

# REDROCK

## W I L D E R N E S S

The Newsletter of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance  
Volume 18, Number 1 • Spring 2001

Wilderness and the New  
Political Landscape:  
Sizing Up the  
Challenges  
Ahead

**Cover Photo:** An early November sunset over the Rimrocks on the southern boundary of the 1.9 million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Within several minutes of taking this photograph, a quickly approaching storm obscured the sun and by the following morning had buried this scene under four inches of new snow.

**Photo by James W. Kay** ([www.jameskay.com](http://www.jameskay.com)).



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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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[**Correction:** Chad and Laird Hamblin (not Herb McHarg) should be credited for the White River bulldozer photo in the Autumn/Winter 2000 issue of *Redrock Wilderness*, p.22.]

## Redrock Wilderness • Volume 18, Number 1 • Spring 2001

This issue of *Redrock Wilderness* was written by the following staff and outside contributors: Amy Barry, Steve Bloch, Keith Hammond, Gail Hoskisson, Diane Kelly, Heidi McIntosh, Herb McHarg, Lindsey Oswald, Dave Pacheco, Mike Reberg, Liz Thomas, Susan Tixier, and Larry Young. It was laid out and edited by Diane Kelly and it was proofread by Lindsey Oswald, and Amy Barry.

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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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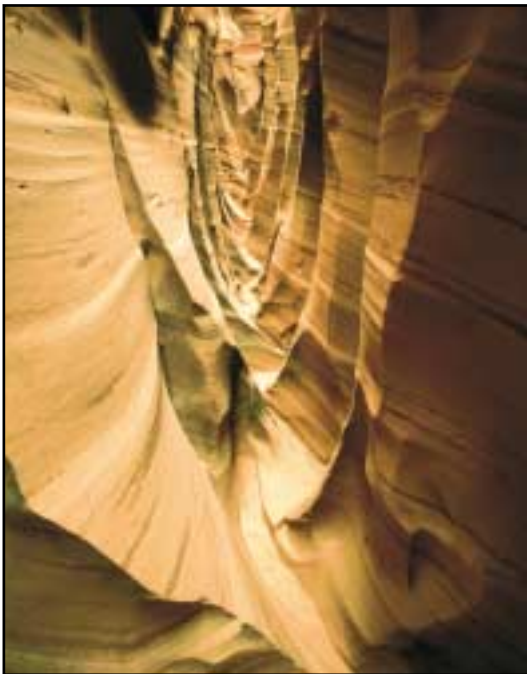
## w i l d e r n e s s   n o t e s

### The Heart of the Matter

Ernest Hemmingway once warned that you should never fall in love with a new land because it would break your heart. That, at least in part, is why he would return to the Old Country; it was simply too painful to watch the transformation of the new land he loved—the American West.

Those of us who love the land of southern Utah understand Hemmingway's broken heart. In Utah, we are confronted with forces of destructive change that seem to intensify with each passing day. Recreational toys literally chew up the landscape. Political posturing seeks to maximize individual autonomy to control and use our public lands with little or no regard for what the land is becoming. The influx of new residents to many rural communities places excessive water demands on the arid desert and chips away at its majestic vistas. These days, the land is even suffering from an overabundance of low-impact visitors who pour into redrock country for purposes ranging from primitive recreation (i.e. fishing, river rafting, and hiking) to solitude and spiritual sustenance. (See *Wilderness Spotlight*, p. 34, for a personal account of this growing problem.)

A few days ago I had a conversation with one of Utah's more prominent power brokers. As his face grew flush, he complained that all he wanted for himself and others was the right to experience the land today as he did fifty years ago when he was a teenager growing up in central Utah. He essentially argued for the freedom to do anything, anywhere he desired, and he railed against those "arrogant Easterners" who presumed to tell him what to do with *his* land. Upon further discussion, it became clear that he defined anyone who did not live in Utah as an "Easterner." It was not so clear how he would label the majority of Utah citizens who favor wilderness protection for Utah's remaining wild lands.



*James W. Kay*

*Looking within: a slot canyon in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.*

I think what my fellow Utahn failed to acknowledge to himself, but somehow knew implicitly, was that the world in which he had grown up had slipped away. Perhaps fifty years ago it did not matter so much what a single individual chose to do with our public lands since their wholesale destruction was far less imminent. Alas, the world has changed a great deal in just half a century. This man sought to preserve the right of individuals to use the public lands as they please, without acknowledging that the cumulative impacts of all of our actions upon these fragile landscapes would result in drastic and perhaps irreversible harm to his native homeland.

It seems to me that the passion with which he opposed wilderness designation—the one management strategy which would provide genuine protection for the land he claims to so dearly love—likely arose from his struggle with the early stages of the grieving process: anger and denial over the loss of a time when virtually unrestricted access to public lands was not so obviously transforming them into something no one wants them to become.

And so this man continues to oppose what seems reasonable and rational to so many of us. Out of our own grief emerges something altogether different: a sense of urgency to cherish and preserve what remains. We know that while there are still places where we can go to be alone and experience the wild, there are not nearly so many as there were even a few decades ago. As the slickrock and sagebrush of southern Utah continue to face the unrelenting forces of transformation, we are losing undisturbed watersheds, biodiversity (including plant communities and wildlife), pre-historic cultural artifacts, immense natural laboratories for scientific research and education, unspoiled awe-inspiring scenery, and world class opportunities for back-country recreation and spiritual renewal. We know that we have already lost too much, and our hearts are already breaking. But we also know that the National Wilderness Preservation System provides us with a means to protect those places that still remain wild and pristine—including more than 9 million acres of America's redrock wilderness. For the sake of our hearts, let's keep it wild!

—Larry Young

## features

### When the Going Gets Tough...

**H**ang on tight, because we're in for a rough ride, folks. Unless you've been living at the bottom of a slot canyon for six months, you know there's been a big change in Washington—and it doesn't exactly bode well for wilderness.

The head honcho at the Department of Interior is now Gale A. Norton, a former protégé of none other than James Watt, the notorious arch-conservative Interior Secretary who served under former President Ronald Reagan. Norton began her legal career under Watt's wing at the anti-environmental Mountain States Legal Foundation, and she has spent her life fighting against federal protections for our public lands, waters, and endangered species, on behalf of mining and timber companies. As Colorado's attorney general, Norton allowed polluters of the public lands to "police themselves." After leaving that post, she worked as a lawyer and lobbyist for more polluters.

What does Secretary Norton have in store for Utah's wilderness? We can only guess from her record: she openly supports drilling for oil in the magnificent wilderness of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, so chances are good that she'll support drilling on unprotected wilderness lands in the lower 48 states too. In fact, her Interior Department is already inventorying all known oil and gas deposits on public lands, getting ready for a big push to drill.

On the congressional side, it's no secret that Rep. James V. Hansen (R-UT) is a foe of meaningful wilderness protection. But now he's got more power than ever. As the new Chairman of the House Resources Committee, Rep. Hansen now controls all public lands legislation and hearings, wields new power to twist arms in Congress, and commands a huge staff to write nasty bills. We can expect he will use all the powers of his chairmanship to thwart real wilderness protection in Utah.

Rep. Hansen got an early start on his anti-environmental agenda by sending a breathless eight-page letter to President Bush and Vice President Cheney, even before they took office, asking their help in rolling back nearly every environmental protection President Clinton had achieved. Our new national monuments, roadless area protection for our national forests, bans on jet skis and snowmobiles in some of our national parks—Hansen says all these must go! Plus, he wants to use the power of his committee to

weaken the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and other critical environmental laws. And this is just the stuff he put in his letter, which immediately leaked to the national press.

In the Utah press, Hansen has openly threatened to undo or dramatically downsize the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, to redefine "roads" so that rural counties can convert old jeep trails and cow paths into highways through wilderness, and to phase out protection of America's Wilderness Study Areas. He's also hinted that he'll take another shot at a statewide wilderness bill that would undoubtedly leave the majority of Utah's BLM wilderness open to development. All of this does not add up to a pretty picture for Utah wilderness during the next two years.

With a more balanced Congress, Hansen's rotten bills will hopefully die on the House floor as usual. But the greater risk is that he will sneak them through as "riders" on must-pass budget bills, which President Bush is unlikely to veto as President Clinton did. Perhaps the worst risk is that working together, Chairman Hansen and Secretary Norton could resurrect bad policies on R.S. 2477 right-of-way claims, even granting such claims outright in order to undercut pending lawsuits and permanently prevent wilderness designation in much of Utah's backcountry (see article on R.S. 2477, p. 21). The bad guys have a lot more firepower these days and more tricks up their sleeves. We'll do everything in our power to stop them, but we'll really need your help to keep them in check.

This issue of *Redrock Wilderness* takes a critical look at the two key players who will influence wilderness decisions and public lands policy in the years ahead. Much in these pages is disconcerting, but not to worry—we've got an enormous amount of momentum on our side. As this newsletter goes to press, new and returning members of Congress are rapidly signing on as original cosponsors of America's Redrock Wilderness Act. Now more than ever, your calls and letters to Congress can really make a difference (see call to action, p.14). And for some added perspective, we've included in this issue a recent *New York Times* editorial in which environmental historian William Cronon reflects on the green legacy of the Republican Party and offers a not-so-subtle challenge to the new administration. The stage is set and our task is clear...let's take the bull by the horns!

## f e a t u r e s

## Norton on Trial Is *Her* Past an Indication of *Our* Future?

On January 31<sup>st</sup>, Gale Norton was sworn in as the nation's new Secretary of the Interior, despite a professional record marked by repeated anti-environmental stands and a disdain for federal regulation. Twenty-four Senators voted against Norton's appointment (see pages 8-9), making her the most contested Interior Secretary nominee in the history of the office (even more than the infamous James Watt!).



With management oversight for nearly half a billion acres of federal land and the responsibility of enforcing important environmental laws, the Interior Department plays a critical role in public lands policy and environmental protection. Ms. Norton's suitability as head of this powerful agency was immediately called into question by national press, and her appointment was adamantly opposed by conservation groups nationwide.

While Ms. Norton's competency as an unbiased Secretary of the Interior remains to be proven, her evasive responses to key questions at her confirmation hearing give cause for apprehension, if not alarm. On the following pages, we've included the opposition letter submitted to members of the Senate by 14 environmental organizations (including SUWA), as well as a sample Q&A from the confirmation process, and selected statements from Senators opposed to Ms. Norton's appointment.

### Letter of Opposition to Gale Norton's Cabinet Nomination January 10, 2001

#### Dear Senator:

On behalf of the millions of Americans who are members of our organizations, and the many more who care about protecting and preserving our nation's public lands, we write to urge you to oppose the nomination of Gale Norton as Secretary of Interior. Ms. Norton has a long record of condemning basic federal lands stewardship as an intrusion on the extreme "property rights" causes which she champions. Her positions and beliefs are fundamentally incompatible with the Secretary of Interior's role as steward of our precious natural resource heritage.

Ms. Norton publicly supports oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, one of the world's last truly pristine wild places and a critically important nursery ground for arctic wildlife. But that is only the beginning. Her career evidences a long term commitment to undermining the policies of land and wildlife protection for which the Interior Department bears responsibility. She worked for four years for the Mountain States Legal Foundation, an anti-environmental litigation group out of Denver that is closely linked to the "wise-use" movement, which argues that national lands should be open to exploitation. Mountain States is well known for representing the interests of loggers, miners, cattle ranchers and water developers in fights against environmental protections. While there, Ms. Norton argued in a U.S. court that the Surface Mining Act—a law she would bear responsibility for carrying out and enforcing as Interior Secretary—should be declared unconstitutional.

Moderate republicans with strong environmental records have distanced themselves from the group for which Ms. Norton recently served as the National Chairwoman: the Coalition for Republican Environmental Advocates (CREA). This political action committee gets substantial funding from industries hostile to environmental protections, including Coors Brewing Co., American Forest and Paper Association, and the Chemical Manufacturers Association, among others. CREA's first dinner included a keynote address from Newt Gingrich

and honorary members include Representatives Chenoweth, Richard Pombo, and Don Young, all of whom are known for their outright hostility towards environmental protection. CREA was denounced by the Republicans for Environmental Protection who called the group a “transparent attempt to fool voters who care about environmental protection.”

Ms. Norton promotes her radical anti-regulatory property rights views in legal writings in the Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy and the George Mason Law Review, even going so far as to recognize “a homesteading right to pollute.” In Ms. Norton’s opinion the “chilling effect” of requiring the government to pay compensation for environmental protection is “something positive.” These are disturbing views for a nominee to be the chief trustee of our federal lands to espouse. This philosophy could lead to policies that weaken federal land protections, as discussed later in this letter.

Her past record illuminates many varied examples of her long-standing, anti-environmental approach to decision making:

- Undermining Federal Responsibility for the National Environmental Policy Act. Ms. Norton testified before Congress that NEPA implementation ought to devolve to the states and away from the federal agencies whose decisions it is designed to inform. In fact, in speaking of the federal lands over which the Secretary of Interior presides, Ms. Norton advocated the view that states are the “proper entities to implement environmental laws and policies.”

- Weakening Endangered Species Protections. In 1995, as Attorney General, Ms. Norton signed onto an amicus brief with the state of Arizona arguing that including habitat in the definition of harm would be unconstitutional and place states in the untenable situation of choosing between using land to provide revenue and potentially violating the habitat harm regulations. By asserting that the federal government is not authorized to protect wildlife habitat without compensating nonfederal landowners, she advances a position that runs afoul of the ESA’s stated goal to conserve ecosystems. In the 6-3 decision, the Supreme Court upheld such authority of the Department of Interior.

- Endangering Western Water. On one Interior project, the original Animas La Plata, Ms. Norton endorsed construction of a massive dam in southwestern Colorado even though biologists thought the project would endanger rare fish.

- Weakening Superfund Liability. Ms. Norton testified to Congress that Superfund liability should only apply prospectively, not retroactively, and refused to sign a letter that 35 other Attorneys General wrote to Congress expressing their support for the natural resource damage provisions of CERCLA [the Superfund legislation]. These two positions run counter to responsibilities she would need to accept as the lead federal trustee for natural resource damage claims on our nation’s public lands.

- Relaxing Environmental Safeguards. As Attorney General for Colorado, she supported measures that would relax otherwise applicable environmental safeguards if businesses volunteered to regulate themselves. For example, she supported a Colorado law that gave polluters immunity if they reported environmental violations and pledged to clean up their act. The EPA criticized the law because it kept details of companies’ actions confidential, preventing citizens and government agencies from investigating even egregious violations that could have dramatic impacts on public health and the environment. Her stance on this issue is troubling, because as Secretary of Interior she might be willing to let companies that operate on or near public lands regulate themselves. This approach could result in a situation similar to the one that occurred during her tenure as Colorado’s Attorney General when a gold mining company acting under a self-regulation regime committed ongoing criminal violations of environmental laws resulting in massive and ongoing cyanide contamination of the Alamosa River in the Colorado mountains. EPA had to intervene to address the contamination.

- Challenging Federal Regulation of Surface Mining. Ms. Norton filed an amicus brief in 1980 on behalf of the Virginia Surface Mining and Reclamation Association in which she states that the Surface Mining Act “should be declared unconstitutional.”

- Lobbying for Polluters. Since leaving her job as attorney general in 1999, Ms. Norton has been lobbying Congress and the Colorado state legislature on lead paint issues on behalf of NL Industries, a Houston company formerly known as National Lead Co. The company has been named as a defendant in suits involving 75 Superfund or other toxic-waste sites, in addition to a dozen lawsuits involving children allegedly poisoned by lead paint.

## f e a t u r e s

## The Nay Voters

### Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL)

“As a strong promoter of wilderness areas, I am concerned that Ms. Norton’s pro-development leaning will make it more difficult to inventory areas for wilderness designation. I am concerned that she will open more land to mineral and mining development, leaving less for wilderness areas. I am concerned that she won’t stand strong and protect existing and proposed wild areas from off-road vehicle damage.”

### Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA)

“After Ms. Norton’s confirmation hearings, her responses to over 200 written questions and an in-depth look at her long and detailed history of work on these environmental issues—unfortunately, on the other side of most of them—it is clear to me that her record is remarkably consistent. One can say that about Ms. Norton; her record is remarkably consistent.

She has spent her lifetime over the past 20 years focused on fighting against our essential Federal environmental laws and fighting for increased resource extraction from our public lands. That is her history. That is her life. Indeed, it is striking how few examples there are where Ms. Norton worked for the protection of the environment, despite the fact that her positions as Associate Solicitor at Interior and Attorney General in Colorado required it.

As a matter of fact, given her statements about the inappropriate role of the federal government in all of this protection, it is hard to understand how she would want to be a part of the Interior Department, much less be the head of it. It raises questions to me about her ability to adequately serve as an advocate from the federal perspective in various environmental decision-making processes. Ms. Norton has a long history of association with organizations that promote ideas such as eliminating the Bureau of Land Management and selling off our national parks. Not surprisingly, these views have sparked strong opposition from the people of our country.”

*(continued opposite panel)*

- Downplaying Global Warming. On the issue of global warming, one of the most serious challenges facing the global environment, Ms. Norton co-authored an op-ed in 1997 in which she declares that she does not think the problem exists. She stated: “There is little consensus over whether global warming is occurring.” It is alarming that Ms. Norton has taken a public view that is at odds with the consensus opinion of the international science community, when DOI plays a vital role in interagency cooperation concerning finding solutions to global warming.

We also harbor serious concerns that Ms. Norton’s views on private property rights could affect her ability to be a careful steward of our national lands. As noted above, Ms. Norton’s extreme views on property rights have led to her opposition to effective implementation of the Endangered Species Act, a law she will be charged with implementing at the Interior Department. There are numerous other instances where the Secretary of Interior makes decisions about the need for public protections on private lands. For example, under the Clean Air Act, federal land managers of “Class 1 areas” (which includes most national parks) evaluate the impact of proposed new air pollution sources near national parks on the air quality-related values of the parks including impacts on visibility, and impacts on sensitive flora and fauna. If these federal managers demonstrate to the state permitting authority that an adverse impact will be caused in the park and the state agrees, the permit cannot be issued. As Secretary, Ms. Norton could establish procedures or criteria that would effectively hobble the ability of federal managers to participate in state permitting actions.

In addition, the Secretary makes critical recommendations about how private inholdings adjacent to park lands are developed and used. As Secretary, Ms. Norton could prevent the National Park Service from exercising the right to condemn private inholdings in national parks when the use of these inholdings jeopardizes park resources. This would open wide the door to massive private development within national parks where there are inholdings on sensitive lands or in sensitive places.

Finally, as Interior Secretary, Norton would be responsible for countless Environmental Impact Statements pertaining to federal projects on federal land. From her testimony, it appears Ms. Norton would prefer not to exercise that responsibility, but instead leave it to individual states to conduct the primary assessment of environmental impacts, whether or not they favored or opposed the federal management decision under consideration. This kind of “devolution” of authority over federal lands is a direct lineal descendant of the “Sagebrush Rebellion” championed by her early mentor James Watt on behalf of the businesses and user groups most responsible for damaging public lands.

For all these reasons, we urge you to review closely Ms. Norton’s record and consider her ability to safeguard the lands, wildlife and waters that Americans hold so dear—for themselves and their future generations. It would be a pity to waste the progress we have made, and we believe that the nomination of Ms. Norton would represent such a momentous shift backwards that we take the drastic step of calling for opposition to her nomination for Interior Secretary.

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## Sample Q&A from Secretary Norton's Confirmation

**Sen. Durbin:** Are you familiar with the Interior Department's August 1994 proposed R.S. 2477 regulations, and do you support them?

**Ms. Norton:** I am not familiar enough with the specifics of the proposed R.S. 2477 regulations to respond to this question at this time. I would be happy to follow up with you at a later date after I have had an opportunity to review the proposed regulations and the related congressional debate.

**Sen. Durbin:** And do you plan to change the agency's current policy on R.S. 2477?

**Ms. Norton:** I am not familiar enough with the Department's policy on R.S. 2477 to respond to this question at this time.

**Sen. Durbin:** Millions of acres of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have never been inventoried for their wilderness qualities. Other areas known to have wilderness qualities were passed over during incomplete inventories. What would you do to support the continuation of wilderness inventories on BLM lands?

**Ms. Norton:** I am not familiar with the status of BLM's wilderness inventory program. If confirmed as Secretary of the Interior, I will commit to reviewing the current program before deciding how to proceed.

**Sen. Durbin:** And what would you do to protect unprotected wildlands that the BLM has inventoried and found to qualify for wilderness designation?

**Ms. Norton:** I need to learn more about BLM's inventory program before deciding how to proceed.

**Sen Durbin:** Off-road vehicles are a growing threat to sensitive public lands managed by the BLM, causing soil erosion, damaging vegetation and disrupting wildlife. Are you aware of the full extent of this problem, and what will you do to protect wild and/or roadless areas from degradation by ORVs?

**Ms. Norton:** I share with you a desire to minimize soil erosion, damage to vegetation and disruption to wildlife on sensitive public lands managed by the BLM. I do not know the specifics of how ORVs impact public lands and need to learn more before deciding how to proceed.

**Sen. Durbin:** Will you seek increased funding for ORV monitoring and enforcement?

**Ms. Norton:** I need to learn about the current level of funding for ORV monitoring and enforcement activities. If confirmed as Secretary of the Interior, I will need to review this and other budget matters more thoroughly before making any recommendation.

**Sen. Durbin:** Many BLM Resource Management Plans are out of date. Some as much as 20 years old. What will you do to update BLM management plans?

**Ms. Norton:** I am aware that many BLM Resource Management Plans are out of date. I am not, however, familiar with the magnitude of this issue nor steps that have, or can be taken, to update these plans. If confirmed as Secretary of the Interior, I will need to learn more about this before deciding how to proceed.

### Senator John Kerry (D-MA)

"As the Senator from Minnesota said, I think what we are looking for in the person who comes to a job with that kind of responsibility, being a Cabinet Secretary in charge of major responsibilities, is somebody who brings not a series of denials, renunciations, conversions, if you will, from a lifetime of effort, but somebody who brings with them to the job their gut and their heart and their head all linked together in concert with the fundamentals of the job they are being asked to do.

In the case of the nominee Gale Norton, I don't find there is that kind of connection, that there is a continuity of a lifetime of effort that shows me with assurance where the stewardship of this department will go."

### Senator Jack Reed (D-RI)

"Ms. Norton's employment history and legal writings reflect a consistent record of supporting industry and developers over wildlife and public lands protection, even going so far as to argue to the U.S. Supreme Court that the Endangered Species Act and the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act—both of which she would administer if confirmed—are unconstitutional. She has repeatedly taken the position that the federal government lacks the constitutional power to address a wide range of environmental harms, a view that is diametrically opposed to a long line of Supreme Court rulings and is hard to reconcile with the Secretary of the Interior's role in managing our precious natural resources.

...it is regrettable that President Bush chose someone who has spent so much of her professional life working against the very mission of the department she would oversee and, more importantly, the laws she would enforce."

### Other Senators Who Voted Against Norton:

Evan Bayh (IN), Joseph Biden, Jr. (DE), Max Cleland (GA), Hillary Clinton (NY), Jon Corzine (NJ), Mark Dayton (MN), John Edwards (NC), Tom Harkin (IA), Ted Kennedy (MA), Patrick Leahy (VT), Carl Levin (MI), Joseph Lieberman (CT), Barbara Mikulski (MD), John Rockefeller IV (WV), Paul Sarbanes (MD), Charles Schumer (NY), Debbie Stabenow (MI), Robert Torricelli (NJ), Paul Wellstone (MN), and Ron Wyden (OR).

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**features**

## Hansen at the Helm Meet Your New House Resources Committee Chairman

On December 20, 2000, shortly after the results of the Presidential election were finalized, Representative James V. Hansen, Utah's most unabashedly anti-wilderness congressman, dashed off a solicitous eight-page letter to President-Elect Bush and Vice-President-Elect Cheney. As heir to the chairmanship of the House Resources Committee, Hansen already had his anti-environmental agenda at the ready, and he wasted no time in pitching his plan to the incoming administration. Each line item in the letter essentially suggests the reversal or abolishment of an environmental policy initiative established under the preceding Clinton administration—no beating around the bush, so to speak.

After enthusiastically congratulating Bush and Cheney on their election victory, Rep. Hansen quickly makes the ask:

“...I would appreciate your consideration and suggestions on a number of rules, regulations, and policy decisions formulated under the Clinton Administration that have caused considerable concern to me and, quite frankly, to many of our citizens. These rules, regulations, and policy decisions cover a multitude of resource issues and are in various states of completion. There is, however, one thing in common. They will have, if allowed to proceed or be implemented, a tremendous negative effect on the good stewardship of our public lands along with greatly limiting access to the citizens of this country. Because of this, I and many other Members on the Committee, have well-founded concerns regarding these rules, regulations, and policy decisions. We have concluded that all of these require immediate attention and review, thus, are requesting your cooperation in this regard. I look forward to working with you and your Administration to redirect these policy initiatives...”

The policy initiatives Mr. Hansen hopes to “redirect” in his preemptive wish list concern a wide range of public land issues, from monument designations to forest protection and national park management. These are, perhaps, just the tip of the iceberg for Rep. Hansen as he assumes his influential new position in the public lands debate. Following are some sample paragraphs from the congressman's ominous letter to the new administration. **Bold type** represents SUWA commentary. (See DC News, page 13, for more on Hansen's anti-environmental agenda.)

• National Park Service: Management Policy of “Resource Preservation” over “Visitor Enjoyment”/Interpreting NPS Organic Act:

The National Park Service was created by the 1916 Organic Act, with the primary mission to “promote and regulate the use of Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations . . . by such means and measures as to conform to the fundamental purpose . . . which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same. . .” Although the dual mission of the Park Service seems abundantly clear, the law is being divided by the NPS which is promoting the “conservation of the resource” over and above “for the enjoyment of the same” by the public. The NPS, in their recently released draft Management Policies – 2000, states unequivocally that the parts of this provision of law are not equal. The NPS asserts that “[t]here are dual elements to the Organic Act's single fundamental purpose, but those elements are not equal. Rather, the Act is explicit that enjoyment of park resources and values is to be allowed only to the extent that can be done without impairing those resources and values.” Moreover, a letter addressed to all Park Service employees crafted by the NPS Environment Leadership coordinator, stated that “[p]reserving and maintaining our precious resources for future generations is the most important part of our mission.” As shown in the original intent of the Organic Act, however, conservation is intrinsically tied and cannot be separated with user enjoyment. These policy statements clearly show that the NPS has been moving to restrict and otherwise limit public access to our national parks for a number of years, especially under the Clinton Administration.

**One has to wonder, what will remain for public enjoyment if the resource is destroyed by overuse and inappropriate management?**

• Bureau of Land Management: National Monuments on Public Lands

Beginning in September of 1996, President Clinton began the legacy of designating millions of acres of public lands as National Monuments under the 1906 Antiquities Act. The Resources Committee demonstrated through numerous investigations that these designations have all been completed without any public input and indeed over the strenuous objections of local and federal elected officials. The most recent designa-

tions which occurred in 2000 are currently in the planning process and slowing those planning efforts will give Congress an opportunity to review these designations in detail and make decisions accordingly. Vice President-Elect Cheney and I have had a conversation about how to deal with these millions of acres of new designations which circumvented the public process and the legislative process. I look forward to working with you, your Secretary of Interior and those who are most affected by these designations to make sure each designation is warranted, completed in an open and fair manner, and has the approval of Congress.

**The Antiquities Act has been invoked dozens of times since its passage by Congress in 1906. Monuments originally established under the Act (some of which are now national parks) include Devil's Tower, the Grand Canyon, Zion, Bryce Canyon, Glacier Bay, and the Statue of Liberty. Several of these designations were originally considered controversial, though few would question their value today.**

• U.S. Forest Service: Forest Service Roadless Areas

One of the most egregious abuses by the Clinton Administration of its legal authority through ruling is the new Forest Service roadless area policy. The practical effect of implementing this unreasonable policy

is tantamount to designating approximately 60 million acres of wilderness through administrative fiat, thereby circumventing the Wilderness Act of 1964 ... This policy, developed without the benefit of sound scientific support, will highly restrict public and agency access to approximately 60 million acres of national forest land, or one-third of the National Forest System. When combined with lands already designated as wilderness (nearly 35 million acres), access for recreation and forest protection will be prohibited on fully one-half of all National Forest System lands.

**In developing the roadless area policy, the Forest Service held over 600 public meetings across the nation and considered a record 1.6 million citizen comments—including testimony from scientists—most of which supported stronger protection for our national forests. The policy is *not* equivalent to wilderness designation and provides ample access for management activities such as restricted “stewardship logging” of small diameter trees (largely in response to last summer’s historic wild-fire season). Access for recreation is not in the least bit prohibited and, in fact, the policy does not even address the problem of off-road vehicles. In Rep. Hansen’s home state of Utah, thousands of acres of de facto roadless forest were not included in the roadless area policy.** ✂



## f e a t u r e s

## When the G.O.P. Was Green

By William Cronon (Originally published in *The New York Times* January 8, 2001)

The past week has seen stark reminders of just how much the Democratic and Republican parties differ on environmental policy.

As President-elect George W. Bush nominated cabinet secretaries committed to drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and promoting development on public lands, President Clinton issued an order last Friday putting nearly one-third of national forest land off limits to road building and logging and preserving millions of acres in Alaska's Tongass National Forest.

What is odd about this stark contrast is that no one seems surprised by it. Yet Republican hostility to environmental protection is quite a recent development. Indeed, until the 1980's, Republicans could claim with considerable justification that their party's environmental record was no less distinguished than that of the Democrats.

After all, Theodore Roosevelt, one of the greatest Republican presidents, launched conservation as a national political movement.

Roosevelt set aside the first national monuments and wildlife refuges. In 1906, Roosevelt signed the Antiquities Act, which has enabled Mr. Clinton to protect wild lands as national monuments (and which Republican congressmen would like to radically weaken for that reason). Among the places Teddy Roosevelt protected by the Antiquities Act was no less a national treasure than the Grand Canyon.

Roosevelt was by no means the only Republican president eager to protect America's lands and resources. Although this is not the way we remember him, Herbert Hoover was a dedicated conservationist. And we should not forget that Dwight Eisenhower set aside lands on the North Slope of Alaska, protecting one of the last great caribou herds on earth. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a Republican creation, which makes the Republican eagerness to drill it all the more distressing.

Perhaps the most surprising Republican environmental legacy is that left by Richard Nixon. Nixon's personal commitment to conservation was not especially strong, and his policies can be mainly ascribed to his intense competition with two Democratic presidential contenders in the Senate—Henry Jackson and Edmund Muskie—who were both strongly pro-environment.

Nonetheless, many of the laws that have defined modern American environmental policy—the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, the National Environmental Policy Act, even the Endangered Species Act—were signed by Nixon with strong bipartisan support. And we owe the existence of the Environmental Protection Agency to Nixon's genuine enthusiasm for government reorganization.

History's lesson is that for most of the 20th century, conservation enjoyed the support of both parties. Although they often approached the issue in different ways and with different emphases, Democrats and Republicans agreed that conserving natural resources, reducing pollution and preserving wild lands were clearly in the national interest. Strange as it may seem today, the parties even competed over which was more committed to environmental protection.

The great sea change in Republican policies toward the environment did not come until the election of Ronald Reagan. By 1980, conservatives in the party had begun their attack on big government as a way to reduce the scope of federal power.

Environmental protection during the 1960's and 1970's had become associated with federal regulation—in no small measure because of bipartisan legislation passed during the Nixon years. And so environmental protection was demonized as a symbol of government usurpation of liberty and property, especially among those in the West who had long chafed at federal ownership of western land.

Although opposition to environmental protection seemed to make good sense as part of the conservative assault on government regulations, this stance has been a political loser for the Republican party. Few features of Republican politics have provoked more backlash, or lost more potential votes, than the party's anti-environmental stance. James Watt and Anne Burford were disasters for the first Reagan administration. And Newt Gingrich's "Contract With America" came to grief in good measure because most Americans continue to believe that protecting the environment is a good thing.

There are two distinct Republican traditions regarding environmental protection. The more recent one is that people should be able to do pretty much what they please with natural resources and wild lands

*(Continued on page 14)*

## DC news

### Hansen Declares War on Monuments

Rep. Hansen (R-UT) opened fire on our nation's newest national monuments in February, sending a letter to every Congress member with a Clinton-created monument in their district and offering to redo—or undo—any monument if there is local opposition to it. In most places, people like their new monuments just fine; Hansen's main target is Utah's own Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, which has given Utah's congressional delegation fits since its surprise announcement in 1996.

Hansen has said he thinks the remote heart of the monument, the Kaiparowits Plateau, should be stripped out (so that mining companies can strip the Kaiparowits for coal). Rep. Chris Cannon (R-UT), whose district includes the monument, says he might want to change its boundaries and turn parts of it into a "national conservation area" designed to provide "multiple use opportunities," including the renewal of mining leases and claims. This sounds like a recipe for a coal mine—the very coal mine President Clinton said this monument was supposed to prevent. These guys are picking a tough fight because our side will rally hard to protect our national monuments. But they're going to try it anyway, and we're going to have to stop them. All of you who love the Grand Staircase-Escalante, be ready to fight for it!

### G.O.P. Energy Bill: Drill the Wilderness

This one's the sleeper, folks, and it could be deadly for a lot of wilderness in Utah and throughout the West. Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-AK) is pushing a bill called the National Energy Security Act of 2001 that would drill the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil, would slop bucketloads of taxpayer subsidies into the trough for the oil, gas, coal, and nuclear industries, and—worst of all for Utah wilderness—would relinquish the BLM's oil and gas leasing program to the states.

This has been an oil company fantasy for years—in fact, a Republican Senate staffer admitted that oil lobbyists wrote much of this bill. Turning over the BLM's oil and gas leasing program to the states is a terrible idea because the states are even more pro-industry than the BLM is. Most of the western states

have oil and gas commissions (like Utah's UDOGM) which are run by a bunch of oil men, and they will undoubtedly approve far more drilling projects in our wild roadless lands than even the BLM would. Murkowski's bill proposes to let the states call the shots on applications for permits to drill (APDs), on any public appeals of bad leasing decisions, and more. Worse, the bill would gut federal environmental oversight of oil and gas projects by giving the Department of Interior just 30 days to review APD approvals—that's nowhere near enough time to do an Environmental Impact Statement or even to solicit public comments on these projects. Even worse, if Interior doesn't reject a state-approved APD within 30 days, the approval is automatically granted! **If this bill passes, we can expect hundreds more wellheads and drill pads sprouting up in Utah's wilderness.**

With the California energy crunch providing a bogus rationale for drilling oil on the public lands (California's power utilities use virtually no oil), this bill is a hot topic in Washington. SUWA and other environmental groups are fighting it but they will need all the help you can give. Please watch for alerts on this matter in the future.

### Congressman Bruce Vento Passes Away

Congressman Bruce Vento (D-MN) died at his home in St. Paul, Minnesota on October 10, 2000. From the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in his home state of Minnesota to the great wilderness of Alaska, he stood up—often against heavy odds—to protect America's special places. Vento served as chair of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands for ten years. During that time he oversaw the passage of legislation to protect 5 million acres of wild land, and the designation of 76 Wild and Scenic rivers. He was the lead sponsor of legislation to designate as wilderness the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

A frequent visitor to southern Utah, Rep. Vento was an original cosponsor of America's Redrock Wilderness Act in every Congress since its inception, and he took the lead in fighting bogus R.S. 2477 right-of-way claims that would ruin wild lands in Utah. He was a hero and a friend to wilderness advocates nationwide and he will be greatly missed.

—*Courtesy of the Wilderness Support Center*

## D C n e w s

## When the G.O.P. Was Green

*continued from page 12*

without government interference. Although this tradition plays well in certain western states—which opposed even Teddy Roosevelt’s policies—anti-environmentalism does not represent the broad center of American popular opinion.

It is in fact the second, older, Republican tradition that is more in tune with public sentiment. Even conservatives who favor limited state power understand that government has an appropriate role to play in domains that the private sector does not handle well on its own. One of these is national defense. Another is conservation. Honoring our heritage by preserving public lands, remembering the deep spiritual ties to the land that led the United States to be the first nation in the world to create wilderness parks—what actions could more conservative than these?

George W. Bush has the opportunity to reinvigorate the Republican legacy of conservation. His party’s support for environmental protection would surely be good for the environment—and good politics for the Republicans as well.

—William Cronon is an environmental historian at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

## San Rafael All Over Again?

In February, officials from Emery County and the State of Utah began visiting Capitol Hill to try and revive their failed San Rafael National Conservation Area (NCA) legislation. It’s too early yet to say whether this time they’re willing to give the Swell’s one million acres of redrock wilderness any strong protection, but we’ll know more soon. You may remember that last year’s sticking points were geographic boundaries, off-road vehicles, and formal protection of wilderness-quality lands. The previous NCA bill would have abruptly cut off proposed wilderness units at county lines while allowing ORV’s to run rampant and designating **zero** wilderness out of **one million** acres of qualifying lands. After losing to some heavy opposition last Congress, perhaps the state and county will come up something better this time around. If not, we could have yet another San Rafael fight on our hands. We’ll keep you posted.

### Call to Action:

## 107th Congress Cosponsor Drive Is Underway and We Need Your Help!

Utah wilderness lovers across the nation continue to meet the challenge when we throw down the gauntlet. In the 106th Congress, you shattered the record level of support for America’s Redrock Wilderness Act that we’ve enjoyed every successive

Congress since the bill’s introduction in 1989! Finishing off with 168 cosponsors in the House and 16 in the Senate, we have set the bar high, even by our lofty standards.

But break the record again we will! As you know, it can only be accomplished through diligent effort, and by holding elected officials accountable to you, the American public. **In the new 107th Congress, please take a moment to pen a letter to your Representative and both your Senators, asking them to cosponsor America’s Redrock Wilderness Act.** (There are no bill numbers yet, just mention the bill by name). Please also include a statement in your letter indicating that “it is OK for my letter to be used for legislative purposes.” This allows your elected officials to read your letter during floor debates as examples of citizen support. If you need help determining who your Representative and two Senators are, go to [www.congress.org](http://www.congress.org) and enter your ZIP code—but please don’t just e-mail them; a written letter in a stamped envelope still works best.

On the opposite page is a list of current cosponsors in the brand new 107th Congress. The list is small because we’re just kicking off the drive—that’s why you need to write now. If your members of Congress are on the list, please write them to say thank you. If they are not on the list, please write and encourage them to cosponsor! It is our goal to reach 140 original House cosponsors upon introduction, and 15 in the Senate. If you want to know whether your Representative or Senator has cosponsored America’s Redrock Wilderness Act in the past, call SUWA’s Washington, DC office at (202) 546-2215 and we’ll gladly help you.



# America's Redrock Wilderness Act Cosponsors in the 107th Congress (as of March 20, 2001)



**House Bill  
Sponsored by  
Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY26)**

**Alabama**

Earl Hilliard, D-AL07

**California**

Xavier Becerra, D-CA30  
Lois Capps, D-CA22  
Anna Eshoo, D-CA14  
Bob Filner, D-CA50  
Barbara Lee, D-CA09  
Robert Matsui, D-CA05  
George Miller, D-CA07  
Grace Napolitano, D-CA34  
Lucille Roybal-Allard, D-CA33  
Brad Sherman, D-CA24  
Pete Stark, D-CA13  
Ellen Tauscher, D-CA10  
Maxine Waters, D-CA35  
Henry Waxman, D-CA29  
Lynn Woolsey, D-CA06

**Colorado**

Diana DeGette, D-CO01  
Mark Udall, D-CO02

**Connecticut**

Rosa DeLauro, D-CT03  
James Maloney, D-CT05  
Christopher Shays, R-CT04  
Robert Simmons, R-CT02

**Florida**

Corrine Brown, D-FL03  
Peter Deutsch, D-FL20  
Carrie Meek, D-FL17  
Robert Wexler, D-FL19

**Georgia**

John Lewis, D-GA05

**Hawaii**

Patsy Mink, D-HI02

**Illinois**

Rod Blagojevich, D-IL05  
Lane Evans, D-IL17  
Jesse Jackson Jr., D-IL02  
Janice Schakowsky, D-IL09

**Kansas**

Dennis Moore, D-KS03

**Maine**

Thomas Allen, D-ME01

**Maryland**

Benjamin Cardin, D-MD03

Albert Wynn, D-MD04

**Massachusetts**

Richard Neal, D-MA02  
Michael Capuano, D-MA08  
William Delahunt, D-MA10  
Edward Markey, D-MA07  
Martin Meehan, D-MA05  
James P. (Jim) McGovern, D-MA03  
John Olver, D-MA01  
John Tierney, D-MA06

**Michigan**

David Bonior, D-MI10  
John Conyers, D-MI14  
Dale Kildee, D-MI09  
Carolyn Kilpatrick, D-MI15  
Sander Levin, D-MI12  
Lynn Rivers, D-MI13

**Minnesota**

Bill Luther D-MN06  
Betty McCollum, D-MN04

**Missouri**

William "Lacy" Clay Jr., D-MO01  
Karen McCarthy, D-MO05

**Mississippi**

Bennie G. Thompson, D-MS02

**Nevada**

Shelley Berkley, D-NV01

**New Jersey**

Robert Andrews, D-NJ01  
Mike Ferguson, R-NJ07

Rush Holt, D-NJ12

Frank Pallone, D-NJ06  
William Pascrell, D-NJ08  
Donald Payne, D-NJ10  
Christopher Smith, R-NJ04

**New York**

Joseph Crowley, D-NY07  
Eliot Engel, D-NY17  
Nita Lowey, D-NY18  
Carolyn Maloney, D-NY14  
Carolyn McCarthy, D-NY05  
Michael McNulty, D-NY21  
Jerrold Nadler, D-NY08  
Jose Serrano, D-NY16  
Nydia Velazquez, D-NY12  
Anthony Weiner, D-NY09

**North Carolina**

David Price, D-NC04

**Ohio**

Sherrod Brown, D-OH13  
Tony Hall, D-OH03  
Marcy Kaptur, D-OH09  
Dennis Kucinich, D-OH10  
Thomas Sawyer, D-OH14  
Stephanie Tubbs-Jones, D-OH11

**Oregon**

Earl Blumenauer, D-OR03  
Peter A. DeFazio, D-OR04  
Darlene Hooley, D-OR05

**Pennsylvania**

Robert Borski, D-PA03  
Robert Brady, D-PA01  
William Coyne, D-PA14

Chaka Fattah, D-PA02  
Joseph Hoeffel, D-PA13

**Rhode Island**

James Langevin D-RI02

**Texas**

Ken Bentsen, D-TX25  
Charles Gonzalez, D-TX20  
Sylvestre Reyes, D-TX16

**Vermont**

Bernard Sanders, I-VT-At Large

**Virginia**

Rick Boucher, D-VA09  
James Moran, D-VA08

**Washington**

Brian Baird, D-WA03  
Jay Inslee, D-WA01  
Jim McDermott, D-WA07  
Adam Smith, D-WA09

**Wisconsin**

Tammy Baldwin, D-WI02  
Jerry Kleczka, D-WI04

**Senate Bill  
Sponsored by  
Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL)**

Edward Kennedy, D-MA  
John Kerry, D-MA  
Ron Wyden, D-OR

**Please Ask Your Representative  
and Senators to Cosponsor  
America's Redrock Wilderness Act Today!  
(or thank them if they already have)**

**Send your letters to:**

**The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515**

**The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510**

## D C news

## Wilderness Week Takes Capitol Hill by Storm

Sure as August thunderstorms bring flash floods down the canyons, each February our nation's capital is deluged with fun-loving citizen activists who come to educate Congress on America's redrock wilderness. This year, 70 activists from all parts of Utah and the U.S. traveled to Washington, DC to be part of the Utah Wilderness Coalition's (UWC) legendary Wilderness Week. After a full day of activist training workshops, these intrepid volunteers prowled the halls of Congress for three solid days, visiting every single House and Senate office—535 in all—and asking every representative and senator to become an original cosponsor of Redrock!

This year's stellar bunch of activists was inspired by personal visits from Senators Richard Durbin and Russ Feingold, and Representatives Brian Baird and Rush Holt; all spoke of their passion for Utah's priceless wilderness and the vital work that they—and we—are doing to protect it for all time. At the traditional Tuesday night Congressional Wilderness Reception, the UWC presented Rep. Maurice Hinchey with the first "Utah Wilderness Champion" award for his stalwart leadership in five consecutive Congresses as the sponsor of America's Redrock Wilderness Act. Rep. Hinchey gave an impassioned speech about saving threatened wilderness that got everyone



*Fred Oswald*

*Utah activists Gail Hoskisson and Amy Brunvand compare notes with Montana activist Kate Wright.*



*Ray Bloxham*

*Wilderness Week participants gather on the front steps of the U.S. Capitol.*

fired up to pursue new congressional cosponsors with a vengeance. After all their hard work, Wilderness Week participants learned just how effective their voices can be when more than 80 members of Congress signed onto the Redrock bill in just two weeks, a blistering pace that put the bill on track to break all previous records for original cosponsors at reintroduction time. Keep chasing those cosponsors, folks. We've said it before and we'll say it again—your involvement makes a big difference!

SUWA thanks all our wonderful Wilderness Week volunteers as well as our coalition partners—The Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club—for all their help in launching America's Redrock Wilderness Act in the 107th Congress. Congratulations on a job well done!



*Fred Oswald*

*Activists from Utah's 2nd congressional district attend a meeting with Rep. Jim Matheson (D-UT) on Capitol Hill.*



## canyon country updates

### Comments Needed on Draft San Rafael Travel Plan!

Old-timers may recall that in 1991, when the Price BLM office released their Resource Management Plan, they included absolutely no off-road vehicle (ORV) trail designations and no environmental impact analysis of ORV use. Instead, they vowed to release a travel management plan within one year that would specifically address ORVs. Of course, when the agency ran up against a firestorm of opposition from ORV folks who had always treated the area as an unrestricted playground, the BLM put the plan on the shelf, where it's gathered dust ever since. Meanwhile, we've got more eroded, muddy, user-created trails than ever.

Fast forward to 2001, when the BLM evades judicial review of their failure to produce the plan by promising to release one this year (see ORV Litigation Continues, p.18). May is the target for release of the draft.

The BLM needs your comments now, before the draft hits the streets. The dirt-bike and ATV clubs have been submitting a mountain of material to the BLM in an attempt to keep as many trails and wash bottoms open to their soil-churning machines as possible. And there's every reason to suspect that the BLM is taking it all in and using it as the basis for their plan. That tilts the playing field against us, and the only way to restore some semblance of balance is to provide our information early in the process.

What should you submit to the BLM? Here are some suggestions:

1. Executive orders and regulations require the BLM to minimize conflict between motorized and non-motorized users. This means that the negative impacts ORVs have on your experience—noise, fumes, safety threats, scars on the land, and loss of vegetation and wildlife—are problems the agency has to address. Tell the BLM in detail how ORVs affect your experience in the wild, and submit pictures if you can.

2. The BLM must ensure that any ORV use it authorizes will minimize environmental harm. The BLM needs to hear from you about environmental damage you've witnessed from ORVs.

3. Any information about the creation of trails since 1991 is important because ORVs are supposed to be limited to trails in existence as of that date. If you visit certain areas on a regular basis, keep an eye

out for new trails created since 1991 and provide the best documentation you can. If we don't get rid of these pirate trails now, we'll have to live with them forever. **Please send your comments to: Dick Manus, Area Manager, 125 South 600 West, Price, Utah 84501; and Sally Wisely, BLM State Director, 324 South State, Suite 301, Salt Lake City, Utah 84111-2303.**

### BLM Gets it Right with Wilderness Handbook

At long last, it's here. As the new year rolled in, the BLM issued its new and greatly anticipated *Wilderness Inventory and Study Procedures Handbook*. Don't let the bureaucratic and lackluster title fool you—this handbook contains much-needed guidance some real action-packed direction. In BLM parlance, the Handbook provides “policy, direction, general procedures, and guidance for all future wilderness inventories and future designations of Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) under provisions of Sections 201 and 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.” Granted, it may not sound like a *New York Times*’ “bestseller,” but it's got some interesting passages that are well worth reading.

In a nutshell, the handbook emphasizes that wilderness is an important public resource that must be included in the agency's land management decision-making process. **Best of all, it directs the BLM to acknowledge citizens' wilderness proposals and to review and inventory lands in such proposals before taking any actions within these areas.** The agency must then conduct an environmental analysis of the proposed action (i.e. oil and gas development, mining operations, road construction, and ORV uses) to determine whether it could impact the wilderness resource. The BLM must also address alternatives including mitigating or relocating the action, or postponing a decision on the action until wilderness values can be addressed through a new or amended land use plan. This is a major step forward in Utah and around the West with respect to protecting wild lands.

Previous efforts by the BLM to inventory Utah's remaining wilderness lands have been, at best, incomplete and, at worst, deeply flawed and politically tainted. The new Handbook remedies this by requiring a review of any proposed wilderness areas potentially harmed by development projects. In other words, the BLM can no longer summarily dismiss citizens' wilderness proposals. This is good news for the three

## c a n y o n   c o u n t r y   u p d a t e s

million acres of citizen-proposed wilderness in Utah that were never assessed by the BLM.

Although there is no guarantee that the BLM will protect all of these citizen-inventoried areas as WSAs, **this is a big step in the right direction.** Obtaining new site-specific information will help put an end to agency management decisions that are based on old, outdated, and often invalid information. And though there will continue to be disagreement among various interests as to the final management of wilderness-quality lands, the new BLM handbook provides for a much more informed decision-making process.

## ORV Litigation Continues

*Note: This is the third article in a series—see Summer 2000 issue, p.28 and Autumn/Winter 2000 issue, p.19.*

This past winter, in an unpleasant holiday surprise, SUWA suffered a setback in its ongoing ORV litigation against the Utah BLM. On December 22<sup>nd</sup>, Judge Kimball ruled against SUWA and its conservation partners, denying our motion for a preliminary injunction (PI) and granting a corresponding “motion to dismiss” filed by the ORV groups. To briefly recap, our PI motion had three principal goals: (1) immediate closure of four WSAs to ORVs (Moquith Mountain, Sids Mountain, Behind the Rocks, and Parunuweap), (2) immediate BLM compliance with the obligations stated in its land use plans (i.e. monitoring of ORV damage at Factory Butte), and (3) an honest BLM evaluation of whether its outdated land use plans accurately analyze current ORV use levels and impacts.

You’ll recall that since we filed this case in October of 1999, the BLM has taken never-before-seen steps to immunize itself from our litigation. These steps include, but are not limited to:

- widespread ORV closures in San Rafael Swell WSAs;
- emergency ORV closure in Parunuweap WSA;
- new staff hires in the Henry Mountains Field Station (which includes Factory Butte and Wildhorse Mesa);
- new law enforcement personnel hired in Moab and Salt Lake field offices and;
- both a statewide and national ORV strategy.

During the course of the lawsuit, the BLM steadfastly maintained that its rapid succession of actions were merely coincidental with, and not in response to, our litigation. You decide who to believe.

Nevertheless, throughout the court proceedings, BLM managers repeatedly acknowledged that ORV damage is continuing to take place in some of the above mentioned WSAs (i.e. Sids Mountain), but that the agency remains “optimistic” that it will eventually “get a handle” on the problem. Additionally, the BLM made only the most tentative promises to begin updating its ORV and land use plans, beginning with the San Rafael travel management plan (see article, page 17), and possibly continuing throughout this decade with new land use plans in Vernal, Richfield, and Price. All of these promises, however, are predicated on funding from Washington, DC, and we have already seen the agency begin to back away from any commitment to completion dates.

While these actions are only a “first step” to addressing widespread ORV damage on Utah BLM lands, they were enough to temporarily immunize the agency from our litigation. We have already filed our notice of appeal of Judge Kimball’s decision, and will be filing appellate briefs in the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals in early spring. In the meantime, the remainder of our case before the District Court has been “stayed” (temporarily halted), pending resolution in the Tenth Circuit.

## Oil and Gas Wells Near Canyonlands?

Imagine: you and your family are on a trip to witness first-hand the spectacular scenery of Canyonlands National Park and Dead Horse Point State Park—places you have not seen since childhood. On the way there, you’ve been reminiscing (and burning your family’s ears off) about the spectacular sweeping vistas at the entrance of the Canyonlands Basin. Much to your surprise, you find an array of seismic routes, cables, and strange industrial vehicles in place of the expected view. . . or worse yet, a field of oil and gas wells!

Unfortunately, this scenario could turn out to be more than just a bad dream. **The BLM is now preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a 36 square-mile oil and gas seismic exploration proposal on lands adjacent to Canyonlands National Park and overlapping portions of Dead Horse Point State Park.** If the project is approved, the landscape bordering approximately eight miles of the scenic Highway 313 could be marred with seismic tracks and future development.

Besides its intrusion on park views and resources, the project area also overlaps the Gold Bar proposed (and BLM-inventoried) wilderness, a rugged and color-



Photo by Richard Cook/Image prep by Canyon Color Graphics, Moab

*Seismic oil and gas exploration near Canyonlands National Park would violate the peace and wild beauty of nearby canyon systems in the Gold Bar proposed (and BLM-inventoried) wilderness unit.*

ful landscape comprised of six canyon systems with numerous arches and other natural features carved from Navajo sandstone. As a precursor to drilling, large “vibroseis” buggies would circumnavigate the rims of these canyons, traveling *cross-country* over a landscape with wilderness character. These buggies would zig-zag through the project area, stopping at regular intervals to send vibrating waves into the earth. Helicopter crews working around the clock would stretch 108 miles of receiver cables across the area to record seismic data from the resulting tremors.

Ironically, this proposal comes on the heels of the BLM’s announcement that it will restrict vehicle travel in this precise area (see following article). Recognizing that “desert lands take years to recover from cross-country travel,” the agency even plans to install information boards that show visitors “areas where the public lands have been damaged by cross-country use.” What will these visitors think about the 150 miles of cross-country seismic tracks or future wells and access roads strewn across these same public lands?

The EA is scheduled to come out in April, so let’s get a jump on this and tell the BLM that the project must not go forward. Citizens do not want oil and gas wells and roads along a scenic corridor to their national and state parks, and within would-be wilderness. The public is already against the precursor to such development—cross-country motorized travel and seismic operations—in an area that the agency itself recognizes as sensitive to such impacts. Let the agency know that it must amend its management plan to consider the visual impacts of this project, and it must complete a wilderness assessment of the Gold Bar unit. **Write to: Maggie Wyatt, BLM Moab Field Office, 82 East Dogwood Ave, Moab, Utah 84532; fax (435) 259-2106. Please send copies to: Sally Wisely, BLM State Director, P.O. Box 45155, Salt Lake City, Utah 84145-0155; fax (801) 539-4013, and Alford Banta, Superintendent, Canyonlands N.P., 2282 S. Resource Blvd., Moab, Utah 84532; fax (435) 719-2300.**

## Moab BLM Limits ORV Travel

In July of 1969, Astronaut Neil Armstrong uttered his now-famous remark, “one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind,” as he stepped from the space capsule and put the first human tracks on the moon. In January of 2001, the BLM announced new travel restrictions that it hopes will limit tracks in certain areas managed by the Moab field office. One giant leap for the BLM, one *small* step for public lands protection.

**Over 245,000 acres in five areas that were previously designated as “open” to motorized travel will now be managed as “limited to existing roads and trails.”** Areas affected include all or portions of the Labyrinth Canyon and Horsethief Point proposed wilderness units northwest of Moab, lands within and beyond the Behind the Rocks BLM wilderness inventory unit, and a handful of smaller areas—a few along the western boundary of Arches National Park, one northeast of Fisher Towers, and another on the Utah/Colorado border adjacent to Rabbit Valley. These restrictions are commendable, and the Moab BLM deserves some applause for implementing them. **On closer scrutiny, however, this represents only a small step toward protecting lands managed by the BLM.**

Restricting vehicles to “existing” trails does little to prevent resource damage but instead perpetuates a host of problems. First, it raises the question of what is considered an existing trail. Does an animal path qualify? A wash? A faint set of tracks? Seismic lines? A foot-path? Second, there are already too many “existing” trails scattered haphazardly across our desert lands, fragmenting wildlife habitat, crossing through important cultural sites, and tempting ORV users further into the quiet backcountry. Many of these routes should be closed and reclaimed immediately, not authorized as official travel corridors. Third, the Moab BLM lacks an inventory of “existing” trails in the resource area. Even armed with a comprehensive inventory, it would be

## canyon country updates

## BLM's Final ORV Strategy Released (to a Giant Flushing Sound)

Ah, the BLM. While at the same time it complained loudly about lack of resources, the agency spent months developing its "new" national ORV strategy, received thousands of public comments, and held hearings around the country. The result? Status quo. The strategy offers exactly zip in the way of meaningful protection for BLM lands, 94 percent of which are available for use by off-road machines like dirt bikes, ATVs, and monster jeeps. No wonder the BLM doesn't have money for planning and ORV enforcement!

Interestingly, in crafting its national ORV management strategy, the BLM used altered versions of its official logo on both the draft and final plans. Yes, you really *can* tell a book by its cover.



Official BLM Logo



Logo from the draft national ORV strategy



Logo from the final national ORV strategy

extremely difficult to enforce an "existing" trail limitation since the second person to travel on a freshly created set of tracks could argue that they were complying with the rule, i.e. that they were following an "existing" trail. And finally, because the Moab BLM failed to apply a meaningful travel limitation across all lands it manages in the resource area, this new restriction may encourage more damaging cross-country use in the areas that remain designated as "open." An example is the land surrounding and overlapping the proposed Duma Point wilderness unit, including the White Wash Sand Dunes and sensitive riparian areas like Tenmile Wash and other drainages.

This leads us to the same simple policy we've been urging the agency to adopt for years, and the only truly sensible solution to the problem: a trail policy of "closed unless posted open." This designation, uniformly applied across all public lands, would resolve many of the management issues facing the BLM, and would prevent much of the resource damage that is now occurring. Please ask the BLM to take the leap and institute a "closed unless posted open" policy in Moab and statewide . . . one small step for the BLM, one giant leap for wildlands protection in Utah. **Write to: Sally Wisely, BLM State Director, P.O. Box 45155, Salt Lake City, Utah 84145-0155; fax (801) 539-4013.**

## A Breach in Moqui Canyon

Moqui (or Moki) Canyon was once the home of hundreds, if not thousands, of people. Over many generations, these people lived quietly in the canyon, hunting its abundant wildlife and drinking from its pure water sources. Ruins and petroglyphs are the sole remaining traces of their occupancy.

Long after this native culture abandoned the area around 1300 A.D., modern man drowned the lower six miles of the canyon (including their remains) under reservoir Powell. Then, in the late 1970's, an oil company illegally bulldozed a road from the canyon bottom to the mesa above. Although the BLM installed a gate and promised closure of this illegal route, the agency never bothered to lock the entryway. This failure to enforce closure has not been an enormous issue since the area's topography prevented ORVs from entering Moqui Canyon and driving up the route (vehicles were stopped at a sandslide on the south rim). Recently, however, a bulldozer tore down the slide, breaching the canyon's natural protection against renegade ORVs. Not surprisingly, reckless ORV drivers have already made their way into this archaeologically rich canyon, up the illegal road, and across several proposed wilderness areas.

When SUWA told the BLM about this breach, the agency quickly responded by locking the gate. Please thank the BLM for taking immediate action in this matter, and ask them to stop vehicles before the sand-slide area, to keep the gate locked, to close and reclaim the illegal ORV route, and to ticket any trespassers. **Send your letter to: Kent Walter, Monticello Field Office Manager, BLM, P.O. Box 7, Monticello, Utah 84535; fax (435) 587-1518.**

## The Salt Creek Saga Continues . . .

The dispute over jeep use in Salt Creek Canyon, in the southeastern corner of Canyonlands National Park, just keeps on truckin'. To recap, federal judge Dale Kimball ordered Salt Creek closed to motorized vehicle use in 1998 due to the water pollution and environmental degradation documented by the Park Service. Even the Park Service saw the error of its ways and decided against defending its earlier decision to leave Salt Creek open to jeeps. Still, the ORV groups, unwilling to accept any restrictions on their sport no matter the environmental harm, appealed the case to the Tenth Circuit Court. Last summer, the Tenth Circuit dissolved the closure order and sent the case back to Judge Kimball for further review. In October, the Park Service issued an emergency closure of the route.

During the five-year history of this case, San Juan County uttered nary a peep. Last fall, however, it fired up the county four-wheel drives and headed to the canyon to make its stand for R.S. 2477 right-of-way claims in one of the most ecologically fragile areas of the park—Salt Creek. Several times, county officials bullied their way past Park Service officials who objected to vehicles churning through the canyon in violation of the closure order. With the Park Service apparently unable to keep the county out, and with the county making threats of more intrusions this spring, we convinced Judge Kimball to bring the county into the suit as defendants.

### ORV Groups Lose Bid to Open Canyon to Jeeps

In a related matter, the ORV groups argued to Judge Kimball that the Park Service lacked the authority to issue the emergency closure order to protect park resources such as water quality, native vegetation, and wildlife habitat. They sought an immediate reopening of the creek, despite the fact that they already have hundreds of miles of trails to ride in the park. Judge Kimball rejected their request, and the creek remains protected.

## Your Letters Needed!

Like we said, Salt Creek is protected . . . for now. But believe it or not, the Park Service is beginning an Environmental Assessment on vehicle use in Salt Creek. It's very possible that the Park Service could issue a decision at the end of that process to re-open the creek to vehicles. The agency needs to hear from *you* that park protection is more important than allowing noisy, polluting jeeps in every nook and canyon in the park. **Please write to:**

**Canyonlands National Park  
Attention Salt Creek EA  
2282 SW Resource Blvd.  
Moab, Utah 84532**

**\*Comment Deadline is May 1, 2001\***

## Traffic Delays on the R.S. 2477 Trail

Our R.S. 2477\* suit against the BLM and three Utah counties (Kane, San Juan, and Garfield) is over four years old at this point. Once the BLM completed its administrative determinations on the 16 routes at issue in the suit, it was time to move forward. So last fall, SUWA and the Sierra Club filed their papers in support of a motion for summary judgment, arguing in essence that it was time to make a ruling on whether these routes were really valid R.S. 2477 claims.

Key questions are up for discussion and the outcome will have an enormous impact on the future of public lands management and protection. For example, the statute provides that "the right of way for the construction of highways across public lands, not reserved for public uses, is hereby granted." But what exactly is "construction?" The counties argue that the repeated passage of vehicles along a given route amounts to construction; we say it means what it says—actual physical labor meant to construct a highway. If the court rules with the counties, there's no telling how many rights-of-way they would ultimately claim, and proposed wilderness would lie right in the crosshairs.

Oddly, the BLM chose not to file a brief in response to ours, asserting that the dispute was really between the counties, SUWA, and the Sierra Club.

## c a n y o n   c o u n t r y   u p d a t e s

Never mind that the central issue in the debate at this phase of the case is whether the BLM's own determinations were correct and whether the court should accord them deference. At any rate, more briefs were exchanged between us and the counties, and the hearing was set for March 6<sup>th</sup>. Then, the BLM rode in at the last moment, finally asking for permission to file a brief and arguing that it should not be up to us to defend their decision making. Good move, bad timing. The upshot is that we can expect a flurry of new briefs and a hearing two months later, on May 8<sup>th</sup>. Either way, the losing side is very likely to appeal.

*\* R.S. 2477 is a Civil War-era statute which is now being used as a loophole to gain road-building rights across public lands. Up to 10,000 indiscriminate R.S. 2477 claims have been filed by rural Utah counties seeking to circumvent wilderness designation.*

## More Guzzlers Proposed for West Desert

As the last issue of *Redrock Wilderness* went to press, the Fillmore BLM office was in the midst of preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to review the effects of constructing 38 additional small-game guzzlers (artificial water developments) in Utah's West Desert. As expected, the BLM approved the project, despite the fact that it will push the total number of guzzlers constructed over the past five years in the West Desert to *over 200*. The most recent decision allows guzzler construction in the San Francisco Mountains, Red Tops, Black Hills, Cricket Mountains and Red Canyon—all areas within America's Redrock Wilderness Act.

SUWA immediately filed an appeal of the Fillmore BLM's decision with the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). We argued that the BLM should have looked at other locations for the guzzlers (i.e., outside the proposed wilderness areas), and that the agency should have better addressed the "No Action" alternative of shelving the project altogether. The BLM's cursory analysis of this alternative was limited to a couple of sentences which said, in effect, that the current environment would continue to exist. This does not amount to a well-reasoned analysis!

We also argued that the BLM's decision did not adequately assess the cumulative impacts of 200 guzzler developments in Utah's West Desert. Instead, the agency's decision was based on the *assumption* that the guzzlers have a positive impact on the environment. Such assumptions do not constitute a thoroughly

researched and well-documented assessment. What magic number of guzzlers will the BLM finally decide is "enough?" We hope the IBLA will force the agency to address this issue sooner rather than later.

## Cottonwood Wash Mine "Wrecklamation" Plan

The upper Cottonwood Wash watershed, located about five miles west of Blanding, Utah, is bordered by drainage divides to the north, west, and east, and by highway U-95 to the south. Within this area of approximately 143,000 acres (spanning in elevation from 4,000 feet to more than 10,000 feet at Elk Ridge in the Abajo Mountains), the BLM has management jurisdiction over about 34 percent of the land. Forest Service lands account for 60 percent, while the Ute Mountain Tribe and the State of Utah hold nearly equal portions of the remaining 6 percent. Over 200 abandoned vanadium and uranium mine openings exist in the watershed, many of them clustered at its southern tip on BLM land, the rest scattered throughout the upper portions of the drainage on Forest Service land.

The BLM and Forest Service are proposing to reclaim 81 of these 200 abandoned mine sites (62 on BLM land and 19 on National Forest), 15 miles of mine access roads, and 44 miles of mining exploration routes. If tackled properly, the project could be an admirable venture. Currently, the mines are contaminating soils, leaking into water sources, and emitting excessive concentrations of radon gas. Reclamation of the old mine routes will also benefit the watershed area by reducing soil erosion, threats to water quality, wildlife disturbance, and habitat fragmentation.

Certain off-road vehicle enthusiasts are upset over the route reclamation, expressing concerns that it would reduce access in the area—never mind the radon gas, water pollutants, or physical hazards from dilapidated mine structures! Our concerns, on the other hand, center on unnecessary proposed actions in the Environmental Assessment (EA) that may actually expose the area to further damage.

The project purports to take a holistic view of the conditions and resources within the entire watershed and, in fact, the stated purpose of the EA is to "improve the overall health of the watershed." It is ironic, then, that the agencies have decided to dismiss the area's wilderness values from consideration in the EA, stating that they are "unrelated to actions proposed." Indeed, they are very closely related. Bounded within the project area are the Hammond,

## Your Opinion Counts!

Over and over again we hear the BLM make excuses for not doing what it's supposed to be doing on ORVs, grazing, and other issues, by claiming they just haven't received enough complaints from the public to justify action. Apparently, some folks in BLM management think the agency doesn't have to follow the law unless someone complains. And some well-meaning folks in the agency just don't have time to get to everything, so they focus on the squeaky wheels. **Your job is to be the squeaky wheel!** Now more than ever, with the BLM on the hot seat for its shoddy ORV management, your voice is critical.

So, whether you respond to one of the highlighted issues in this newsletter, or whether you simply write to the BLM to complain about ORV abuse or other resource damage you witnessed on vacation, please don't hesitate to express your opinion. And remember to send pictures of the problems you see. Don't let the BLM claim that "everything's okay" when it clearly isn't.

**Write to: Sally Wisely, BLM State Director, P.O. Box 45155, Salt Lake City, Utah 84145-0155; fax (801) 539-4013. Please send a copy of your letter to: SUWA, Attn ORV comments, 1471 S. 1100 E., Salt Lake City, UT 84105.**

Allen, and Arch Canyon proposed wilderness units, all part of America's Redrock Wilderness Act. Although mine reclamation activities will not occur within these units (since they do not contain significant mining impacts), the agencies propose to gravel 14 miles of the nearby Cottonwood Road and harden 17 stream crossings with concrete as part of the reclamation project.

"Improving" roads is not only unnecessary to achieve the project's purpose, but runs directly counter to its objective. The resulting all-season access will encourage increased motorized use, the creation of damaging spur routes, vandalism of cultural sites, and perhaps even new logging proposals. Further, it may have indirect negative impacts on the wilderness character of the units noted above.

As it stands, the many benefits of the Reclamation Plan are shrouded by the agencies' backhanded attempt to use this project as a vehicle to develop the area by "improving" the Cottonwood Road. We'll keep pushing the BLM and Forest Service to adhere to the project's original purpose of improving the Cottonwood watershed and protecting its wildlife, cultural, and wilderness resources. This project should set a worthy precedent for future watershed reclamation plans. . . not a model for "wrecklamation" of sensitive areas.

## A Reprieve for Shunes Creek

Good news for the Virgin Spinedace, Speckled Dace and the Desert Sucker—all native fish species that inhabit Shunes Creek, a small tributary of the East Fork of the Virgin River. Instead of being left high

and dry from a proposed dam and water diversion (technically a side vane weir, for those dam techies out there), these fish will continue living in their native habitat at the southwest corner of Zion National Park. You may remember that although the dam and diversion structures were proposed by Trees Ranch Limited for an area managed *as wilderness* within Zion National Park, the Park Service authorized the project in order to accommodate the company's private water right (see Summer 2000 issue, p.33). The agency made this decision knowing that the dam and diversions were expected to dry up the creek during the summer months of low stream flows, leaving the fish without a home.

SUWA filed comments on the proposed dam and, after the proposal was approved, we filed an informal appeal with the Department of Interior (DOI) requesting that the decision be set aside as it was premised upon inapplicable laws and inaccurate information. Late last year, while our request to DOI was still pending, Trees Ranch announced that it would build the side vane weir outside the park on its own private lands. Interestingly, SUWA and others had suggested this very alternative from the beginning, but to no avail.

Although the Park Service's decision to allow the dam and diversions within Zion are still in effect, we have every reason to believe that Trees Ranch will make good on its word to construct the dam downstream, outside of the park on its private property. We are relieved that Shunes Creek will continue to flow within the park and provide habitat for native fish, especially the Virgin River Spinedace, which has been extirpated from 40 percent of its very limited historic range. Go fish!

## canyon country updates

## Peter's Point Well: BLM Pushes Through Natural Gas Well at Expense of Wildlife

SUWA and the BLM tangled earlier this winter over proposed natural gas drilling deep within the Book Cliffs. Unfortunately, wintering mule deer and elk were the losers.

### Background

For almost fifty years the Peter's Point well, located at the end of a twenty-five mile cherry-stemmed\* dirt road deep within the Desolation Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA), has been faithfully producing natural gas. The well site itself is classified by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) as "high value" elk winter range, and the access road leading to the well is classified as "critical" elk winter range and "high value" mule deer winter range. Except for occasional maintenance trips to service the well or to "read the meter," the operation was relatively self-sustaining. Then, after years of uninterrupted service, the Peter's Point well casing collapsed in February of 2000. Despite the lessee's (Wasatch Oil) attempts to repair the well, it remained defunct.

In June of 2000, the BLM began an environmental assessment (the "summer EA") to evaluate Wasatch Oil's proposal to drill an "offset" well fifteen feet away from the original well, and still on the original well pad. The EA assumed, as a basic precondition to all analyzed alternatives, that Wasatch would not be permitted to drill during a "winter closure" period:

*In order to avoid disturbance to mule deer and elk while on their winter range, exploration, drilling, and other development activity would be allowed only during the period between May 16 and October 31 of any given year.*

This important winter closure stipulation had been applied to *all* oil and gas leases in the Price River resource area for 17 years, and was by now a standard condition for leases issued from that office. The summer EA was finalized in July, and on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, the BLM approved Wasatch's "Application for Permit to Drill" or "APD." The BLM, however, inexplicably failed to put the winter closure provision into both the summer EA's Record of Decision and the August APD.

\* If a dead-end road extends into an otherwise roadless area, the wilderness boundary is sometimes drawn so as to exclude the road but include the land surrounding it. The excluded road is called a cherry-stem.

As summer turned to fall, Wasatch had trouble arranging for a drilling rig and associated work crew, and by the third week of October, the company asked the BLM for permission to drill during the winter closure. At this point, SUWA's Herb McHarg had begun to get wind of what Wasatch was up to, and he requested all legal documentation surrounding the BLM's summer EA. After learning that the winter closure provision had been "left out" of the summer EA, Record of Decision, and APD, Herb left messages for Price field office manager, Dick Manus, and at the BLM state office, alerting the BLM to this oversight. Both manager Manus and Assistant State Director Doug Koza left messages for Herb stating that the BLM **would not** permit any drilling during the winter closure.

With the rising price of natural gas, however, Wasatch was not prepared to give up that easily, and the company continued to pressure the BLM to allow drilling during the winter closure. Relenting to Wasatch's insistence, the BLM and UDWR took a helicopter overflight above the drill sight and access road to determine if mule deer and elk had already moved onto their winter range. Because November 2000 was unusually cold and snowy, the animals had, in fact, already migrated into the vicinity of the well site. Moreover, in October of 2000, UDWR had released several rocky mountain bighorn sheep at the well site itself, and at least three sheep were still in the area. In short, this type of early winter was precisely the reason the BLM imposed a winter closure period in the first place—to protect the wildlife when they are most stressed and vulnerable.

Not dissuaded by the animals' presence at the drill site and along the access road, on November 17<sup>th</sup> the BLM began preparing its second EA (the "November EA"), which purported to focus solely on impacts to mule deer and elk from winter drilling. Conveniently, and after some hasty high level telephone calls, the UDWR wrote the BLM a letter stating that it did not "oppose" Wasatch drilling during the winter closure period. **The BLM completed its hurried November EA on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, just five days after it began, and, to make matters worse, signed the Finding of No Significant Impact and Record of Decision on the same day!** Not a single member of the public was able to comment on the November EA, and going into Thanksgiving weekend, Wasatch once again had a green light to begin drilling. *(continued page 26)*



## canyon country updates

BLM manager Dick Manus approved the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Peter's Point gas well after both he and Doug Koza of the BLM state office told SUWA's Moab Representative Herb McHarg that they would not approve the well because their resource plan precluded drilling in critical elk habitat during the winter. Bad as it was, that was just the beginning of Dick 'n Doug's credibility problems. Take a look at the BLM press release below (underscoring added).



Bureau of Land Management  
For immediate release: December 14, 2000

Contact: Dick Manus (435) 636-3600

### Wasatch Oil and Gas Corporation to Drill Peter's Point Gas Well Preliminary Injunction Denied by Federal District Judge

A federal judge has denied a request from the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance for a preliminary injunction to halt the drilling of a natural gas well on BLM lands located on Cedar Ridge, 55 miles north of the town of Green River.

According to BLM's Price Field Office Manager Dick Manus, his August 2 decision granting Wasatch Oil and Gas approval to drill stands and the company is authorized to continue its ongoing work to complete the Peter's Point well.

Manus said he was pleased and gratified by the judge's ruling. "The extraction of natural gas continues to be an important use of the public lands. Last year a variety of large companies and small independents such as Wasatch Oil and Gas, recovered 97,500,000 MCF (thousand cubic feet) from 2,750 producing gas wells found on BLM lands in Utah."

"Natural gas is a key component to meeting the nation's future energy needs and the demand for gas from public lands will only increase," said Manus.

"We work hard with industry to ensure that oil and gas development is done in an environmentally responsible way that protects natural resources," Manus continued.

Regarding the Peter's Point well, Manus said his office took a real hard look at the specifics surrounding this request to drill, "but when you add all the factors up, we determined that this project could proceed without significant impact to wildlife or other resources."

The gas well is being drilled less than 20 feet from an existing well that has been in continuous production since 1953. No new construction is involved.

According to Manus, the only potential impacts of concern are related to increased traffic along the access road and whether or not mule deer or elk herds would be temporarily displaced.

"The question at hand was wildlife, and that's why we put forth the extra effort to do additional fieldwork, including close coordination with the State of Utah's Division of Wildlife Resources."

—more—

The BLM sacrificed critical elk winter range during an unusually harsh season to establish the Peter's Point gas well. So far, the well has produced nothing. A big contribution to the national energy supply? Think again.

In truth, Manus signed off on the EA while his biologist was out of town, and no BLM biologist actually reviewed the EA before the final decision. In court, the biologist testified that the EA was "a very rushed planning effort." It took a total of just five days—unprecedented speed for an EA of this type.

Not only was the EA issued without a BLM biologist's review, but the BLM never bothered to obtain the most current critical habitat map from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, which showed a conflict with the well road. The BLM's own habitat maps are 20 years old.

(continued next page)

## c a n y o n   c o u n t r y   u p d a t e s

In reality, maintenance crews use a single pick-up truck just once every two weeks to check equipment. This particular project requires multiple big-rig trucks and drilling rigs with dramatic visual and auditory impacts.

In fact, this is the only exception allowed in the history of the plan where safety was not the motivating factor.

(continued)

While there will be some increase in vehicle traffic over a three-week period while the well is drilled, our conclusion is that the incremental increase is not sufficient to pose a significant impact on the herds. Travel on the access road will be kept to a minimum due to several measures agreed to by the company. Mitigation includes: selecting a smaller drilling rig to reduce the amount of equipment and the number of trips needed to move the equipment on and off site; arranging work crews such that each crew would work a 12-hour shift and would travel to and from the drill site in the same vehicle; scheduling travel on the access road during times when mule deer and elk would be less affected; and developing a nearby water source to reduce the number of trips along the road.

BLM determined that increased traffic on the road would not pose a serious problem, particularly in light of the fact that this road is open to the public and receives regular use by oil and gas maintenance crews and hunters during this time of year. The Peter's Point well is within a cow elk hunting area that will continue through January 30.

Our decision is also in full conformance with the Price River Management Framework Plan that provides guidance for all of Carbon County and some of northern Emery County. While the plan does contain a seasonal restriction on new construction and drilling activities between November 1 and May 15 to protect wildlife, the plan also contains a provision allowing exceptions on a case-by-case basis, this being one.

"Clearly, the intent of the seasonal wildlife restriction in the land management plan is to prevent invasive activities that include new construction, which simply is not the case here," says Manus.

###

(continued from page 24)

### The Fight

Once again, SUWA jumped into the fray. In mid-November, Herb had been told that the BLM was contemplating a supplemental EA, but because he wasn't sure what the BLM was up to, he decided to wait to see a draft EA before submitting comments. After returning from Thanksgiving weekend and learning about the BLM's complete disregard of public process, Herb quickly filed a Request for Immediate Stay and for State Director Review on November 29<sup>th</sup>. On the afternoon of November 30<sup>th</sup>, SUWA learned that State BLM Director Sally Wisely had denied its request for a stay, and that Wasatch was imminently preparing to drill.

With no other choice left, at 4pm on November 30<sup>th</sup>, SUWA filed for a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) in federal district court, requesting that the court declare the BLM's actions in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and enjoin the BLM from permitting Wasatch to drill. The next morning, SUWA attorneys Steve Bloch, Heidi McIntosh, and Herb McHarg were in court before Judge Dale Kimball, arguing for the TRO. By this point, Wasatch's attorneys had joined the fight and, along with the U.S. Attorney's Office, argued that the BLM's decision to

permit drilling was acceptable and that, in any event, Wasatch had spent too much money on a drill rig and work crew to be turned away now. Unfortunately, Judge Kimball accepted the latter argument, and denied SUWA's request for a TRO, but set a Preliminary Injunction hearing for December 7<sup>th</sup>.

After a week of furious work, SUWA was prepared to do battle. We were joined by SUWA member and activist, Bill Love, whose passion for protecting wildlife and wildlife habitat led him to contact Herb and volunteer his time as a witness for the December 7<sup>th</sup> hearing. Wasatch wasn't staying quiet during this time, and the company began moving its drilling equipment to the Peter's Point well site, though by all accounts it had not yet begun drilling by the December hearing date.

Incredibly, at the December 7<sup>th</sup> hearing, the BLM admitted it was using outdated wildlife maps and information from 1980 to guide its decision in the November EA. In addition, a BLM biologist with over twenty years experience at the Price office testified that the November EA was both "rushed" and "unique," and that the BLM went ahead and finalized the November EA without the basic data necessary to make an informed decision. Sadly, the outcome of the December 7<sup>th</sup> hearing was much like the TRO hearing

on December 1<sup>st</sup>, and Judge Kimball was not persuaded that the BLM's fly-by-night November EA had violated NEPA. On December 11<sup>th</sup>, Judge Kimball denied our request for a Preliminary Injunction, stating in particular that he did not believe SUWA had presented "relevant evidence" which, even if the BLM had provided an appropriate comment period, would have changed the agency's decision to permit Wasatch to drill.

### Aftermath

SUWA filed and briefed a Motion for Reconsideration, asking Judge Kimball to review and amend his December 11<sup>th</sup> ruling to reflect that we were correct on the legal merits of our Preliminary Injunction motion. On February 9<sup>th</sup> Judge Kimball once again denied our motion. In an ironic twist, Wasatch Oil filed a notice with the BLM on January 2nd, stating that it had been unable to drill the new well and would not return to the well site until spring of 2001.

Though we lost this battle, it was important to demonstrate to the BLM that we are prepared "to go to the mat" and fight both the agency's cavalier notion of "public participation" in the NEPA process, and its industry-driven agenda to extract as much oil/gas/coal as possible, regardless of the environmental impacts. With the new Bush administration's push for fossil fuel development and extraction, and the BLM's penchant for ignoring the law, we're sure to be seeing more of the BLM in court this coming year.

## In the Name of Forest Health

The Vernal Field office of the BLM is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a proposal to burn and "mechanically treat" aspens in order to "rejuvenate" the stands (one wonders how nature got along all of these years without us). Because the project falls within the Bitter Creek proposed wilderness (and the BLM's own wilderness inventory unit), the agency must complete a wilderness assessment of the entire area, and must consider the alternative of postponing a decision until the area's wilderness values can be addressed.

If the BLM really wants to improve forest health, it should turn its attention to excessive cattle grazing, roads, ORV damage, and Smokey the Bear's "no burn" mentality. These are the real causes of any perceived decline in the land's health, and any EA should consider such factors. Tell the BLM that wild places need *less* human interference and manipulation to stay healthy, not *more*. **Please send comments to: Steven Strong, BLM Vernal Field Office, 170 South 500 East, Vernal, Utah 84078; fax (435) 781-4472.**

## The White River Wilderness Says "Thank You!" to Citizen Activists

Speaking through windy murmurs in pinyon and juniper boughs and the gurgled tongue of water lapping stone, the White River Wilderness bellows a sigh of relief and appreciation to the citizen activists who have temporarily stopped the drilling of an oil and gas well on its precious ground. This was a grassroots effort to be proud of—complete with letters and phone calls, administrative appeals, protest gatherings, and some very distressing yet convincing video footage filmed by two outstanding activists (which aired on television during the Sydney Olympics closing ceremony!). Together we can make a difference...and we have.

The Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) has granted our request for a "stay," meaning that no further action can occur until a final determination is reached on the merits of the appeal. At the time the stay was granted, however, the IBLA thought that the company had stuck to its development schedule and had already finished road construction and drilling. Therefore, the IBLA believed that the stay would merely prevent the construction of the proposed pipeline. Since then, we've explained that the company has only bulldozed an initial path to the site and scraped the drill pad, and that final road construction and drilling have not occurred. We hope the IBLA will expand the stay to prevent any further development, and eventually rule in our favor on the merits of the case. We'll keep you posted, and we'll let you know if we need to grind the grassroots gears once again. For now, let's enjoy the silence afforded by this small victory!

## Rhyolite Decision Appealed

SUWA recently filed an appeal with the Regional Forester for a decision to approve the Rhyolite Fuel Reduction Project (another creative name for logging) in the Dixie National Forest. The decision, handed down by the forest supervisor, failed to adequately address other alternatives (including cancellation of the project), and was not supported by adequate monitoring information on wildlife, soils, vegetation, and other forest resources.

The 200-acre Rhyolite project is east of Cedar City and borders the east side of Cedar Breaks National Monument on the Northern Markagunt

## canyon country updates

Plateau, where elevations rise to nearly 10,500 feet. The project area is in the upper drainage of the Mammoth Creek watershed and is dominated by “mature and old growth stands” of spruce, fir, and aspen (which would be cut down under the project proposal), interspersed with lush wildflower meadows.

The Rhyolite Fuel Reduction Project is just the latest example of the Forest Service using the cyclical (and perfectly natural) outbreak of spruce bark beetle to justify cutting down spruce trees in the Dixie. The Rhyolite project authorizes the commercial logging of nearly 10,000 spruce trees (living and dead) from old-growth stands, in addition to several aspen clearcuts. This decision means that approximately 1.7 million board feet of wood will be logged, generating a present net value, according to the Forest Service, of \$14,500—small peanuts compared to the huge losses felt by myriad wildlife species that call this part of the Dixie home.

## Animal and Land Abuse Continue in Monument

Due to the severe drought conditions of 2000, BLM offices across Utah determined that continued livestock grazing would inflict unacceptable damage to the public range resources, and directed permittees to remove some or all of their livestock from the summer pastures earlier than usual. Permittees agree to obey such emergency determinations when they initially sign their grazing permit contracts with the BLM.



Thomas Burr

*An emaciated cow near the entrance to the drought-plagued Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The cow, which belonged to rancher Mary Bulloch, was later euthenized due to extensive injuries.*

In this case, permittees throughout the state largely complied with the agency’s directive, with the glaring exception of three stubborn ranchers who graze cattle in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. These permittees, whose cattle have full run of the wild and remote 50-Mile Mountain area, refused to abide by the BLM’s determination, complaining that the land was too rugged to allow them to find and remove all of their cattle. Even after the BLM gave them ample opportunity and many unwarranted time extensions to remove their cattle, they defiantly refused to remove many of the cows, willfully violating the terms of the grazing contract.

Eventually, the BLM began the round-up, enlisting helicopters to locate the 200-head of near-starving cattle. Still, it took nearly six months for the BLM to complete the roundup on 50-Mile Mountain. Federal regulations allow the BLM to recoup all expenses associated with such roundups, so notices were sent to the three permittees requesting reimbursement for the BLM’s costs, to the tune of \$100,000. So far, the cattle owners have been unwilling to pay up.

Unbelievably, the BLM is now considering some sort of settlement with these renegade and lawless permittees. And here’s the kicker: not only could the settlement substantially reduce the cattle impoundment fees owed to the federal government, but it could allow these *very same* law breakers to put their cattle back on the *very same* allotments that they themselves admitted were too rugged to allow the proper management of livestock.

But before livestock are permitted back on 50-Mile Mountain, the BLM must conduct a “health assessment” of the area. According to BLM reports from last fall, the starving cattle had chewed off nearly 90 percent of the vegetation; it’s hard to imagine that this area could fully recover in a matter of just a few months. SUWA will be participating in the BLM’s on-site health assessment this spring and we welcome others to join us.

One thing that is clear from this fiasco is that this rugged and extremely remote region is not suitable for domestic livestock grazing. **Therefore, the BLM should not allow cattle back on 50-Mile Mountain.** The permittees, and even the BLM itself, acknowledge that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to properly manage livestock in this area. For the agency to ignore the lessons learned from this whole affair and revert to business as usual would be unconscionable.

If you’d like to participate in the BLM’s on-site health assessment, you can contact the agency for more information at: **GSENM, 180 West 300 North, Kanab, UT 84741; (435) 644-4300.**

## wilderness buzz

By now everyone knows that Utah Congressman Jim Hansen was named chairman of the powerful House Resources Committee. What you may not know is that Chairman Hansen is trying to create a “softer” national image, and now has a large public relations staff helping him do just that. He’s papering media outlets throughout the country with talk of his “I’m-a-moderate-and-I’ll-work-with-everyone attitude.” Of course, we know the real Jim Hansen, and apparently his supporters do too. In the Feb. 11th edition of the *Deseret News*, Utah Shared Access Alliance board member Derk Beckstrand was quoted as saying: “So far Jim is supportive in our efforts to thwart public land closures by radical environmentalist groups in the form of wilderness designations...” In preparation for our next issue, we’re asking you to keep your eyes and ears open for unusual Hansen rhetoric and to let us know what you find. It will be up to us to keep Mr. Hansen accountable to the majority of Americans who support real environmental protection for their public lands.

And speaking of wilderness foes, my desk is littered with newsletters from multiple use/ORV groups. Publicly, these groups like to talk about balance (except for the above-mentioned slip by Mr. Beckstrand), but a quick read of their publications reveals their true anti-wilderness intentions. Here’s a sampling from some of those newsletters.

### You Know You’re Being Effective When...

...The cowboy poets immortalize your actions in verse. In the latest edition of the Utah Shared Access Alliance newsletter (you know, that front organization for ATV manufacturers), two SUWA staffers were vilified in cowboy verse by former Emery County Commissioner Kent Peterson, whose seven stanza poem entitled “Federal Court” was prominently featured in the publication. Kent’s been a little miffed ever since the BLM started closing ATV routes in the San Rafael Swell in response to our lawsuit. He also blames SUWA for killing his precious San Rafael National Conservation Area proposal on two separate occasions in Congress last year. So here are the first and second verses of “Federal Court”:

*Life is kind of like a novel with some good times and some bad / But that week I spent in federal court is about as bad as I have had / We were there to watch the circus, to hear the lies the lawyers told / Because that lady environmental lawyer was here to close our roads.*

*The first witness came in sandals, bright red hair and gold earrings / He testified he was a college dropout and an expert in all things / He talked about the damage to our roads that had been done / By those cowboys driving ATVs out in the desert having fun.*

Taking into account Mr. Peterson’s liberal use of creative license, can you name the SUWA scoundrels he so enthusiastically disparages? Be the first to email us their correct identities (at miker@suwa.org) and we’ll send you a free tee shirt (please specify a size preference). We’ll reveal the outlaw environmentalists who inspired Kent’s moving prose in our next issue.

### Creative License Hyperbolized

*“SUWA has just received an infusion of \$10,000,000.00 from charitable trusts. We need to keep up our membership! Who else will confront their ‘road closures, no drilling, no mining, no cattle, no OHVs, we want it all because we know better’ policy?”*

That “Alert” appeared in the December 2000 Southeast Utah Land Users (SULU) newsletter. SULU, by the way, is another one of those local anti-environmental groups with a decidedly anger-based disposition. When you line up all those zeros, comas, and periods, our budgetary infusion according to SULU equals a whopping 10 million dollars. Typo or tricky tactic? It’s not hard to guess. In the meantime, SUWA staffers are demanding a cost-of-living adjustment!

### Cowboys & Eco-Indians

Below the text in the above-mentioned alert is a cartoon depicting SULU folks (as pioneers) riding covered wagons and being attacked by environmentalist lawyers (Indians) shooting sharp pencils (labeled SUWA and Sierra Club) at the wagons. One driver says to the other, “Keep your eyes peeled. There’ll be more enviro bushwhackers up ahead !!” Setting aside the inappropriate ethnic/manifest destiny stereotypes for a moment, SUWA staffers were offended by the term “bushwhackers.” We prefer the term “waylay.”

### No Hyperbole Here

This quote was pulled from an article in the same SULU newsletter: “We are purposefully scheduling some trails to be developed around areas SUWA wants to put into the People’s Proposed Wilderness.”

## grassroots network

### Help Make Those Calls!

SUWA would be nothing if it weren't for our extraordinarily dedicated and responsive membership. When called upon, these folks aren't afraid to step up and show strong support for protecting Utah's unique and spectacular wild places. One of the most effective ways they show this support is by phoning members of Congress and other decision makers when anti-wilderness bills and policies arise in Washington, DC.

With Representative Jim Hansen (R-UT) now in charge of the House Resources Committee and Secretary Norton at the head of the Interior Department, we are going to need help—and a lot of it—during the next few years. In particular, we're asking you to donate a few hours of your time to help with our activist phone bank in Salt Lake City so we can get the word out to our members in times of crisis. SUWA never solicits funds by phone, so our members know that when they receive a call from a SUWA volunteer, it is only to give them information on important issues so they can make their voices heard.

Last year, our activists, volunteers, and members made an enormous difference by turning back the blatantly anti-wilderness San Rafael "Not-so-Swell" bill on the floor of the House of Representatives. They succeeded in derailing it again a few months later when it was attached as an anti-environmental rider to a must-pass appropriations bill.

Congressman Jim Hansen already has a laundry list of anti-environmental goals in mind for the current Congress and has sought White House support for his agenda (see page 10 for more details). We must be prepared to fight back quickly and effectively. So if you can spare a couple of hours on an occasional evening to phone bank, please contact Gail Hoskisson and she'll put you on the volunteer list. Call 486-7639, ext. 20 or send and email to [gail@suwa.org](mailto:gail@suwa.org). Thank you!

### New Internet Group for SUWA Members

For years, SUWA members and activists have contemplated the idea of an email group for redrock enthusiasts. We are happy to report that one very dedicated SUWA member has taken the initiative and set up such a group. Hosted by Yahoo! Groups, this free, easy-to-use email group allows SUWA members to communicate with each other about ideas, experiences,

events, and outings related to Utah's redrock country.

The group is monitored and managed by a SUWA member (not by SUWA). In order to gain access to the group, you must be a current SUWA member. Membership will be verified by member number (found on the mailing label of your SUWA newsletter) before access is granted. To learn more about the group, or to join, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/redrockpeople>.

### Join SUWA's Email Alert List

Volunteer activists are a critical component in the fight to save Utah wilderness, and SUWA's email alert list makes it easier than ever for wilderness supporters to get involved. Alert list subscribers receive periodic updates on Utah wilderness issues and occasional requests to make phone calls or write letters at critical times. There are typically 2-4 messages per month, though there can be more when issues heat up. If you have an email address and aren't already a subscriber, please sign up now. If you change your mind, it's quick and easy to unsubscribe, and we never give out email addresses to other organizations. Just send email to [SubscribeMe@suwa.org](mailto:SubscribeMe@suwa.org). The address from which you send this email will be automatically subscribed.

### Canyon Country Service Trip

Wilderness Volunteers, a non-profit organization created to promote volunteer service, offers the following trip to Utah in the fall of 2001. For more information contact Wilderness Volunteers toll free at (888) 737-2888, or visit their website at: [www.wildernessvolunteers.org](http://www.wildernessvolunteers.org).

#### September 9 to 15, 2001: Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Utah

Volunteers will work with the National Recreation Area (NRA) staff to remove non-native Tamarisk. In the lower Escalante, the NRA staff has identified canyons where it is possible to keep the Tamarisk from taking over, preserving a native, Eden-like riparian habitat which is increasingly rare in the West. Free days will find us exploring the canyons, finding arches and prehistoric paintings, and enjoying this special place.

**Cost:** \$198.

**Grade:** Strenuous (canyon backpacking, no pack support).

**Leader:** Deborah Northcutt.

**Accommodations:** Backpack camping.

## Become a State Activist for Utah Wilderness!

Even if you don't live in Utah, you can help defend Utah wilderness and advance America's Redrock Wilderness Act in Congress. Utah Wilderness Coalition partners—SUWA, the Wilderness Society, and the Sierra Club—are seeking dedicated wilderness activists from across the country to head up state-based Utah wilderness activist groups. The primary responsibility of the state activists is to ferret out other wilderness advocates in their community and help us organize them to become effective communicators with their state's congressional delegation. Thanks to the hard work of our current state activists, we ended the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress with record support for America's Redrock Wilderness Act.

If you are interested in becoming involved in an existing state activist group, please see the list below and contact one of the volunteer organizers. If your state is not listed below and you are interested in starting a state activist group, please contact Ken Venables of the Utah Wilderness Coalition at 801-486-2872 or wildutah@xmission.com. You can also visit the Utah Wilderness Task Force web page at [www.sierraclub.org/utah/taskforce/](http://www.sierraclub.org/utah/taskforce/). Your involvement can make a huge difference in furthering congressional support for America's Redrock Wilderness Act and moving us that much closer to passing a wilderness bill for Utah's incomparable wilderness lands!

### Nationwide State Activist Groups

#### Arizonans for Western Wilderness

Jessica Pope; [jesspope@earthlink.net](mailto:jesspope@earthlink.net)

#### Californians for Western Wilderness

Mike Painter; [caluwild@sirius.com](mailto:caluwild@sirius.com)

Vicky Hoover; [vickyhoover@sfsierra.sierraclub.org](mailto:vickyhoover@sfsierra.sierraclub.org)

#### Coloradans for Utah Wilderness

Web page: [coloruwild.org](http://coloruwild.org)

Miriam Rosenblum; [coloruwild@earthlink.net](mailto:coloruwild@earthlink.net)

#### Yanks for Utah Wilderness (Connecticut)

Suzanne & Steve Jordan; [yanks4utah@yahoo.com](mailto:yanks4utah@yahoo.com)

#### Illinois Utah Wilderness Task Force

Clayton Daughenbaugh; [claytonhd@aol.com](mailto:claytonhd@aol.com)

Patrick Murphy; [antaeus@nwu.edu](mailto:antaeus@nwu.edu)

Nils Larsen; [nlarsen@egii.com](mailto:nlarsen@egii.com)

#### Marylanders for Utah Wilderness

Eric Luedtke; [midas13@aol.com](mailto:midas13@aol.com)

#### Mainers for Utah Wilderness

Bob Weurthner; [wueassoc@pop3.cybertours.com](mailto:wueassoc@pop3.cybertours.com)

John Long; [jrlong@maine.rr.com](mailto:jrlong@maine.rr.com)

#### Michigan Friends of Redrock Wilderness

Patrick Dengate; [pdengate436@aol.com](mailto:pdengate436@aol.com)

#### New Englanders for Utah Wilderness

Harvey Halpern; [budevans@worldnet.att.net](mailto:budevans@worldnet.att.net)

#### North Carolinians for Utah Wilderness

Web page: [home.triad.rr.com/nc4utwild](http://home.triad.rr.com/nc4utwild)

Dixon Cook; [nc4utwild@triad.rr.com](mailto:nc4utwild@triad.rr.com)

Camille Archibald; [archibald@rti.org](mailto:archibald@rti.org)

Kaarsten Turner; [kaarsten@forestlandgroup.com](mailto:kaarsten@forestlandgroup.com)

#### Granite Staters for Utah Wilderness (New Hampshire)

Jon Barrows; [iamgreenfire@hotmail.com](mailto:iamgreenfire@hotmail.com)

#### NJ Wild for Utah Wilderness (New Jersey)

Web page: [www.njwild.org](http://www.njwild.org)

Vicky Stone; [vicky.stone@njwild.org](mailto:vicky.stone@njwild.org)

#### New Mexicans for Utah Wilderness

Web page: [net2net.org/mnutah](http://net2net.org/mnutah)

Suzanne Prescott; [circe@swcp.com](mailto:circe@swcp.com)

Julia Fjeldsted; [fjeldmat@earthlink.net](mailto:fjeldmat@earthlink.net)

#### Oregonians for Utah Wilderness

Sally Nunn; [sallunn@aol.com](mailto:sallunn@aol.com)

#### Rhode Islanders for the Redrocks

David Clayton; [ri4r@hotmail.com](mailto:ri4r@hotmail.com)

#### Texans for Wild Utah

Susan Lefler; [susan\\_lefler@hotmail.com](mailto:susan_lefler@hotmail.com)

#### Vermont Utah Wilderness Task Force

Bob Jordan; [bobjordan@attglobal.net](mailto:bobjordan@attglobal.net)

Amy Curry; [abcurry@zoo.uvm.edu](mailto:abcurry@zoo.uvm.edu)

#### Wisconsinites for Utah Wilderness

Marty Dahlke; [dahlkem@vtc.com](mailto:dahlkem@vtc.com)

Dan McDonnell; [mcdonndp@uwec.edu](mailto:mcdonndp@uwec.edu)

## inside SUWA

### Mark Your Calendars for the SUWA Reunion Roundup!

The annual SUWA Roundup provides redrock activists with an excellent opportunity to relax and enjoy the canyon country, reaffirm our collective commitment to America's Redrock Wilderness, and spend time with old friends we may only see once a year. If you haven't been to a Roundup recently, this year's is one you won't want to miss. Since this September marks the tenth anniversary of our annual membership gathering in the San Rafael Swell, we're planning to celebrate with a special reunion of long-time Redrock activists whose efforts laid the groundwork for today's powerful nationwide grassroots movement.

This year's gathering will be held from September 21-23 at the Hidden Splendor mine site and landing strip above Muddy Creek (see map and directions below). We'll have organized hikes on Saturday and the usual pot luck dinner on Saturday night where you can show off your homemade culinary delights (or store-bought goodies if that's your preference). Sunday morning, you'll wake to the aroma of freshly brewed coffee followed by a thank-you breakfast prepared by SUWA staff members in gratitude for the hard work and dedication of our exceptional members and activists.

To celebrate a decade of Roundups, we hope to have many former staff, board, and advisory commit-

tee members joining us in the Swell this year. Our plan is to ply them with your wonderful potluck dishes so they will tell us their stories of the earlier days of SUWA. If you have photographs from previous Roundups you would like to share, send them to SUWA at 1471 South 1100 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84105, Attn: Gail. Please label them on the back with your name so they can be safely returned to you during or after the Roundup (or mail us color photocopies, if you prefer).

If you plan to attend this year, here's what you should bring: a potluck dish serving five people for Saturday night (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 or mats, and lanterns and tables to share with the crowd if you have them. Feel free to bring your own libations as well.

Access roads in the Swell are unpaved but generally well maintained; four-wheel-drive vehicles are recommended. We hope to see you there in September!

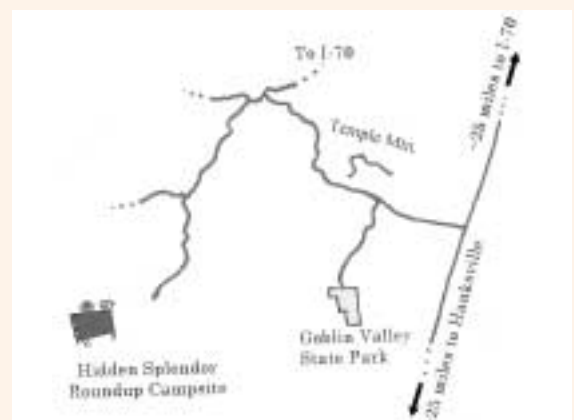
### SUWA Welcomes New Conservation Associate

In January, SUWA welcomed Andrew Hartsig to its staff as Conservation Associate. Andrew will be doing double duty, facilitating the coalition of BLM

### How to Get to the Fall 2001 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.





## Grassroots Team Reorganizes

SUWA's longtime Utah-based outreach coordinator, Dave Pacheco, recently made the move to our Washington, DC office where he will take on the new position of National Outreach Coordinator, focusing on grassroots organizing in the Eastern United States. Replacing him in our Salt Lake City office is Bob Brister of Memphis, Tennessee. As our new outreach associate, Bob will be responsible for grassroots organizing and outreach in Utah and the Western United States.

Bob comes to us with a long history of organizing for peace, social justice and environmental issues. He has spent the last five years organizing and doing outreach for public lands and imperiled species advocacy. Most recently, he organized for the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign and the Southwest Forest Alliance. Bob managed an amazing 116 slide show presentations in the last three years, in addition to his other coordinating and outreach responsibilities with these groups.

We're pleased to welcome Bob to SUWA's Salt Lake City office, where he'll be putting his extensive experience and talent to use in the effort to protect America's redrock wilderness.



Lindsey Oswald

*Andrew Hartsig explores BLM wildlands in the King Range of California with his loyal chocolate lab, Moxie.*

wilderness activists throughout the West, and pursuing some new angles on protecting Utah's canyonlands. A native of upstate New York, Andrew was lured to Utah by his wife, Utah-born and bred Lindsey Oswald, SUWA's Membership Service's Director. Andrew has a degree in anthropology and environmental studies from Bowdoin College, and is thinking about law school. Until just a few months ago, he was the assistant campaign director of the National BLM Wilderness Campaign.

After many years of residence in Utah, Andrew has gone native, falling in love with a landscape that at first looked completely foreign in its aridity, sparseness, and vast horizons. When he's not at home undertaking massive home improvement projects—like vaulting the ceilings in his bungalow, sawing through the roof to install skylights, xeriscaping the front yard, or creating an authentic Zen garden—he and Lindsey can be found skiing the backcountry or knocking around the canyons of southern Utah with their beloved chocolate lab, Moxie.

We know Andrew's creativity and enthusiasm will be an enormous asset to SUWA, and on top of that, he's one of the nicest guys we know.



*Bob Brister with his dog, Vinnie—a long-time companion and founder of "Pit Bulls for Peace."*

## wilderness spotlight

**Editor's Note:** Wilderness Spotlight is a new feature column which highlights a different proposed wilderness unit in each issue of the newsletter. If you have your own story about a special proposed wilderness area in Utah's canyon country or Basin and Range region, please send it in. Topics can be as diverse as the places themselves, with a focus on personal experiences and observations. Be sure to include your name and contact information, and send your essay (no more than 700 words please) to: **Newsletter Editor, SUWA, 1471 S. 1100 E., Salt Lake City, UT 84105.** We look forward to hearing from you!

### Upper Calf Creek Falls, Revisited (Too Often?)

*We have met the enemy, and he is us, too!*

Imagine you're having a spring picnic in the desert under the clearest blue skies you've ever seen, and set before you is an enormous—let's say gargantuan—lemon meringue pie. Notice that teeny little bug crawling across the puffy, whitish peaks? Wee grains of sand cling to the sides of broken eggwhite waves, and riverlings of shiny liquid can barely be seen deep down in the cracking confection. Fall deep into a full-tummy, too-much-wine stupor, become that teensy bug, and come with me—to Upper Calf Creek, a Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

“Confection” is a word that naturally comes to mind when standing on the edge of the drop-off into the Upper Calf Creek WSA. And it is hardly necessary to have imbibed too much wine to imagine that you are about to descend into meringue. Soon you will be friction-walking down Navajo Sandstone slickrock, sidestepping scattered volcanic rocks, the “wee grains of sand” in our dream.

Upper Calf Creek Falls is off Highway 12 between the small Utah towns of Escalante and Boulder. I recall digging our car out of deep, fine sand after a visit into the canyon fifteen years ago. Now there is a trail-head sign to orient visitors, and the Bureau of Land Management has improved the parking area. In my opinion, it was better to dig and to have an adventure than to have the walk-in-the-park experience of today.

Picking my way down the considerable slope all those years ago, I took care to find purchase on slickrock that was free from volcanic gravel or small rocks. Today, there is clear passage. Many—I'd say *too*

many—hands and feet have made the descent “safe” for those who follow, depriving them of the breathless sense of a wild approach to the unknown.

The landscape is mostly pastel rock—beautiful, sculpted, frozen-in-time sand dunes. Here and there are very tall ponderosa pines, very short pinyon pines, a collection of cacti, humps of blue grama grass, and stands of oak. In the spring and early summer, there are flowers, not in opulence, but single flowers on slender green stems, highlighting the backdrop of pink-tinged white rock sprinkled with black, round, volcanic bowling balls.



*Michael J. Blakeslee*

You can hear the water before you reach the bottom of the slope, echoing off the high-walled canyon you suddenly find yourself in. Today, the obvious trail splits—one fork going up above the falls and the other dropping into the canyon. Fifteen years ago there were no trails. You might have missed the secret pools above the falls, or even fallen to your death into cheery, bubbling Calf Creek.

Fifteen years ago the descent was into a wild and mysterious paradise. The sound of water falling some 90 feet and the feel of a cool water-mist slowly replaced the sensations of sun and white-hot rock. Protective, healthy branches of unexpectedly large trees, ferns, and other green things (in the desert!) grabbed me as I crept toward the soothing sound.

Then suddenly, there it was—a most turquoise and green and blue pool. Swallows diving through the mist. Little white marigolds of some kind bobbing on the swell at the edge of the pool, moving as the water free-fell from above. Watercress begging to be sandwiched. This was surely the place Zane Grey wrote about in *Riders of the Purple Sage*, where our hero and heroine could happily live out their lives with everything they

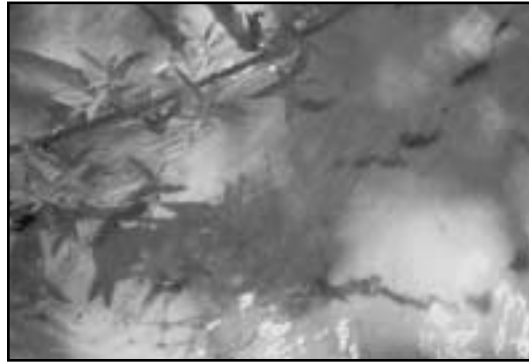
## Wilderness Spotlight

would ever need, never to be seen again by anyone.

All this still exists. But barely. The plunge pool is generally cloudy now, filling with sand from the people who play in the smaller pools above and romp under the waterfall itself, splashing and throwing mud. Where there are still fish, there are also pieces of cheese and lunchmeat people have left to lure them from under the collapsing banks. Toilet paper among the ferns. Footprints on the ever increasing sandbars.

The trip down takes less than an hour. Straight down, no problem. Jump in, but keep your clothes on. There are bound to be at least a dozen others with the same thing in mind. Down a quick beer. Hike back out. All before lunch.

This is our dilemma. This area is protected. It's a Wilderness Study Area. And it is being trashed. Not by cows. Not by ATV's. Not by logging or mining. But by us.



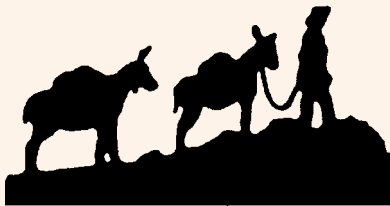
Michael J. Blakeslee

There must come a time when we choose to love and revere these special places enough to leave them alone and let them heal—to recognize their intrinsic values and guard them as sacred.

Please understand that taking us well-intentioned wilderness lovers to task on this point in no way excuses those who would destroy our public wildlands with greed

and impunity. There is no doubt that any threat posed to America's redrock wilderness by fun-loving, non-motorized outdoors folks is minimal compared to oil and gas development, off-road vehicle abuse, and R.S. 2477 right-of way claims. But arguing over the degree of damage done is not the point: a beating is a beating. The point is to shift the emphasis from "use"—even by us—to "protection", from the needs of human beings to the needs of the wild places.

—Susan Tixier was formerly executive director of Great Old Broads for Wilderness. She is now executive director of Forest Guardians.



Self-portrait block print of Everett Ruess with his mules.

## Leave a Lasting Legacy for Utah Wilderness

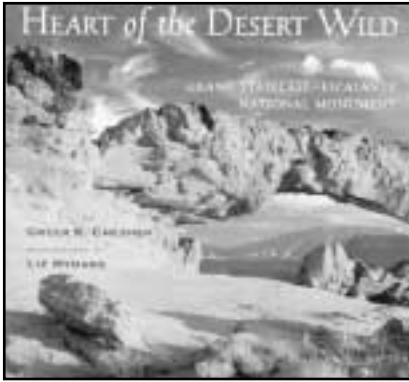
- Do you have an IRA, 401(k), or other retirement plan?*
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If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you may be able to make a special gift to the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance that will have lasting benefits for Utah wilderness. And many of the giving options available through our Everett Ruess Society can earn you benefits such as guaranteed income for life or savings on income and capital gains taxes (or estate taxes for your heirs), while allowing you to help SUWA protect in perpetuity Utah's incomparable desert wildlands.

To learn more about the Everett Ruess Society, named after the infamous wanderer, artist and free spirit who roamed the wild places of the Colorado Plateau, Please contact Lindsey Oswald, Membership Services Director, at 801-486-7639, ext. 11, or at [lindsey@suwa.org](mailto:lindsey@suwa.org).

i n s i d e S U W A

## Book Review



### Heart of the Desert Wild

by Greer K. Chesher; photographs by Liz Hymans. Bryce Canyon Natural History Association, 2000.

Reviewed by Heidi McIntosh

*“This is a rare thing, this ability to stand on a high point and see only looming moonshadows under the cliffs and stars like glitter on a magician’s robe. Space—the final frontier. No—the final luxury.”*

Greer Chesher’s new contribution to the southern Utah literary collection, “Heart of the Desert Wild,” is really many books in one. Like a Russian doll, the more you unpeel and explore, the more delights you encounter. On one level, it is a visually stunning book that would make any coffee table proud. I took it at face value at first, exploring it back to front, poring over every spectacular image and reading the colorful snippets of essays that accompany each photograph. These images, taken by Chesher’s river-running compatriot Liz Hymans, are wonderful panoramic visions that capture the expansive beauty of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. One of the most spectacular depicts salmon-toned cliffs below a dusky lavender sky with a luminous moon on the rise. Fabulous.

Fortunately, beauty is not just skin deep in this case, and describing this book as a “coffee table book” (with all due respect to the genre) doesn’t do it full justice. “Heart” is the first book to treat the monument as a single ecologic body, and as such it ploughs important new ground. Chesher, a biologist who has logged two decades with the National Park Service at Zion, Bandolier and Grand Canyon National Parks, knows the rugged Colorado Plateau like the back of her hand and thinks of it as her “heart’s home.” On top of that, she spent a year conducting additional research specifically for the book. The result is a treasure trove of fascinating facts about the monument’s human and natural history.

For example, we learn that in 1936, Interior Secretary Harold Ickes proposed a 7-million acre “Escalante National Monument”; that 65 million years ago dinosaurs once populated a monument that was forested like the Amazon; that an ancient sea once covered the now bone-dry landscape and left behind tell-tale 95-million year-old oyster shells. Additionally, the monument contains a comprehensive fossil record that exists nowhere else in the world, as well as rich evidence of

the Fremont and Anasazi cultures that thrived in the area thousands of years ago.

Chesher’s chapters on native wildlife and vegetation, and how grazing and other incompatible uses have wreaked havoc on the natural ecosystem of the monument, are where her two passions—biology and writing—ring in harmony. As in the rest of “Heart,” she combines lyric prose with heartbreaking facts like this one: the extinction rate in the last three centuries was one per year; now it’s an alarming 1,000 per year. And chest-high native grasses that once thrived in the monument had been nibbled to the ground by the 1930s.

Another example: Chesher explains in fascinating detail how 50,000 year-old packrat middens, long preserved with industrial strength rat urine, reveal a wealth of data about fundamental changes in our natural world, from native plant loss to climate change. She then asks us to dwell on the implications of “our short-term social decisions.”

“Packrat oracles tell us that when the climate changes by only a few degrees our biotic environment reorganizes itself. In the past, environments that met such challenges were intact and healthy. As our disturbed and compromised environments face coming change, how well will they make the transition? Although we can never go back, we can reunite the pieces and provide them the space, time, and assistance to regenerate healthy ecosystems. It is in revitalizing the past that we save the future.”

This passage encapsulates the message of “Heart”—that the monument is a microcosm of the Earth’s environment, that all things are connected, and that what happens to our environment has enormous implications for us all. The book explains the importance of large, unfragmented habitats and argues convincingly that protection is not just for scenic delights but to provide the space for critical ecological systems to carry on as “interconnected landscapes functioning within a biotic whole, like healthy organs operating within a living body.”

Chesher’s argument is straightforward and convincing, and her use of the monument as a study in how ecosystems should be managed is a valuable contribution. Moreover, her talent for combining science with a poetic style saves the science from dryness and the poetry from dripping sentimentality.

There are other treasures to find in the pages of this book, but I won’t spoil the pleasure of discovering them here (although the archival photographs of Utah are a special treat and worth mentioning). This book will add layers of understanding to the monument and what it offers, and leave you wanting to learn more.



# It's a Spring Sale!



ON selected SUWA items (this page only)

## Posters & Books



### Cedar Mesa Poster

This full color 24" x 36" poster (on natural fiber ivory) features a stunning David Muench photo of an Anasazi cliff dwelling along with a quote by the late Wallace Stegner: "...the spiritual can be saved ..." Available for **just \$10** while supplies last!

### Desert Essays

Signed copies of *The Telling Distance: Conversations with the American Desert* are on sale for **only \$5** while supplies last. Author Bruce Berger is a veteran desert wanderer and a member of SUWA's advisory board.



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inside SUWA

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SUWA gives citizens a voice in deciding the fate of one of America's most magnificent landscapes—the wild and unspoiled Colorado Plateau. Across the nation, we are an alliance of concerned individuals and activists who treasure Utah's incomparable wilderness lands.

To gain the legal protections this land rightfully deserves, we must build a national campaign to save Utah's remaining wild places. That means forging an alliance of many more people, like yourself, who care about the fate of America's spectacular redrock wilderness.

So please join SUWA today. For your \$30 annual membership dues we'll keep you informed on all the issues with our quarterly newsletter and periodic action-oriented alerts. The important thing is your support for SUWA's hard-hitting, grassroots wilderness advocacy. Through the allied efforts of local activists and concerned citizens nationwide, we are determined to save Utah's remaining wilderness.

## Get Your Own SUWA Logo T-Shirt



Front and back view

### SUWA T-Shirts

Shirts are 100% organic cotton (they will shrink somewhat), with a black and sandstone-red logo on either a natural or sage green background.

- Please send \_\_\_\_\_ SUWA t-shirts at \$15 each.

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## SUWA's Compilation CD is One of a Kind!

### Slickrock & Sagebrush: Songs for Utah Wilderness

Inspired by the enduring beauty of Utah's redrock wilderness and the powerful grassroots efforts to protect it, SUWA's new compilation CD is a must-have for Utah wilderness activists! Enjoy an exceptional collection of songs about wilderness while supporting SUWA's important work. A perfect addition to your music collection, the CD costs \$17 and all proceeds benefit SUWA.



*Slickrock and Sagebrush: Songs for Utah Wilderness* is a one-of-a-kind collection featuring such talented artists as Cosy Sheridan, Ken Shaw, Anke Summerhill, Julie Hill, Wendy Ohlwiler, Big Suckin' Moose, The Prairie Dogs, and Katie Lee, among others.

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The first major publication by the Utah conservation community since *Wilderness at the Edge*, SUWA's latest book features the most extensive color photography ever published of Utah's threatened BLM wilderness lands. A **newly updated** black-and-white section (written by Frederick H. Swanson, editor of *Wilderness at the Edge*) presents the key issues of Utah BLM wilderness protection, and is an indispensable resource for activists. An afterword by noted Utah author Terry Tempest Williams affirms the deep meaning this landscape has in our hearts. This book is available only from SUWA and a few selected bookstores.

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ copies of ***America's Redrock Wilderness***. Enclosed is \$18 per copy, which includes postage and handling.

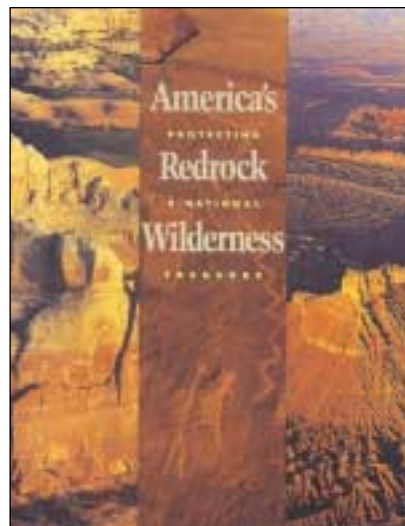
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*America's Redrock Wilderness*: 104 pages (56 pages color, 48 pages B/W); 9"x12," soft cover.




Lone Juniper

Dave Pearson

## Cosponsor Drive Is Off and Running!

Thanks to your help, America's Redrock Wilderness Act achieved record-breaking support in the 106th Congress. But now that we've entered the 107th Congress, we've got to build that support all over again, one Congress member at a time. In this issue, we're asking that you take a moment to pen a letter to your Representative and both your Senators, asking them to cosponsor America's Redrock Wilderness Act. Our goal is to reach 140 original House cosponsors upon the bill's introduction, and 15 in the Senate—but we can't do it without you! **Please see pages 14 & 15 for more details and a list of current cosponsors.**

**\*\*Critical Action Item\*\***  
**Comments Needed on San Rafael Swell Travel Plan!**  
**(please see page 17)**

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