Redrock Wilderness Act was introduced in both Houses of the 108th Congress with record cosponsor support. Representative Maurice Hinchey introduced H.R. 1796 on April 11, 2003 with 145 members of the House of Representatives joining him as cosponsors. Senator Richard Durbin introduced S. 639 in the Senate on March 18, 2003 and was joined by 13 Senate cosponsors. SUWA extends a huge thank you to these congressional wilderness champions for their courage, vision and commitment.

This record level of support for America's Redrock Wilderness Act came despite a letter sent to members of Congress by Representative Chris Cannon of Utah's 3rd district. It appears that Mr. Cannon is taking up the anti-wilderness crusade spearheaded by his predecessor, Representative Jim Hansen (R-UT), who retired from Congress last year. In his letter, Rep. Cannon attempted to cast doubt on the latest citizens' wilderness inventory by saying it was "actually done by wilderness advocates, hardly a credible source."

We respectfully point out to Mr. Cannon that wilderness activists didn't just invent additional acres to include within America's Redrock Wilderness Act. The Utah Wilderness Coalition conducted extensive field research with hundreds of citizen volunteers during a data-intensive, two-year-long inventory process that encompassed the entire state. This inventory was conducted using standards even more conservative than those used

by the BLM itself; in fact, the agency corroborated the citizens' fieldwork in its own 1999 reinventory. Over 250 local and national environmental groups have endorsed the citizens' proposal by joining forces on the Utah Wilderness Coalition.

Please write your Representative and Senators today and ask them to cosponsor America's Redrock Wilderness Act (**see page 16 for a list of current cosponsors**). To find out who your elected officials are, go to www.congress.org and type in your zip code.

Help Us Build Congressional Support for America's Redrock Wilderness Act!

Write to:

The Honorable [Senator's name]
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable [Representative's name]
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Highway Robbery

On April 9, 2003 Utah Governor Mike Leavitt and Interior Secretary Gale Norton signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning RS 2477 claims in Utah (for full story, see page 6). While the Governor and Secretary claim this MOU will resolve RS 2477 conflicts by recognizing only maintained roads, there is nothing in the MOU that prevents the state, counties, or individuals from claiming all the wash bottoms and cattle trails

mapped during their extensive inventory of potential claims across the state—including bogus routes through national parks, national monuments, proposed wilderness areas, and even private lands.

Back in 1996, Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) inserted language in the FY 1997 Omnibus Appropriations bill placing a moratorium on any final regulation involving RS 2477 validity standards unless specifically authorized by an act of Congress. The recent Leavitt/Norton agreement occurred without congressional action or oversight, which leaves looming questions about its legality. The Government Accounting Office (GAO) rendered an opinion in 1997 that the Stevens moratorium was permanent law and thus would require Congress to act before standards could be set for granting RS 2477 claims. Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), ranking member of the Energy & Natural Resources Committee, has requested that Secretary Norton refrain from processing RS 2477 claims until the GAO evaluates the legality of the MOU.

Representative Mark Udall (D-CO) and eighty-seven members of the House of Representatives also sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary Norton questioning the legality of the agreement. In addition, Mr. Udall has introduced legislation H. R. 1639, which would establish uniform federal standards for review of RS 2477 claims. The full text of this legislation can be found at: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Banning Wilderness

Late in the afternoon on April 11, 2003, just hours after Representative Maurice Hinchey introduced America's Redrock Wilderness Act in the House of Representatives, Secretary Norton signed a settlement with the State of Utah renouncing her Department's well-established authority to conduct wilderness reviews of public lands managed by the BLM (for full story, see page 6). Norton also revoked the BLM's authority to use its own inventories as the basis for Wilderness Study Area designations, invalidating 2.6 million acres of wilderness-quality lands identified by the BLM in 1999 under the Babbitt Interior Department. Combine that with roughly 3 million acres of land in America's Redrock Wilderness Act that the BLM never had a chance to reinventory and the total acreage in Utah now removed from wilderness consideration comes to about 6 million.

Fortunately, some level-headed legislators are taking a stand against the Interior Department's latest attacks on wilderness. One hundred members of Congress, led by Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), and Mark Udall (D-CO) have signed a letter to Secretary Norton objecting to the Leavitt/Norton settlement as well as the RS 2477 MOU. In the meantime, SUWA attorneys are working together with attorneys from Earthjustice, Natural Resources Defense Council, and The Wilderness Society to challenge the settlement's legality.

ORV Case Could Reach Supreme Court

The Bush administration has signaled that it is preparing to ask the U.S. Supreme Court to throw out a lower court ruling which holds the BLM accountable for its failure to prevent off-road vehicle (ORV) impairment to Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). In May, the U.S. solicitor general filed a 10-page brief with the Supreme Court outlining why the 10th Circuit Court decision on *SUWA v. Gale Norton* should be overturned. At press time, the administration has not officially asked the court to review the case.

The original lawsuit, filed in October of 1999 by SUWA and a broad coalition of conservation organizations, charges the BLM with shirking its duty to manage ORV use and protect wilderness resources. According to law, WSAs must be managed such that their wilderness values are not impaired by human activities like mining, logging, road-building, ORV use, and other forms of development. Unfortunately, the BLM has done little to regulate use of ORVs on public lands, even within areas proposed for wilderness designation. Currently, only 6 percent of Utah's BLM lands are off limits to ORV use.

If the Supreme Court takes the case and ultimately decides in favor of the Bush administration, it would have a profound impact on public land management across the West. In the words of SUWA Conservation Director Heidi McIntosh: "The courts have been the last refuge for citizens seeking to enforce environmental laws, and now the Bush administration is attempting to take that away from the public, too." We'll keep you posted on any new developments.



America's Redrock Wilderness Act Cosponsors in the 108th Congress

(as of June 20, 2003)



H.R. 1796

Sponsored by

Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY26)

150 House Cosponsors

Arizona

Raul Grijalva, D-AZ07

California

Mike Thompson, D-CA01

Robert Matsui, D-CA05

Lynn Woolsey, D-CA06

George Miller, D-CA07

Barbara Lee, D-CA09

Ellen Tauscher, D-CA10

Tom Lantos, D-CA12

Pete Stark, D-CA13

Anna Eshoo, D-CA14

Michael Honda, D-CA15

Zoe Lofgren, D-CA16

Sam Farr, D-CA17

Lois Capps, D-CA23

Brad Sherman, D-CA27

Howard Berman, D-CA28

Adam Schiff, D-CA29

Henry Waxman, D-CA30

Xavier Becerra, D-CA31

Hilda Solis, D-CA32

Lucille Roybal-Allard, D-CA34

Maxine Waters, D-CA35

Jane Harman, D-CA36

Juanita Millender-McDonald, D-CA37

Grace Napolitano, D-CA38

Linda Sanchez, D-CA39

Bob Filner, D-CA51

Susan Davis, D-CA53

Colorado

Diana DeGette, D-CO01

Mark Udall, D-CO02

Connecticut

John Larson, D-CT01

Rovert Simmons, R-CT02

Rosa DeLauro, D-CT03

Christopher Shays, R-CT04

Nancy Johnson, R-CT05

District of Columbia

Eleanor Holmes Norton, D-DC

Florida

Corrine Brown, D-FL03

Rovert Wexler, D-FL19

Peter Deutsch, D-FL20

Alcee Hastings, D-FL23

Georgia

John Lewis, D-GA05

Iowa

James Leach, R-IA02

Illinois

Bobby Rush, D-IL01

Jessee Jackson Jr, D-IL02

William Lipinski, D-IL03

Luis Gutierrez, D-IL04

Janice Schakowsky, D-IL09

Mark Kirk, R-IL10

Jerry Costello, D-IL12

Tim Johnson, R-IL15

Lane Evans, D-IL17

Indiana

Julia Carson, D-IN07

Baron Hill, D-IN09

Kansas

Dennis Moore, D-KS03

Louisiana

William Jefferson, D-LA02

Massachusetts

John Olver, D-MA01

Richard Neal, D-MA02

James McGovern, D-MA03

Barney Frank, D-MA04

Marty Meehan, D-MA05

John Tierney, D-MA06

Edward Markey, D-MA07

Michael Capuano, D-MA08

Stephen Lynch, D-MA09

William Delahunt, D-MA10

Maryland

Benjamin Cardin, D-MD03

Albert (Russell) Wynn, D-MD04

Elijah Cummings, D-MD07

Chris Van Hollen, D-MD08

Maine

Thoman Allen, D-ME01

Michael Michaud, D-ME02

Michigan

Dale Kildee, D-MI05

Sander Levin, D-MI12

John Conyers, D-MI14

Minnesota

Betty McCollum, D-MN04

Martin Olav Sabo, D-MN05

Collin Peterson, D-MN07

Missouri

William "Lacy" Clay, D-MO01

Karen McCarthy, D-MO05

Mississippi

Bennie Thompson, D-MS02

North Carolina

Frank Balance, D-NC01

David Price, D-NC04

Brad Miller, D-NC13

New Jersey

Frank LoBiondo, R-NJ02

Christopher Smith, R-NJ04

Franke Pallone, D-NJ06

Bill Pascrell, D-NJ08

Steven Rothman, D-NJ09

Donald Payne, D-NJ10

Rush Holt, D-NJ12

Robert Menendez, D-NJ13

New Mexico

Tom Udall, D-NM03

Nevada

Shelley Berkley, D-NV01

New York

Tim Bishop, D-NY01

Steve Israel, D-NY02

Carolyn McCarthy, D-NY04

Gary Ackerman, D-NY05

Gregory Meeks, D-NY06

Joseph Crowley, D-NY07

Jerrold Nadler, D-NY08

Anthony Weiner, D-NY09

Edolphus Towns, D-NY10

Major Owens, D-NY11

Nydia Velazquez, D-NY12

Carolyn Maloney, D-NY14

Charles Rangel, D-NY15

Jose Serrano, D-NY16

Eliot Engel, D-NY17

Nita Lowey, D-NY18

Michael McNulty, D-NY21

Louise McIntosh Slaughter, D-NY28

Ohio

Ted Strickland, D-OH06

Dennis Kucinich, D-OH10

Stephanie Tubbs Jones, D-OH11

Sherrod Brown, D-OH13

Tim Ryan, D-OH17

Oregon

Earl Blumenauer, D-OR03

Pete DeFazio, D-OR04

Darlene Hooley, D-OR05

Pennsylvania

Robert Brady, D-PA01

Chaka Fattah, D-PA02

Joseph Hoeffel, D-PA13

Tim Holden, D-PA17

Rhode Island

Patrick Kennedy, D-RI01

James Langevin, D-RI02

South Carolina

John Spratt, D-SC05

Tennessee

Jim Cooper, D-TN05

Bart Gordon, D-TN06

Harold Ford Jr., D-TN09

Texas

Max Sandlin, D-TX01

Nicholas Lampson, D-TX09

Lloyd Doggett, D-TX10

Silvestre Reyes, D-TX16

Sheila Jackson-Lee, D-TX18

Charles Gonzalez, D-TX20

Martin Frost, D-TX24

Chris Bell, D-TX25

Eddie Bernice Johnson, D-TX30

Virginia

James Moran, D-VA08

Rick Boucher, D-VA09

Virgin Islands

Donna Christensen, D-VI

Vermont

Bernart Sanders, I-VTAL

Washington

Jay Inslee, D-WA01

Rick Larsen, D-WA02

Brian Baird, D-WA03

Norm Dicks, D-WA06

Jim McDermott, D-WA07

Adam Smith, D-WA09

Wisconsin

Tammy Baldwin, D-WI02

Jerry Kleczka, D-WI04

S. 639

Sponsored by

Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL)

14 Senate Cosponsors

Barbara Boxer, D-CA

Tom Harkin, D-IA

Evan Bayh, D-IN

Edward Kennedy, D-MA

John Kerry, D-MA

Debbie Stabenow, D-MI

John Corzine, D-NJ

Hillary Clinton, D-NY

Charles Schumer, D-NY

Ron Wyden, D-OR

Jack Reed, D-RI

Patrick Leahy, D-VT

Maria Cantwell, D-WA

Russ Feingold, D-WI

Don't see your representative or senators on this list? Please write a letter urging their support (see page 14).

canyon country updates

Good
News!

Federal Court Upholds Emergency ORV Closures

On May 21st, in a rare ruling from the bench, a Federal District Court judge in Salt Lake City denied an off-road vehicle (ORV) group's challenge to common sense travel restrictions imposed by the BLM in order to protect Utah's public lands from spiraling ORV damage. The judge held that the federal government has the power to restrict ORV use in order to prevent such harm and subsequently denied all of the group's claims.

The litigation involved some of the most scenic wildlands around Moab, as well as public lands adjacent to Canyonlands National Park. In its lawsuit, the ORV group went so far as to challenge a request by the BLM that motorized users recreating near the world-renowned Factory Butte **voluntarily** remain on existing roads and trails to minimize damage. The group essentially argued to the court that its members were entitled to ride anywhere, anytime, and that the BLM lacked the authority to prevent the damage this cross-country riding was inflicting on the plants, wildlife, and soils of these fragile desert ecosystems.

The judge's decision, coupled with a similar ruling from the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals in 2002 upholding route closures in Utah's Dixie National Forest, sends a strong message that federal land managers should not be afraid to take steps to protect public lands from off-road vehicle abuse. ORV riders should know that there will be consequences for their irresponsible behavior, including the loss of their privilege to recreate on public lands.

SUWA was joined by The Wilderness Society, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, and Wildlands CPR in supporting the BLM's travel restrictions. The coalition of conservation groups was represented by SUWA's Steve Bloch along with Keith Bauerle and Jim Angell of Earthjustice.

Good
News!

Nine Mile Canyon Gets Brief Reprieve

Breaking News: On the afternoon of June 13th, the BLM withdrew its recently released Environmental Assessment (EA) of a natural gas well development project in Nine Mile Canyon (northeast of Price, Utah) after receiving highly critical comments from SUWA, the Hopi and Navajo tribes, the Nine Mile Canyon Coalition, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and other concerned members of the public. Following additional study and consultation with Native American tribes, the agency plans to issue a revised EA with a new comment period.

In the original document, released in May of 2003, the BLM declared its intention to permit a seven-well natural gas exploration and development project encompassing parts of Nine Mile Canyon and its tributaries. The agency preliminarily determined that the drilling project would have no significant impact on the environment, despite the fact that several of the proposed wells border outstanding Native American petroglyph panels and well-preserved granaries. The project area also overlaps critical habitat for elk, mule deer, and bighorn sheep, and borders designated critical habitat for the federally threatened Mexican spotted owl. Access to the proposed well sites would require the construction of approximately 2,600

State & BLM Drop Appeal of SUWA Court Win

After initially filing a Notice of Appeal over SUWA's victory in the Yellow Cat seismic project (see Spring 2003 issue, p. 16), both the BLM and the State of Utah notified the DC Circuit Court of Appeals that they were dropping their protest. We are currently negotiating our attorney's fees and costs with the Department of Justice.

canyon country updates



Ray Bloxham

Despite its breathtaking scenery and world-renowned archaeological resources, Nine Mile Canyon has been repeatedly targeted for oil and gas development.

feet of new road and would leave a footprint of nearly 14 acres for both road and well site construction.

Fremont and Ute Indian tribes occupied Nine Mile Canyon for centuries and the area is known worldwide as a “40-mile Prehistoric Art Museum.” In the early twentieth century, the Nine Mile Canyon road was built by the Buffalo Soldiers to open the Uinta Basin to pioneer settlement. This road was not built to support the enormous trucks and delivery vehicles that, under the project proposal, would make 2,000 round trips during a 100-day drilling period.

Locating seven new wells and the kind of above-described activity within a proposed National Register Archaeological District and in or near designated critical habitat is simply unacceptable. SUWA has requested that the BLM deny the project application for the long-term protection of cultural and biological resources, including endangered species. We thank those of you who responded to our email alert and submitted personal comments by the June 13th deadline. Stay tuned for further updates on this issue.

In Related News...

Responding to a SUWA protest, the Utah BLM state office withdrew ten proposed oil and gas lease parcels from its May 2003 lease sale. The ten parcels were located in a stretch of Nine Mile Canyon nominated by SUWA as an Area of Critical

Environmental Concern (ACEC)—a special protective status for areas with important scenic, cultural, or biological values. We expect that the BLM will not re-offer these leases until it reviews our ACEC nomination over the coming months. We know, however, that the BLM is under tremendous political pressure to lease exactly these types of sensitive public lands and that the agency will likely be asked to re-offer these leases at a future sale.

San Juan ATV Safari Moves Forward

On June 9, the BLM released its Environmental Assessment (EA) for a proposed three-day, 350-ATV event on BLM and Forest Service lands throughout San Juan County, Utah. As if certain of the outcome, proponents of the San Juan ATV Safari began advertising registration on their website on May 1st, complete with descriptions of all the proposed routes. It seems their premonition has come true: the recently released EA denies the possibility of any significant environmental impacts and lacks consideration of an alternative that would disallow routes through inventoried wilderness and other sensitive lands.

The complete disregard of wilderness-quality lands in this EA is just a taste of what's in store following the backroom wilderness inventory settlement signed by Governor Leavitt and the Interior Department on April 11th (see feature story on page 6). Lands formerly protected but now at risk include Jacob's Chair (the ATV route would bisect an area that the BLM found to have wilderness character in 1999) and Bridger Jack (ATVs would loop through this BLM inventoried unit on a route illegally bulldozed by San Juan County).

Other proposed routes fall within the Cedar Mesa Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), a Scenic Highway Corridor ACEC, proposed wilderness, and other lands rich in archaeological sites and wildlife habitat. The routes proposed in Arch Canyon (in the Cedar Mesa ACEC) and Indian Creek (near Canyonlands National Park) lie in ecologically fragile streambeds with lush vegetation. BLM approval of these routes would violate the agency's own policy of protecting rare riparian areas. ATV riders would crash through Arch Canyon Creek over 100 times during the proposed ride—a total of 1,700 stream crossings per group.

canyon country updates

Sections of proposed routes that conflict with roadless National Forest lands include the "White Rim" section of the North Long Point route, and portions of the Shay Ridge route.

Proponents of the event hope that it will follow the pattern of the Moab Jeep Safari, which has expanded into an often uncontrollable event. In 1979, the Moab Jeep Safari consisted of ten trails with 400 vehicles participating in a one day event. Now, the Jeep Safari extends over nine days on thirty trails with over 1,700 registered participants, and an additional 4,000 ORV riders who take to the trails without a permit. Aside from the extraordinary degradation to public lands, many violations, injuries, and at least one death have resulted from the Moab event. To make matters worse, the BLM typically rubber-stamps subsequent permit requests for other motorized tours and events on routes included in the Jeep Safari. The agency admits that routes approved for the proposed San Juan ATV Safari could also be used by future tour operators (see following story).

Simply put, ORV events like the proposed San Juan ATV Safari have proven to be unmanageable, damaging to public lands, and dangerous to participants and other public land users. Prior to even considering such a large-scale, problem-laden event like this one, the BLM should prepare a complete Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) based on the following:

- All "routes" should be analyzed for conflict with other resources and resource users. This includes special attention to wilderness, primitive recreation, wildlife, soils, vegetation, water/riparian areas, and cultural sites. Any routes found to be in conflict with such resource values should not be permitted.
- The EIS should analyze the direct, indirect, cumulative, and reasonably foreseeable impacts of the proposal. No permit should be considered until a full-scale travel plan is completed as part of the EIS prepared in conjunction with the San Juan Area Resource Management Plan amendments (see article on page 21).
- All proposed "routes" and potentially affected areas should be field-inventoried for archaeological, paleontological, vegetative, and wildlife resources, including endangered species.
- Wilderness character of all potentially affected lands should be inventoried and evaluated.

- Any permit issued following completion of a full EIS should include a monitoring plan and stipulations designed to prevent undue damage to resources. Such monitoring should occur and stipulations should be enforced. A bond sufficient to cover any damage to public land resources should be required, and a reclamation plan should be submitted and analyzed.

Please submit a letter of concern to the Monticello BLM office urging the agency to address these problems. The complete EA can be found at www.blm.gov/utah/monticello/prog.htm.

Send your letter to:

Patrick Madigan
Monticello Field Office Manager
Bureau of Land Management, P.O. Box 7
Monticello, Utah 84535
Fax (435) 587-1518

BLM Approves ATV Tours in Arch Canyon

The fact that the National Park Service recommended designating Arch Canyon as a national monument in 1937 and the BLM proposed designating it as an "Outstanding Natural Area" in the 1970s attests to the canyon's incredible uniqueness. Unfortunately, management at the Monticello BLM office has consistently ignored these unique qualities.

In 1989, controversy over motorized use in Arch Canyon flared up when the Monticello office gave the green light for a "Jeep Jamboree" event to be held in the canyon with absolutely no public notice. At least back then, the BLM took the trouble to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA), although it was completed only hours before the permit was issued. SUWA successfully appealed the permit, but the BLM skirted the issue by granting San Juan County an RS 2477 right-of-way up the canyon and then declaring that it was unable to stop the Jamboree. SUWA's appeal of that decision is still pending and the right-of-way is on hold. That fact has not stopped motorized abuse in the canyon; in fact, the Jeep Jamboree continues to be held on an annual basis and other ORV users are allowed to churn through the creek year-round.

canyon country updates



James W. Kay

Arch Canyon was once recommended for national monument designation; now it's in danger of becoming an ORV highway.

Meanwhile, SUWA has applied consistent pressure to halt the resulting damage to this spectacular area.

Arch Canyon supports a variety of wildlife including mule deer, bighorn sheep, bobcat, mountain lion, coyote, ringtail, and many bird species (potentially including the federally listed Mexican spotted owl, the southwestern willow flycatcher, and the American peregrine falcon). More than fifty cultural sites exist throughout the canyon, including cliff dwellings, granaries, kivas, and multi-storied habitations. These ancient remains are hidden within a multitude of arches, fins, spires, and alcoves in a 1,000 foot gorge. The striated red and white limestone cliff faces along with the Abajo Mountains and the Comb Wash uplift provide a bold backdrop to the perennial flows of Arch Canyon Creek, a potential Wild and Scenic River. The canyon and surrounding lands fall within the Cedar Mesa “Area of Critical Environmental Concern”—a special management status that requires the protection of scenic, cultural, and biological resources.

Despite the pending appeal and surrounding controversy, the BLM has utterly failed to learn from its past mistakes. In April of this year, the agency issued a permit to “Golden Circle Adventures” for ATV tours in Arch Canyon—again with absolutely no public notice and this time without any environmental review! This is a real threat since Golden Circle Adventures plans to expand its future permit request to all the “routes” included in the San Juan ATV Safari (see previous article).

Please write a letter of protest to the Monticello BLM office. Share your concern for Arch Canyon and ask the field manager to: (1) Rescind the Golden Circle Adventure permit for Arch Canyon; (2) Grant no other permit for motorized use in Arch Canyon (including the San Juan ATV Safari); and (3) Issue an emergency closure of Arch Canyon to all vehicle use pending closure in the Resource Management Plan amendments.

Send your letter to:

Patrick Madigan
Monticello Field Office Manager
Bureau of Land Management, P.O. Box 7
Monticello, Utah 84535
Fax (435) 587-1518

SUWA Files Petition to Protect Endangered Wildflower

On May 19th, SUWA, the Utah Native Plant Society, and the Center for Native Ecosystems petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to list the Mussentuchit Gilia (*Gilia tenuis*), a strikingly beautiful wildflower found only in Utah, as a threatened or endangered species, affording it special protection under the Endangered Species Act. The agency has 90 days to respond to our petition.

The Mussentuchit Gilia is a member of the phlox family and produces between 2-5 striking pale blue tube-shaped flowers. Pronounced “musn’t-touch-it” and named after the Mussentuchit desert north of Capitol Reef National Park, the flower is known to exist today in only 17 locations (less than 2,500 plants) along the western slope of the San Rafael Swell. The primary, imme-

canyon country updates

diate threat to the future survival of the wildflower is the dramatic increase in oil and gas exploration and drilling which destroys plants and degrades their habitat. The plant is also threatened by off-road vehicle damage and overgrazing.

SUWA worked closely with conservation biologist Allison Jones at the Wild Utah Protect in preparing the listing petition. A complete copy of the petition can be found on our webpage at www.suwa.org.

Wilderness Settlement Redirects BLM Planning Process

In our last issue we told you about the BLM's resource management planning process which allows the agency to update all of its original Utah land use plans, some of them nearly 20 years old (see Spring 2003 issue, p. 18). Currently, the Price, Vernal, and Richfield BLM offices are working on separate Resource Management Plans (RMPs), and the BLM just announced the start of its planning process and official scoping period for the Moab and Monticello field offices. SUWA is closely monitoring the direction of these RMPs to determine how we can best influence the final outcome.

In the meantime, the recent backroom settlement signed by Interior Secretary Gale Norton and Utah Governor Mike Leavitt could have a huge impact on both the short and long term protection of Utah's wild lands (see feature article on page 6). In fact, the wilderness inventory settlement is already changing the direction of the RMPs in the state in terms of how wilderness-quality lands will be considered in the planning process and how they will be managed for the 10 or 15-year duration of the new plans.

When the BLM released its 1999 Utah Wilderness Inventory under the direction of former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, the agency identified an additional 2.6 million acres of wilderness-quality lands beyond the 3.2 million acres already designated as Wilderness Study Areas. These additional acres were designated by the BLM as Wilderness Inventory Areas (WIAs), a status which provided interim protection until the agency could

complete a statewide inventory under the RMP process.

The BLM has the discretion, once a wilderness inventory is completed, to propose qualifying parcels as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) within the draft RMP. Only in the final stage of the planning process, after all public comments have been considered, can the BLM officially designate WSAs. Once a WSA is established, it is managed under that status until Congress either designates it as federal wilderness or releases it from wilderness study. *The BLM has never had the authority to designate official wilderness areas, as some opponents have suggested.*

In early 2001, when Utah's state BLM office announced that it was embarking on a new planning process for its field offices, the BLM's 2.6 million acres of WIAs plus an additional 3.3 million acres of wilderness-quality land recommended by SUWA were on the table for possible inclusion in the draft RMPs. Under the Wilderness Inventory and Study Procedures Handbook, the agency was required to consider them all. But with one quick fell of the pen by Secretary Norton and Governor Leavitt on April 11, 2003, all of these lands—nearly 6 million acres of potential wilderness—were suddenly barred from wilderness consideration in the land use planning process and are now open to potentially destructive activities such as uncontrolled off-road vehicle use and oil and gas development.

SUWA staff is continually monitoring the progress and direction of the ongoing RMPs and will let you know when and how you can make your voice heard on this issue (watch SUWA's website, email listserve, and future newsletters regarding these documents). In the meantime, please write a letter to the BLM voicing your opposition to the Leavitt/Norton settlement and its impact on the RMP process. Ask the BLM to give all identified wilderness-quality lands full consideration as WSAs in the RMP planning process, regardless of the ongoing political shenanigans in Washington, DC.

Address your letter to:

Sally Wisely, Utah State Director
Bureau of Land Management
324 South State St. #301, P.O. Box 45155
Salt Lake City, Utah 84145-0155
Fax: (801) 539-4013

grassroots network

When the Going Gets Tough . . .

. . .The grassroots staff gets going! And with national environmental policy rapidly turning from bad to worse, we certainly have our work cut out for us. Below is a sample of what SUWA's crack outreach team has been up to in recent months.

Outreach is Our Best Defense

The central rallying point in our fight against the recent onslaught of wilderness rollbacks in Washington, DC is none other than the citizens' proposal for Utah wilderness known far and wide as America's Redrock Wilderness Act. As most of you know, this legislation aims to designate over 9 million acres of painstakingly inventoried, stunningly beautiful wilderness in Utah and provides us with a proactive tool to counter the current administration's anti-wilderness agenda.

Fortunately for us, SUWA's DC Outreach Coordinator Sean Saville spends most of his time informing and expanding our activist network around the country and building support for

America's Redrock Wilderness Act in the U.S. Congress. In pursuit of these goals, he sends out regular email alerts to a readership of about 10,000 wilderness activists nationwide and educates members of Congress and their staff on current threats to America's redrock wilderness.

Sean also gets out into the field to organize constituent support for Utah wilderness in targeted congressional districts. Our main educational tool is the ever-popular *Wild Utah* slideshow, which includes spectacular slides of Utah's canyon country and inspirational readings by the late Pulitzer Prize winning author Wallace Stegner. Throughout the summer, Sean will take the *Wild Utah* slideshow to the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S., where he'll continue to build a national constituency in support of Utah wilderness. You can get in touch with him at sean@suwa.org or (202) 546-2215.

Earth Week: Wild Utah Style

You might not guess it, but the Tampa Bay area of Florida is a veritable hotbed of environmental activism and Wild Utah enthusiasts. In April, SUWA Southeast Field Organizer Tom Wheatley unfurled his "Protect Wild Utah" banner at four



Tom Wheatley educates passers-by about America's Redrock Wilderness at one of four Tampa Bay Earth Day festivals held in April.

Get Active by Joining SUWA's Email Alert List!

You can't be part of the solution if you don't know what's going on, and the best way to stay informed on breaking issues affecting Utah wilderness is to add your name to SUWA's electronic listserve. If you have an email address and would like to be part of our "first-responder" activist network, just send an email message from your computer to SubscribeMe@suwa.org. This is absolutely the easiest way to stay in the loop on Utah wilderness and learn how to get involved.

Tampa Bay Earth Day festivals and presented three slideshows. People of all ages lined up to write letters to their representatives urging cosponsorship of America's Redrock Wilderness Act. At the end of the week, over 300 letters were on their way to Washington, DC. Tom will continue to foster this Earth Day momentum from his base in Tampa, Florida. If you live in the Southeast and would like to get more involved in Utah wilderness advocacy, contact Tom Wheatley at tomw@suwa.org or (813) 874-0711.

Finding Common Ground in the Northeast

These days, people organizing on different environmental issues often find they have a lot in common. During the spring, SUWA Northeast Field Organizer Bill Raleigh presented the *Wild Utah* slideshow to members of the Southeast Group of the Connecticut Sierra Club chapter. The discussion that followed centered on the deal between Secretary of Interior Gale Norton and Governor Mike Leavitt on RS 2477 road claims. This issue struck a chord with the Connecticut Sierra Club members because they are in the midst of fighting a "road claim" of their own. Developers and politicians alike are pushing to extend a highway through a rural area bordered by the Nehantic State Forest in order to link Hartford with I-95. The Sierra Club's Trails and Rails Action Coalition is fighting the highway in order to preserve some of Connecticut's last open space.

While the issue of roads in Connecticut differs from the RS 2477 debate in Utah, people who care about preserving open space and natural areas understand the irreversible changes that roads create. Indeed, Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut was the first member of Congress to publicly speak out against the RS 2477 deal. Perhaps that's because he's been listening to the Sierra Club members in his state.

During the summer and fall, Bill will be taking the *Wild Utah* slideshow to Maine, Vermont, New York, Rhode Island, and other northeastern states. If your group would like to sponsor a slideshow, contact him at bill@suwa.org or (315) 559-7280.

Fighting the RS 2477 Demon

SUWA Outreach Coordinator Margi Hoffmann has been taking the grassroots lead on our RS 2477 campaign by working with conservation staff to develop activist response strategies, expand our outreach tools, and educate decision-makers on this eminently important issue. Central to this effort is her ongoing work on the SUWA website: posting new alerts, adding new photos, and updating critical information on a daily basis. If you'd like to learn how you can help fight RS 2477, contact Margi at margi@suwa.org or (801) 486-7639, ext. 20.

On the Road with Slideshow Bob

This spring, SUWA Outreach Coordinator Bob Brister took the *Wild Utah* slideshow on tour to Wisconsin, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. His informative presentations—hosted by environmental groups, campus groups, and REI stores across the country—are vital to nationalizing the Utah wilderness issue and engaging a broader constituency. By educating and inspiring citizens across the country, Bob generates numerous letters and phone calls to key members of Congress in support of America's Redrock Wilderness Act.

Many thanks to all the groups who host our slideshow and the audience members who write their legislators and sign up for Utah wilderness action alerts. Bob is planning another round of slideshow tours this fall and winter, including stops in Arkansas, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, the Dakotas, Texas, and Michigan. Surf over to the SUWA web page at www.suwa.org for the latest tour dates and locations (click on *Events*, then *Slideshow Tour*).

inside SUWA

Spirited Celebration Marks SUWA's 20th Year Defending Wilderness

Nearly 300 dedicated fans of Utah wilderness descended upon the Masonic Temple in Salt Lake City on March 28th to celebrate SUWA's 20th Anniversary and Everett Ruess' Birthday. The group was hard to miss, with our bright yellow *Protect Wild Utah* lawn signs, bumper stickers, balloons, pins, and hats. Drivers negotiating their way through the construction on South Temple couldn't help but gawk at the long-haired Slickrock Stranger as he strummed his guitar next to Ed Abbey's 1973 Ford pickup, parked beneath the massive stone lions guarding the entrance to the building.

The main event of the evening was a program commemorating SUWA's two decades of defending Utah's canyon country, with featured speakers Bert Fingerhut (SUWA board member since 1985 and past board chair) and Heidi McIntosh (SUWA conservation director and staff member since 1993). Bert paid a special tribute to three of SUWA's funders who recognized the organization's potential and provided crucial support and direction in our earliest days: Del Langbauer with the Harder Foundation, Donald K. Ross with the Rockefeller Family Fund, and Ted and Jennifer Stanley with the Town Creek Foundation.

SUWA's past and present executive directors also took part in the program. Current executive director Larry Young was joined by founder/first executive director Clive Kincaid (also a current SUWA board member) and former executive director Mike Matz (current executive director of the Campaign for America's Wilderness). SUWA's second executive director, Brant Calkin, couldn't join the festivities in person. However, he was there in spirit, personified by a cardboard cut-out, seated next to Mike Matz.

Following the program, guests were treated to a special screening of Diane Orr's *Lost Forever Everett Ruess*—a documentary/drama that probes the mysterious life and disappearance of the young artist, wanderer, and wilderness lover. Filmed on location in southern Utah, the film captured the silence and vastness of redrock country, as well as



Fred Oswald

Amy Irvine McHarg and Christy Calvin admire SUWA's one-of-a-kind 20th Anniversary cake. Pastry GIS mapping courtesy of Jim Catlin.

the passion and independence of Everett Ruess. If you ask us, Everett was there in spirit, too!

Another highlight of the evening was a giant birthday cake in the shape of Utah, complete with the citizens' wilderness proposal outlined in chocolate frosting. The evening also featured a silent auction with one-of-a-kind Edward Abbey and Monkey Wrench Gang books, calendars, posters, and t-shirts (donated by Ken Sanders Rare Books), as well as one of the last remaining full sets of Everett Ruess block prints. The set, consisting of 25 block prints that chronicle Ruess' travels along the California coast, through the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and into the deserts and canyons of Utah and Arizona, was the subject of an intense bidding war between two anonymous donors that continued throughout the evening. When the auction finally came to a close, the prints sold for a whopping \$18,000—all of which was donated to SUWA for our work to protect America's redrock

wilderness. Many many thanks to the anonymous donor!

SUWA would like to express our gratitude to Diane Orr, Ken Sanders, Jerry Schmidt, Carl Trujillo, and the folks at the Masonic Temple for their generosity and assistance. Thanks also to the many volunteers who helped at the event, and to all of you who made a donation to SUWA in honor of our 20th Anniversary. We appreciate your generous support and look forward to the next twenty years of hard work and success protecting Utah's spectacular redrock wilderness!

Join Us for an Extra Special Roundup, Sept. 12-14

SUWA members are invited to join us from September 12-14 as we celebrate 20 years of wilderness advocacy amid the autumn glow of Utah's canyon country. This year's SUWA Roundup provides us with the perfect occasion to reflect on all we've accomplished together over the past two decades and—amid this dark age of environmental policy—to revel in the fact that over 9 million acres of wild redrock country still remain intact!

Set in the heart of the San Rafael Swell, the SUWA Roundup offers our members the opportunity

to meet SUWA staff and board while enjoying the companionship of fellow desert rats from Utah and other states. Activities include an evening presentation on current Utah wilderness issues, a potluck dinner, live music around the campfire, and—best of all—guided day hikes in our Muddy Creek proposed wilderness unit. Sunday morning you'll awaken to the aroma of freshly brewed coffee followed by a hearty breakfast prepared by SUWA staff in thanks for all your support and dedication.

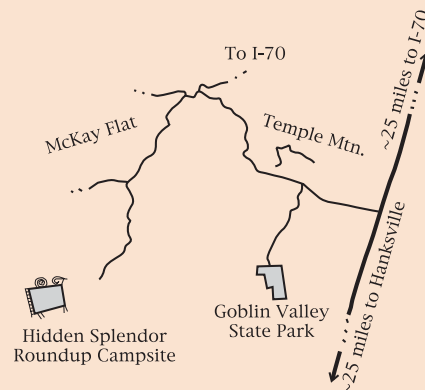
If you plan to attend, here's what you should bring along: a potluck dish serving five people for Saturday evening (if you plan to partake with the group), personal food for Friday evening and Saturday breakfast and lunch, camping gear, plenty of drinking water (none is available on site), utensils, folding chairs, and lanterns and tables to share with the crowd if you have them. Feel free to bring your own musical instruments and favorite libations, too.

Access roads in the Swell are unpaved but generally well maintained and there's plenty of room for camping at the old mine site and landing strip where we'll converge (see box below for map and detailed directions). Please let us know if you're coming this year so we can plan accordingly. To RSVP, contact Margi Hoffmann at margi@suwa.org. For more information, call us at (801) 486-3161 or visit our website at www.suwa.org and click on *Events*.

How to Get to the Fall 2003 SUWA Roundup

Driving instructions to Hidden Splendor:

From I-70, go about 25 miles south on Hwy 24 to the Goblin Valley exit. Turn west and follow the paved road past a spur road that goes south to Goblin Valley. The pavement ends in 1.3 miles. Continue west on the main road for 9.4 miles to a signed junction to I-70 and turn left. In 2.7 miles turn left at the sign for Reds Canyon and McKay Flat. In 0.8 miles turn left at McKay Flat sign. Follow the main road for 9.0 miles to the signed Hidden Splendor road. Proceed down this road for 9.8 miles to the old airstrip (our camp spot) above Muddy Creek.



inside SUWA

The Return of Scott Groene, Part IV

SUWA is happy to announce the return of our friend and compatriot, Scott Groene, who has migrated south again to Salt Lake City after a few years at the Greater Yellowstone Coalition in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Scott has held more positions at SUWA than anyone in the organization's history—taking a turn at four of our offices and even a stint on the board. As if caught in some mysterious magnetic field, he has attempted to leave four times over the past 15 years, only to wake up one day and find himself back here at SUWA, filing legal briefs, fielding press calls, or planning strategy on RS 2477. On his last return to Utah, he took a respite from us to direct the National BLM Wilderness Campaign—though his office was located in the same building to prevent mutual separation anxiety.

When the proverbial organic matter began to hit the fan this year with the Bush administration turning up the heat on Utah wilderness, there was only one place to go when we needed some extra firepower—right to Mr. Groene's doorstep. After a lot of sweet talking, some arm twisting, and a little puffery about how great the nightlife is in Salt Lake City these days, we managed to snag him



A bad case of sleep walking? Scott Groene seems as surprised as we are to find himself back at SUWA yet again.

once again—much to the chagrin of his Jackson Hole cohorts.

Scott has been working with us since April, bringing his fantastic political savvy and solid campaign sense to the wilderness and RS 2477 issues. Welcome home, Scott . . . we were starting to miss you again!



Photo Project Needs Volunteers

Since 1999, SUWA's Photo Documentation Project has been sending volunteers into the field to photograph the spectacular landscapes proposed for wilderness in America's Redrock Wilderness Act. Their efforts have resulted in a broad collection of scenic images available for use on our website and in publications, press materials, and congressional outreach.

If you have a flair for photography or just want get more involved in the wilderness cause, the Photo Documentaion Project could use your help. Project organizers (who are volunteers themselves) are currently seeking local wilderness advocates who are willing to help at the Salt Lake City office on Thursday evenings (preparing packets, filing slides, corresponding with photographers, and other assorted tasks), as well as volunteers who are interested in going out on photo assignments this summer or fall. Areas where photos are most needed include the Grand Staircase- Escalante National Monument, the Book Cliffs region, the West Desert region, and the San Juan River region.

If you are interested in volunteering for SUWA's Photo Documentation Project, please contact the project organizers at photo@suwa.org.

wilderness spotlight

Beelzebub's Weekend Retreat

I follow the rough-and-tumble dirt road bouncing down to the sandy bottom of Devil's Canyon. The gorge burrows through the uplift of the San Rafael Swell, roughly on an east-west axis, and its south-facing walls have already been licked clean by the late winter sun. The north-facing slopes in the shade look like a different canyon, a different season altogether. They are flecked with snow, right down to the threadbare wash.

Like all lovers, I am curious and care deeply about names for the beloved. For quite some time I had been puzzled by a profusion of diabolical monikers incongruously attached to desert localities that for me approximate paradise. Maps of the Colorado Plateau are spotted with names like Devil's Garden, Devil's Lane, Hell Hole Canyon, Devil's Chair, Hell's Backbone, Devil's Slide and Hell's Kitchen.

Initially, I assumed these coinages were only manifestations of shepherders' nightmares and explorers' frustrations. I thought they reflected the disdain that pioneers, weaned on pastoral eastern landscapes, felt for an alien land puckered with heat. As I learned more about these wastelands, however, I realized that the issue was far more complex. For every Dirty Devil there seemed to be a Virgin River, for every Hellroaring Canyon an Angels Landing. What I witnessed was a morality play staged against a backdrop of mesas, gulches, playas and buttes. Early colonists, who were not always of an unflinching religious disposition, simply projected one of the most fundamental human dramas—the struggle between light and dark, between good and evil, order and chaos, civilization and wildness—onto the seemingly blank screen of this barren landscape.

The often-violent processes that shaped this land are laid bare in the drama of its geology. Meteor craters pock the desert skin. Salt domes swell and burst like ulcers. Jagged canyons cut into the flesh of the earth, and the cores of extinct volcanoes stick their necks from salt-encrusted plains. Fault lines rip open hundreds of miles, resembling sharks' teeth, gigantic cockscombs, or the backbones of mythical beasts. Rock strata have

been tilted, crumpled, and torn; the surface layer, littered with boulders, resembles the battlefield of a long-vanished, heroic race of titans.

Every person has their own vision of hell, and for some it happens to include lava fields and tinder cones baked by earth fire and midsummer heat. For myself, the place of eternal damnation comes furnished with neon-lit office cubicles, rush hour, hospital corridors, fifty different brands of toothpaste, tax forms, Rush Limbaugh and Jerry Springer, Wal-Mart, Burger King, celebrity autobiographies . . . and off-road vehicles.

The bottom of Eagle Canyon, from which I crossed over, was marred by tangles of tire tracks scarring its sparse vegetation. But piles of horse manure in varying degrees of freshness assure me that Devil's Canyon has not yet been discovered by wheeled weekend hordes.

Devil's Canyon has been designated a Wilderness Study Area (WSA) by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which means it is under consideration for selection as protected wilderness. But I know that this in itself does not necessarily guarantee its integrity. Too often, WSA boundary markers become a target of aggression. Vandalized and scattered about, they are the unmistakable calling cards of motorized fun hogs out to kick up some dust.

Many rural residents see the federal government's "locking up" of public lands in Wilderness Areas as meddling with state sovereignty. These feelings have sparked a Sagebrush Rebellion, whose fires keep flaring up. Conservation organizations have sued the Bureau repeatedly for turning too many blind eyes on violations. But the agency is also chronically short on dedicated field staff, which could prevent the bulldozing of new county roads, the uprooting of WSA markers, or the removal of BLM road barriers.

"Off-Roaders" are only the latest and least hardy in a succession of people staking claims in the desert. The recreational tearing-up of this ecosystem started in the 1950s, when fans of the American outback and rock hounds began using army surplus jeeps on old mining roads to explore remote canyons and mesas. In the 1960s, with the advent of dirt bikes independent of even the most marginal tracks, off-roading became an end in

wilderness spotlight



Brian Cassell

Devil's Canyon in Utah's San Rafael Swell.

itself. The ultimate high is “hill-climbing,” the monotonous up-and-down riding of steep hills and sand dunes. At present, due to the BLM’s interpretation of its “multiple use” mandate, only 6 percent of BLM lands in Utah are closed to off-road abuse, and Utah is second only to California in the grinding to dust of fragile desert flora and fauna.

Gentle footsteps in a creekbed promise the quiet company of fellow desert rats, a hushed exchange of information about springs, wildlife sightings, or favorite haunts. Conversely, the parallel incisions of four-wheelers on a Morrison butte are often accompanied by obnoxious exhaust, bonfires, shooting contests, noisy partying, and shattered dreams of silence and solitude. Among the environmental costs of this gas-guzzling, land-gobbling nonsense are the destruction of prairie dog burrows and endangered desert tortoises, damage to archaeological sites, spiraling erosion, compacted soils and fouled water sources.

I cannot help but wonder if rapacious attitudes towards the desert vastness are perhaps leftovers

from the old “Wagons West” mentality. A person sealed off in his air-conditioned, horse-powered steel box sees nothing but obstacles that need to be overcome without popping a tire or busting an axle. Once again, men and their machines are pitted against wild nature.

There is a narrow neck of land separating two canyons nearby, which is labeled “Devil’s Racetrack” on my BLM map. Wrong place! These tortured washes are Satan’s real playpens, marked by the zigzag spoor of rubber tread and the stench of diesel fumes. The dusky skin of the desert deserves to be treaded on lightly and on foot, if at all.

The annual Jeep “Safari” in Moab draws thousands of motorized thrill-seekers. Caravans of 40 or more off-road vehicles grind their way over slickrock and through blackbrush flats. Occasionally, a jeep flips on its back and lies helpless like a grounded beetle. Organizations like the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance are taking on the devil-may-care attitude of many “festival” participants. But when they request that jeepers stay on designated trails, activists are likely to be told to go to hell.

It is hard on this winter day to find a campsite where the ground has thawed enough to receive my tent stakes, but I finally succeed on an elevated bench of loose sand. Flanking cliffs reverberate with the muted droning of cars on the interstate less than a mile away. Sound waves slide down escarpments, clog the canyon bottom, and engulf my island camp in a slowly rising flood. They create an aural distortion, diminishing the illusion of unlimited space that is the hallmark of wilderness. “Hell is other people,” wrote Jean-Paul Sartre, and out here it can be.

A seep I was counting on for water turns out to be solid. Hell has frozen over, and no snow is left in this part of the canyon. But icicles sprout from a wall, like stalactites in a cave. I fill my jug with daggers of opaque ice to melt on my camp stove. Staring into its corona of blue flames, my mind dwells on an incident that occurred a few days ago, near the lip of this canyon.

I had been daydreaming, lulled by the crunching sound of my boots. As I drifted among pinyon and juniper dwarves, a sudden blur of feathers, a flash of yellow legs, talons, and a white rump spot jolted me back into reality. A Northern harrier had

wilderness spotlight

swept in on a flock of juncos, which were gleaning the snow crust of edible morsels, as unaware as myself. The raptor failed to score, quite possibly distracted by my appearance.

Almost immediately I felt a connection. For an instant, foreign lives focused on different agendas had awakened to each other's presence. I had cut into the intimate dance of life and death like lightning. I had been admitted to the inner sanctum that is so much more real out here than the distant spectacle of newspapers and police reports. Freed from the need for moral judgment, I stood galvanized between these creatures, sensing the beauty of necessity.

As I hunker in front of my stove, I now realize that the desert is neither benign nor evil. It simply exists apart from our categories and archetypes. The flashflood taking your life does not care one iota. Neither do rocks, cacti, or coyotes. We

imbue the land with devils and angels that ride on our shoulders, whispering seductively into our ears. We carry them wherever we go. And a world that does not care is scarier by far than a world ruled by evil.

I have looked carefully for signs of the fiend in this canyon. But short of the pus-colored plume over a distant coal-burning power plant, I have not even seen the tip of his tail.

Michael Engelhard is an incurable backpacker and canyon rat. He lives in Moab, working as an outdoors educator and river guide. "Beelzebub's Weekend Retreat" is part of his essay collection *Where the Rain Children Sleep: A Sacred Geography of the Colorado Plateau*, to be published next spring by The Lyons Press.

Join the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance!

SUWA's overarching goal is to protect Utah's remaining nine million acres of wild desert lands—lands owned by the American public and administered on our behalf by the Bureau of Land Management. To this end, activists from Utah and across the country have compiled their own exhaustive fieldwork into a citizens' proposal now pending in Congress. The proposal will preserve one of the world's most unique landscapes—where towering buttes, sweeping plateaus, and intimate canyons are enveloped by a rare and breathtaking silence. This is the land of the Old West outlaws and the ancient Anasazi. It is wilderness at its best, and we need your help to keep it that way.

For your \$30 annual membership, you will receive our quarterly newsletter and periodic action alerts to inform you about the most critical issues and how you can make your voice heard. Please join SUWA today and participate in one of the nation's most effective forces for wilderness protection.

Yes! I want to join SUWA

Check one: New member Renewal

I have enclosed: \$30 Annual dues Other \$

Additional Donation \$

Contributions to SUWA are tax-deductible. Please make your check payable to SUWA or include credit card information (VISA, MC, AMEX):

Credit Card #

Exp. Date Amount \$

Mail form with payment to:

SUWA
1471 South 1100 East
Salt Lake City, Utah 84105-2423

Name:

Address:

City: State: Zip:

Phone: Email:

Art & Activism

Support SUWA while Hiking and Painting in Canyon Country

Join longtime SUWA supporters and artists Joan Hoffmann and Frandee Johnson for an Oil, Acrylic, and Watercolor Workshop in Utah's canyon country, **October 1st through 5th, 2003**.

Days will be spent painting, sketching, and hiking along Comb Ridge, where we'll follow the footsteps of the ancients through their rock art and ruins. Critiques and dinner (at local cafés and the historic Cow Canyon Trading Post) will round out the day. Lodging will be at the renowned Recapture Lodge in Bluff.

The \$325 workshop cost includes lodging for four nights and painting instruction (lodging is double-occupancy; bring a friend/spouse for \$140, the cost of lodging). Please note that transportation, meals, and painting supplies are not included. Proceeds from the workshop will be donated to SUWA.

About the hosts/instructors:

Joan Hoffmann has explored and painted the canyons, mesas, rock art, and ruin sites near Bluff, Utah with her painting students each spring and fall for the past ten years. She brings local lore of people and place to her sketching and painting workshops. Joan's instruction includes demonstrations, extensive painting techniques, and critiques.

Frandee Johnson began watercolor painting at the age of 55, after not having painted since highschool. She and her husband Dale still endeavor to discover desert backpacking routes not in the guidebooks, where she can find time to paint. A few years ago, Frandee attended one of Joan's "plein air" watercolor workshops and enjoyed it immensely (although she is still stymied at how Joan can complete a small painting during lunch, before Frandee can unpack her own sandwich!).

For more information, or to reserve a spot, please contact Lindsey at (801) 486-7639 ext. 11 or lindsey@suwa.org by September 1st.



"Bluff," oil painting by Joan Hoffmann (www.joanhoffmann.com).



Frandee Johnson (left) and Joan Hoffmann (right) at work in the great outdoors.

Explore America's Redrock Wilderness with SUWA!



Join SUWA staff, expert guides, and an acclaimed camp chef for a week-long car camping trip exploring some of the most spectacular, remote, and threatened areas in America's redrock wilderness while helping SUWA document wilderness suitability and protect resources at risk. This "working holiday" will take place from **September 28th through October 3rd, 2003.**

All meals and any necessary transportation from Salt Lake City will be provided. The ability to put in some serious mileage (on foot!), take good field notes, and a promise to get along with the camp cook are bedrock requirements. Cost is \$1,000 per person. Group size is limited to ten.

For more information, or to register, please contact Christy at (801) 486-7639 ext. 17 or christy@suwa.org.

New SUWA T-Shirts and Hats For Sale!

T-shirts are 100% organic cotton "Beneficial Ts" from Patagonia. Choose from several colors and styles, including a new women's cut! **Hats** include a baseball cap with SUWA logo (in two colors), plus a floppy hat and sun visor printed with the slogan "Protect Wild Utah." Check out www.suwa.org for more details.

NOTE: White short sleeve Ts run very large.



southern utah wilderness alliance
Artwork on back of short sleeve and long sleeve T-shirts. "SUWA" is printed in small lettering on front.



Front of women's cut T-shirt, with smaller graphic. No artwork on back.

T-Shirts

	Circle Choice(s)	
Short Sleeve White, \$15	S M L XL	Qty _____
Short Sleeve Black, \$15	S M L XL	Qty _____
Women's Cut White, \$15	S M L	Qty _____
Long Sleeve White, \$20	S M L XL	Qty _____

Hats

	Circle Choice(s)	
Baseball Cap, \$25	Sage or Sandstone	Qty _____
Floppy Hat, \$20	Bright Yellow	Qty _____
Sun Visor, \$15	Bright Yellow	Qty _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please enclose check, payable to SUWA, or write credit card information (VISA, MC, AMEX) below. Prices include shipping & handling.

Credit Card # _____

Exp. date _____ Amount \$ _____

Mail form with payment to: Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, 1471 S. 1100 E., Salt Lake City, UT 84105

Save the Date!

2003 Redrock Benefit: A Celebration of Utah Wilderness

Saturday, October 4, 6:00 pm

Graciously hosted by Tom and Jayne Knecht
3661 South Gilroy, Salt Lake City, Utah

Join us for a celebration of redrock wilderness, hosted by Tom and Jayne Knecht, in their home at the base of Millcreek Canyon. Support SUWA's efforts to protect Utah's spectacular wild lands and enjoy authentic Middle Eastern food, live music, refreshing beverages, dancing, a silent auction, and stunning views of Mt. Olympus!

Cost is \$50 per person; all proceeds benefit SUWA. **Please RSVP by September 26th** to Lindsey at (801) 486-7639 ext. 11 or lindsey@suwa.org.



"Fantastic Formations," pen & ink / watercolor by Pat Priebe.

"Without wilderness, we will eventually lose the capacity to understand America."

—Harvey Broome (former president of The Wilderness Society)

 Printed on recycled paper using soy-based ink.



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