

REDROCK

W I L D E R N E S S

The Newsletter of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Volume 30, Number 3 • Autumn/Winter 2013

Thirty Years of Redrock Advocacy

Cover Photo: A backpacker explores Escalante Canyon amid the golden glow of fall cottonwoods. Photo copyright James Kay (jameskay.com)



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

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

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This issue of *Redrock Wilderness* was written by the following staff and outside contributors: Steve Bloch, Ray Bloxham, Neal Clark, Scott Groene, Mathew Gross, Darrell Knuffke, Terri Martin, Deeda Seed, Liz Thomas, and Jen Ujifusa. It was edited by Darrell Knuffke and laid out by Diane Kelly.

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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, 425 East 100 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84111.

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wilderness notes

We've Come a Long Way Together

Chicken McNuggets and Microsoft Word hit 30 this year. So does SUWA. Since the day we were created around a kitchen table in Boulder, Utah, we've gained protection for a great deal of the redrock wilderness. Thanks to two wilderness bills, several land exchanges, a national monument and new management plans, the amount of redrock with some form of protection is now over 5 million acres. And due to our dogged defense, millions of acres still qualify as wilderness—indeed, most of what we started with three decades ago remains wild.

As Jen Ujifusa explains in our lead story, our momentum has moved the Utah congressional delegation to declare that it wants to enact a wilderness bill for the eastern side of the state. We are ready, in this latest chapter of our history, to work with Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) and the rest of the delegation to protect Greater Canyonlands, the Dirty Devil, the San Rafael Swell and Cedar Mesa. But unless and until there is an agreement, we'll continue aggressively defending the redrock and pushing for a Greater Canyonlands National Monument.

Mr. Bishop's overture is good news, but it is no accident. SUWA has been tilling that political soil for our entire existence. And we have apparently convinced some Utah policy makers that we aren't going to disappear until we get the protection we want for the places we love. We are hopeful, then, but not naïve.

There is no escaping the fact that the nation's political system is busted. That makes accomplishing anything just that much harder, including protecting public lands. As I write this, House Republicans have shut down the United States government. At my daughters' school here in Moab, I talk with parents furloughed from their jobs with federal agencies and wondering when they'll return to work. At our kids' soccer games, I hear some of those same parents and others whose family livelihoods rely on tourism worry about finances as tourists cancel trips to now-closed Arches and Canyonlands National Parks.

It's an embarrassment that Utah Sen. Mike Lee (R) is a leader of this folly, followed by what Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA) refers to as "lemmings with suicide vests."

After five years, it's clear that the Obama administration has no vision for managing our public lands, and perhaps even less interest in doing so. We find ourselves fighting this administration as it defends the Bush administration's destructive resource management plans in court. With barely a whimper, this administration has squandered the Bureau of Land Management's longstanding legal authority to inventory and protect deserving places as wilderness study areas. That is a capitulation that will haunt public lands for years to come. And despite great public optimism around her appointment, Sally Jewell has turned out to be more a Secretary of Ribbon Cutting, than a Secretary of the Interior.

Discouraging as this sounds, it's nothing compared to some of the challenges we've overcome in our history. We did that with your help, and with your continued support we'll keep working toward protecting the redrock for as long as it takes.

For the wild,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Scott Groene". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.

Scott Groene
Executive Director

features



Endless Pressure, Endlessly Applied Celebrating Three Decades of Redrock Activism

Enjoy yourselves, keep your brain in your head and your head firmly attached to the body, the body active and alive, and I promise you this much: I promise you this one sweet victory over our enemies, over those desk-bound men and women with their hearts in a safe deposit box and their eyes hypnotized by desk calculators. I promise you this: you will outlive the bastards. —Ed Abbey

Have you been on a walk like this in the desert? One minute you're zigzagging up a rise, heading for that over-there high point—careful not to bust the crust, briefly admiring the golden, velvety ants, marking the lurking prickly pear out of the corner of one eye. The next minute—it can't be more—you turn around and . . . wait! Where's camp? Did I come from over there, or was it over there? How have I gotten this far, this high, so quickly?

These are moments that caution us to check our coordinates, get our bearings, look for landmarks, remembering that the most important of them might be behind us.

At SUWA, we find ourselves on such an outcrop, far from where we started, perhaps miles left to go. Suddenly, we are conscious that 30 years have passed under the feet of an army of redrock defenders. Thousands of tireless activists and generations of staffers have each carried the load for a time, bringing us to this time and place with our charge—Utah's precious wilderness—largely unscathed.

And now, with similar suddenness, Utah Rep. Rob Bishop (R), for whom wilderness was once anathema, has approached us seeking to broker a comprehensive public lands bill that, if we are to support it, must necessarily protect significant pieces in the very heart of the Colorado Plateau.

After decades of fighting us, it seems our opponents would rather work with us and see us go away than continue to stand by as we chip away barriers to protecting this great landscape.

Winning, Bit by Bit

That means we are winning. After 30 years, we've worn them down, bit by bit, raindrops on slickrock, creating new openings for progress.

It took an astonishing amount of work to bring us to where we are today. Each time we appealed a bad BLM decision, each time an activist sent a letter to the editor, each member of Congress who became a new cosponsor of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, every hard-earned dollar a SUWA member sent in support our cause—each of these made us stronger and advanced our mission.

Since the original citizen's inventory of Utah's BLM lands in the late 1970s and into the 1980s, we have sought to save the dusty sandstone refuge of our hearts so our children and grandchildren can see it, roam it and love it as we have.

If we can do that by working with Mr. Bishop, we will. But we will do so with no illusion that it will be easy. Success will take compromise on both sides. It will demand diplomacy from both sides. It will require elbow grease and probably some

“From its meticulous surveying of the Colorado Plateau to its tireless work to protect the Red Rock Wilderness, SUWA has proven itself a dedicated champion of some of our nation's most remarkable public lands over the course of its 30 year history. Throughout my career in the Senate I have been proud to join SUWA's efforts to protect the Red Rock Wilderness. I congratulate the group on reaching this milestone anniversary.”

—U.S. Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL)

features



© Amy O'Connor/SUWA

Outraged citizens make their voices heard at a congressional field hearing on the Utah delegation's abysmal 1995 (anti-)wilderness bill. The legislation was defeated thanks to Utah wilderness activists and congressional champs.

swallowed pride all around. We're willing to give as good as we get on those fronts. The stakes make the effort fully worthwhile.

Alternatives Remain

But make no mistake. If this effort fails to deliver meaningful protection—protection worthy of one of the planet's last great wilderness landscapes—we will not lose sight of our origins. We know how to fight . . . and endure. Through the years, we've outlasted countless opponents who posed challenges that once seemed insurmountable.

We still remember the landmarks we've passed, the days of a one-room office, a quasi-volunteer staff, of "Stop S.U.W.A." hats for sale at Escalante's Frosty Stop. We remember sending our Kanab members'

newsletters in plain brown envelopes to protect them from the kind of obloquy only small minds in small towns can marshal.

We remember soundly drubbing the Utah delegation in the 1990s, killing their faux wilderness bills with the robust support of members of Congress who valued America's public lands—a defiant Rep. Maurice Hinchey, a filibustering Sen. Bill Bradley.

We remember the triumph of the establishment of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

These were against-the-odds victories; we remember that, too. We haven't forgotten that we cut our teeth as underdogs. We orient there as we advance. We have to.

"SUWA has always impressed me with their ability to engage people from all over the country—helping Americans in every state, including my home state of New Jersey, recognize the majesty of Utah's wilderness. I was pleased when Rep. Hinchey asked me to take the lead on America's Red Rock Wilderness Act when he left the House. The coalition of supporters in Congress that want protections for Utah's Red Rock country has developed because of the work of Rep. Hinchey and the advocacy by the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance."

—U.S. Representative Rush Holt (D-NJ)

features

“For three decades SUWA has focused on a terribly difficult but straightforward goal: secure the long-term legislative protection of the wildest public lands in southern Utah, some of the most spectacular country anywhere. The inherent righteousness of this cause, and the energy and intelligence SUWA brings to the work, place them among the most formidable conservation advocates anywhere.”

—Bill Hedden, Grand Canyon Trust Executive Director

“I have been working with SUWA since they began some 30 years ago. While serving in various capacities over that time I haven’t always been in lockstep agreement with SUWA—yet I have grown to appreciate and respect their knowledge and love of the land and their emergence as a strong, resilient and enduring conservation organization.”

—Brad Barber, economist, environmental consultant, and former deputy director/state planning coordinator for the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget (1989-2000).

Because even as relations with at least some members of the Utah delegation have become less glacial, the State of Utah itself has grown increasingly and bizarrely antagonistic. First, the legislature passed a boneheaded law asserting it will seize Utah’s federal lands in 2014 if the U.S. government doesn’t agree to hand them over. That’s not going to happen, but it should make for an interesting show. We’ll get the popcorn ready.

A Wilderness-Lethal Threat

But the willful myopia of politicians who undervalue the great blessing that our public lands provide is no laughing matter. In addition to the land grab, the festering sagebrush rebellion has burst another of its vile boils. Gov. Gary Herbert and the State of Utah teamed up with county commissioners to file more than 20 lawsuits against the federal government, asserting that they should be granted rights-of-way to thousands of miles of so-called “routes” across public lands, many of which are just dry washes, the aimless meanderings of long-forgotten cowboys, and faint two-tracks in the otherwise wild desert. RS 2477, the Civil War era law that enables this madness, has resurrected an anti-federal battle from the 1970s, when clueless but mad-as-hell westerners last gathered around the old Kool-Aid barrel.

This greedy flare-up has been smoldering for decades and now constitutes one of the greatest threats Utah’s wilderness has ever faced. If these lawsuits are successful, the wild redrock as we know it will cease to exist—bisected by thousands of “routes” to be suddenly “improved” by the overzealous road crews of Utah’s southern counties.

We’re putting every resource we have into fighting these lawsuits, and enlisting more.

One way to resolve this business of metastasizing roads and rights-of-way could be through our work with Rep. Bishop. If a wilderness agreement neutralizes bogus claims in our wilderness proposal, we might sidestep the morass that will surely trap us for decades if these lawsuits have to wend their way through the courts.



© Kevin Walker/SUWA

Wilderness activist Dan Kent blocks the path of a San Juan County road grader as it attempts to blade a “right-of-way” on Hart’s Point (just east of Canyonlands National Park) in the fall of 1996. The battle over county RS 2477 claims continues to this day.

features

“I originally joined SUWA’s board to learn what made SUWA the best regional environmental organization in the West. The answer quickly became clear: it’s the staff. SUWA’s staff is—and has always been—terrifically talented and passionate about the Redrock. They are focused, strategic and nimble. And they’re fun to be with. I admire every one of them—past and present—and am grateful to them for their success in protecting and conserving Utah’s wildlands for the rest of us.”

—Johanna Wald, Senior Counselor with Natural Resources Defense Council

Mr. Udall’s Vision, Deserving as Ever

We simultaneously have our eyes on another path to protection: creation of a national monument for the Greater Canyonlands region. The great million-acre vision for Canyonlands National Park, which then-Interior Secretary Stewart Udall articulated in the 1960s, remains unfulfilled. Currently, the national park is just a third of that. Its boundaries, drawn hastily in magic marker in a legislative horse trading exercise, remain a disservice to the landscape—one of the largest roadless areas in the lower 48 states, bursting with archeological and ecological wonder.



SUWA file photo

A SUWA staffer bird-dogs Al Gore on the campaign trail in 2000.

President Obama could rectify that with the stroke of his pen, restoring the promise of Canyonlands and protecting the core of Utah’s redrock. We’ve delivered more than 15,000 postcards to the administration in support of designating a Greater Canyonlands National Monument. Utahns have met with the administration, rallies have drawn eager crowds in Moab, and members of Congress have echoed their support.

This clamor will only grow. If we have to send a man in a chicken suit to follow Interior Secretary Sally Jewell around, well, we know a little something about that, too. We bird-dogged (chicken-dogged?) Al Gore during the New Hampshire and Iowa Presidential primaries in 2000—and his staff took notice.

We may be blowing out a few candles as we mark our 30th year, but we’re as hopeful and determined as ever. We know we’ve gotten this far thanks to our tenacity, our intimate knowledge of the land, our endurance . . . but especially thanks to the passion of our loyal membership. You have served as cheerleaders, gut-checkers, inspiration and infantry on the front lines of this battle to save Utah’s wilderness. We’ve come a long way in 30 years, and we got here together.

So where to next? You already know. In the desert, if you want a better view—and a real sense of where you are and why—the hard way is up, over obstacles and across the scree. It’s the rewarding way, too. We’ll meet you at the next rise. Thanks for coming along, and for making the trip possible in the first place!

—Jen Ujifusa

[If you’re in town, please join us for our 30th anniversary celebration in Salt Lake City on November 16th. Learn more at suwa.org/gala.]

DC news

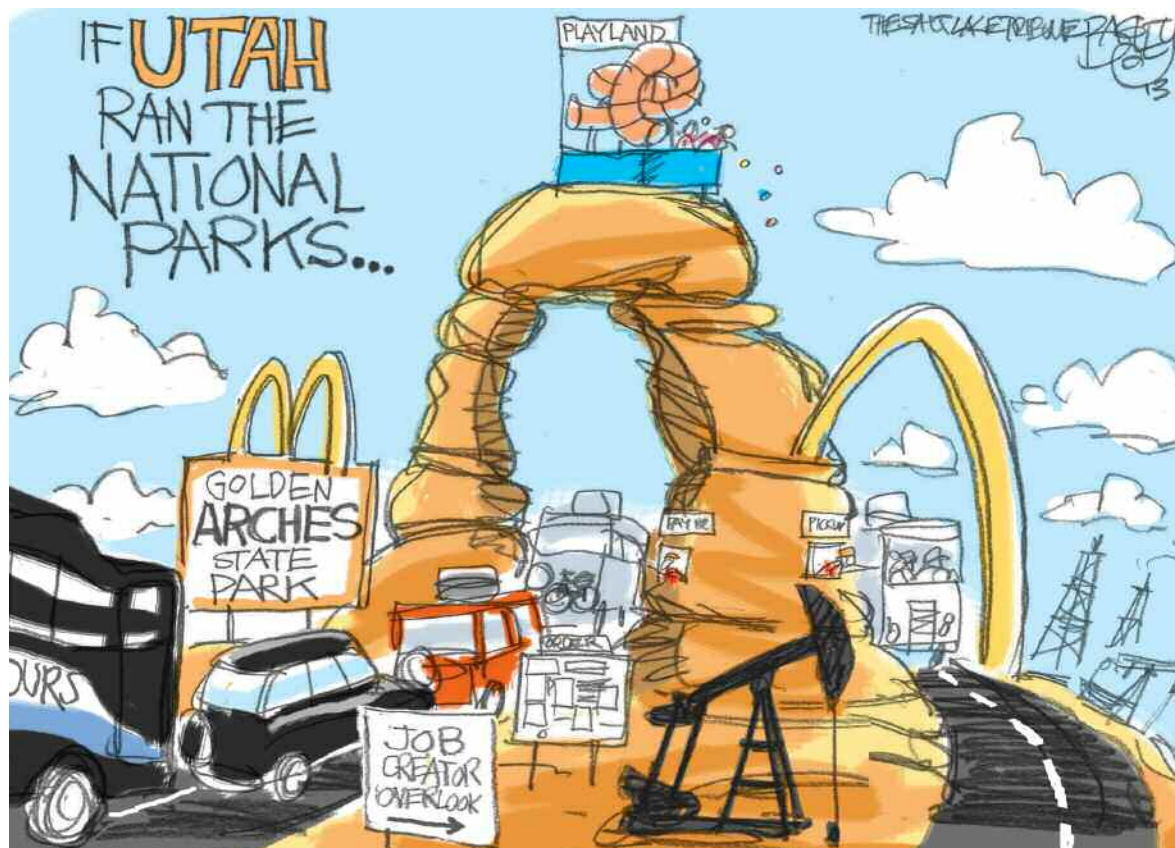
Government Shutdown and National Park Closures Fuel State Land Grab

In a truly Orwellian move, a group of Utah elected officials—members of Congress, the legislature and county commissioners—tried to leverage the 16-day-long government shutdown to support their argument that the State of Utah is better suited to manage public lands than the federal government.

As everyone (except, apparently, House Republicans) knows, the National Park System is part of the federal government. When the Republican House shut the government down, they shuttered our parks and furloughed park employees. This had unintended but predictable, and predictably serious, consequences for gateway communities and businesses in places like Springdale and Moab that rely on tourism for their livelihoods, and federal employees for a significant part of their workforce. Shuttered parks meant cancelled reservations, few tourists, unpaid neighbors and a serious hit to the bottom line.

Never eager to take responsibility for their actions, congressional Republicans expressed outrage over these closures and demanded answers from the Park Service. Why were these parks closed? How could this have happened? “We’ll see about this!” they thundered and promptly convened a House Natural Resources Committee hearing on the matter. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR), patiently explained to the Republicans that they only had to look in the mirror to see who was to blame for the outrage.

Meanwhile, back in Utah, tea-party county commissioners were rattling their sabers and planning to “liberate” the national parks by opening them under county-led management. Utah Gov. Gary Herbert interceded and spent roughly \$1.5 million of Utah taxpayer dollars to re-open several National Park Service units for 10 days (the state will likely not be reimbursed). The legislature grudgingly went along.



DC news

Since then, Republicans like Utah Attorney General John Swallow, lacking any sense of irony, have argued that the Republican-led shutdown and Utah's willingness to pay to keep the national parks open is evidence that Utah can manage public lands better than the federal government can. Huh?

If people like Swallow should have learned anything from the shutdown and its effects on Utah's national parks and other public lands it's this: federally managed public lands—especially magnificent wild vistas and landscapes—are the lifeblood of a vibrant Utah economy. Keeping Utah's public lands in federal ownership is the right thing.

—Steve Bloch

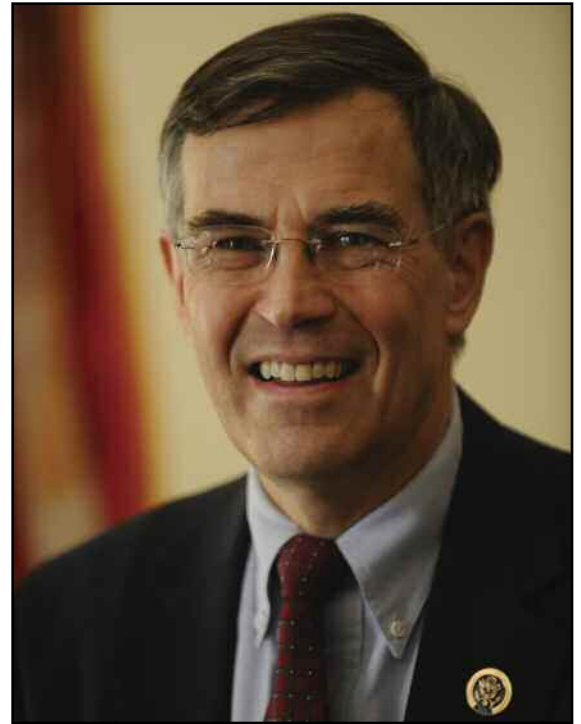
Rush Holt: the Very Model of a Modern Redrock Champ

If we were to sit down and dream up a champion for the redrock wilderness, we'd start by asking for someone smart. Really smart. Someone with a strong personal interest in the environment, someone who understands science. We'd ask for someone who is politically courageous, who stands for his or her principles. Someone on the Natural Resources Committee. If we got greedy, maybe someone who has a perfect lifetime record from the League of Conservation Voters and also makes great cookies.

Pinch us—are we dreaming? Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ), House sponsor of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, is all of those things (well, we don't know for sure about the cookies). A stalwart environmental voice of reason on the House Natural Resources Committee, Mr. Holt brings some serious weight to the cause of protecting Utah's Wilderness.

He's smarter than smart: a nuclear physicist who beat the IBM Supercomputer, Watson, at *Jeopardy* and has his own solar energy patent. The professorial manner he picked up working at Princeton and Swarthmore translates beautifully to the dais, where he can frequently be observed gently dismantling foes of America's public lands with his incisive questioning.

He's also courageous. Whether it's co-leading a letter from 44 congressman to former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar in 2012, demanding that the administra-



Rep. Rush Holt (public domain photo).

tion fight back against Utah's land grab, or urging former BLM director Bob Abbey in a committee hearing to defend public lands from Utah's RS 2477 lawsuits, Mr. Holt speaks up when something needs to be said on behalf of the redrock. To have him now as our primary champion in the House of Representatives is a dream come true. Thanks, Congressman Holt!

—Jen Ujifusa

ARRWA Cosponsor Drive Outpaces Last Congress

We're well on our way to a banner 113th Congress for America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, which Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ) introduced on April 18. At press time, we have 19 cosponsors in the Senate and 93 in the House, putting us ahead of the pace of last Congress. Recent additions include Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), and Reps. Andre Carson (D-IN), Brad Schneider (D-IL) and Susan A. Davis (D-CA). For a complete list of cosponsors visit suwa.org/cosponsors.

—Jen Ujifusa

canyon country updates

Fight Over Bush-Era Leases Ends; BLM Now Targets San Rafael Swell

After a five-year battle, several Utah counties and three oil companies lost their fight to reverse former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's withdrawal of 77 oil and gas leases. This dispute stemmed from the Utah BLM's infamous December 2008 lease sale. Uintah, Carbon, and Duchesne counties, along with the energy companies, petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to take the case. The end came when the court declined.

As much as we welcome an end to this fight, we are girding for another battle in the San Rafael Swell, where the BLM seems dedicated to the same cavalier attitude to our public lands—and the same disregard for law and regulation—that it showed in the tag end of the Bush years.

You may remember the 2008 lease sale: it was the Bush administration's "we're going out of business and everything must go" oil and gas lease sale. The BLM proposed to sell leases in such well-known landscapes as Monitor and Merrimac Buttes outside

of Moab and thousands of acres on Hatch Point overlooking Canyonlands National Park. There was even a parcel immediately adjacent to Dinosaur National Monument. It wasn't pretty.

Agency Error Acknowledged

Redrock wilderness advocates fought this lease sale every step of the way. SUWA and our conservation partners successfully sued to block issuance of the leases. Secretary Salazar later withdrew them, acknowledging that the lease sale was flawed. Uintah county and the others then sued to overturn Salazar's decision. Working with our friends at Earthjustice, we successfully intervened on behalf of the Interior Department to defend that decision.

SUWA and the United States prevailed at the district court, which rejected the lawsuit as having been filed too late; the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld that decision. The plaintiffs then turned to the Supreme Court to take up the case but the court declined.



© Ray Bloxham/SUWA

In June, the BLM announced its plan to lease portions of the Eagle Canyon (above) and Lost Spring Wash proposed wilderness areas for oil and gas development.

canyon country updates

Hundreds Rally to Oppose Energy Leasing in San Rafael Swell



© Terri Martin/SUWA

When the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) said it would lease wilderness-caliber lands for energy development in the San Rafael Swell, we knew redrock advocates would be outraged. But we didn't know the half of it.

More than 200 people turned out for a September rally we sponsored with the Sierra Club outside the BLM's state office in Salt Lake City. Agency employees peered down on the crowd and a sea of signs reading "No wells in the Swell!" and "Don't Drill the Swell." Speakers reinforced the message that the Swell is just too precious to surrender to energy development:

—"The San Rafael Swell is one of America's great natural canyon landscapes and one of Utah's most prized outdoor recreational wildland gems," said Peter Metcalf, CEO, President and founder of Black Diamond, Inc. from Salt Lake City.

—"Our children and grandchildren deserve the opportunity to experience the majestic beauty of this special place, unspoiled by oil rigs, pipelines and pollution," said Craig Otterstrom, 76. He's a native of Castledale, a gateway community to the Swell, whose parents used to take him on trips into the area—a tradition he has continued with his family.

—Lauren Wood, a seventh-generation Utahn and third generation river runner whose grandfather founded Holiday River Expeditions, said leasing would forfeit "a beautiful wilderness area to industrial development."

Nearly 5,000 people have written to the agency in opposition to the proposed lease sale.

The root problem behind the December 2008 sale was the Bush-era BLM's unbalanced land management plans that prioritize energy development and off-road vehicle use over all other uses of Utah public lands. Those land use plans are currently the subject of federal court litigation filed by SUWA and others.

More Bad Leasing Decisions on the Way

Coming on the heels of the Supreme Court's decision not to hear Uintah County's appeal over the 77 leases, it seemed particularly odd that the Utah BLM was once again setting the stage to sell off more leases in the heart of redrock country for energy development. As Yogi Berra once said, "It's déjà vu all over again."

In June, the agency announced its plan to sell 50 leases covering more than 79,000 acres of proposed wilderness in the San Rafael Swell, the spectacular uplift of jagged cliff faces, narrow slot canyons, and hidden valleys that forms one of the scenic and geological wonders of the world.

The *Salt Lake Tribune* editorialized against the proposed lease sale, noting that the auction list included four leases that cover parts of the Cleveland-Lloyd Dinosaur Quarry. "Only after the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance pointed out that the parcels were inside a 721-acre National Natural Landscape designated by Congress in 1965 did the agency concede it had made a mistake," the *Tribune* editors wrote. "Such errors don't inspire trust that BLM officials are taking a close look at the areas targeted for leasing."

The BLM itself agrees that many of these lands in the San Rafael Swell are wilderness caliber—including the Eagle Canyon and Lost Spring Wash proposed wilderness areas, both of which are on the chopping block. Nonetheless, the Utah BLM continues to follow Bush-era land use plans that make incredibly bad ideas like this possible.

Shutdown Delays Protest Response

SUWA and a number of other conservation groups have filed protests against the sale of these 50 leases (and a handful of others) with the BLM's Utah State Director, who said he would respond to protests by mid-October. With the government shutdown, that self-imposed deadline came and went and we are awaiting his decision. All options

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are on the table if the BLM decides to proceed with the sale.

Incredibly, the sale of these new leases comes at a time when there are more than 3 million acres of BLM lands in Utah already under lease but not being developed by industry. At the same time, the State of Utah's oil and gas production rates have continued to rise, mocking the phony claims from the oil and gas industry that unless the BLM keeps selling leases in sensitive areas development will dry up.

—Steve Bloch

Labyrinth Canyon Sacrificed for Fertilizer

The BLM's Moab field office has set loose a Canadian company's American subsidiary to dig for potash along the Green River's Labyrinth Canyon.

Potash is an ingredient in commercial fertilizer and the BLM is willing to trade it for Labyrinth's recreational, geological and archaeological resources—some dating back 10,000 years.

The decision allows American Potash to drill exploratory core holes on the eastern flanks of the Green River as it flows through the canyon. The activity will require widening and upgrading existing vehicle routes and building new ones across the desert to get drill rigs and other equipment to four sites, three of which are within proposed wilderness and the Greater Canyonlands region.

BLM Should Do Homework First

The BLM admits that the area's current management plan (part of the detritus of the Bush era) failed to correctly identify areas where oil, gas and potash development should occur. It is revisiting the plan to rectify that. Meanwhile, it is allowing exploratory drilling, of course! The agency forges recklessly ahead rather than waiting for the conclusion of a deliberate process—a process which, among others things, could close the Labyrinth area to potash leasing and development.

The whole enterprise gets even sillier when you consider that world potash prices have dipped sharply from record highs, according to the *New York Times*,



© Ray Wheeler

The BLM has given a Canadian company the go-ahead to explore for potash in Labyrinth Canyon.

since Russia bailed out of a Belarusian potash cartel cooked up specifically to inflate potash prices.

A draft of the BLM's remedial plan should be released in 2014. That will be too late to save Labyrinth from the four exploratory potash wells. We will keep pressure on the agency to complete its new leasing plan before issuing leases for even more development.

—Liz Thomas

Valuing Wilderness in Utah's West Desert

The Cedar City office of the BLM, now in the process of revising its resource management plan (RMP), is responsible for some of the more remote and isolated locations in Utah, the West Desert among them.

The splendor and solitude of the West Desert—Utah's slice of Great Basin country—have captured the hearts of many wilderness advocates. So far, they haven't made much of a dent in the agency's reluctance even to identify, let alone protectively manage, the full range of wilderness resources there. In fact, Cedar City today remains among the

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most parsimonious of Utah field offices when it comes to identifying wilderness potential.

Law and regulation oblige the BLM, as part of an RMP revision, to inventory potential wilderness resources and to identify which areas qualify for special planning. The agency completed this phase of its work and released the inventory earlier this year. Unfortunately, if all too predictably, the BLM's findings are deficient. Many unqualified specialists from resource disciplines other than wilderness conducted the inventory. And it shows: the Cedar City inventory ranks as one of the worst in Utah in recent years. Now that is truly saying something.

Among the casualties were many outstanding, scenic and remote locations such as the Mountain Home Range, the San Francisco Mountains, and portions of the Indian Peaks Range. They were inventoried incorrectly and were arbitrarily determined to have no wilderness resources.

SUWA has raised these concerns with the agency. We noted, too, that the agency violated its own internal regulations that guide the inventory process. Since then, SUWA has supplemented the BLM



© Ray Bloxham/SUWA

Utah's San Francisco Mountains are among several wild and remote landscapes the Cedar City BLM erroneously found to lack wilderness character in its most recent inventory.

record with our own field observations about wilderness character. All this has sent the agency back into the field to—we earnestly hope—perform a more accurate, honest and thorough wild character inventory.

—Ray Bloxham

Vegetation Devastation: No End in Sight

Never quick to let a bad idea die, the BLM continues its dogmatic war against pinyon and juniper vegetative communities. Most recently, the BLM's Moab field office approved the South Book Cliffs Vegetation Improvement Project, a scheme that involves removing up to 100 percent of pinyon-juniper within the 8,200 acres to be treated.

The plan includes places proposed for wilderness designation in America's Red Rock Wilderness Act and involves aerially applying herbicide, then seeding approximately 9,000 acres of wilderness study areas. The project, developed in coordination with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)—the agency that just introduced non-native mountain goats into the La Sal Mountains for trophy hunting—is intended to benefit mule deer and elk.

The BLM's Price field office, never known for resisting terrible projects (and definitely not averse to tapping into a seemingly endless flow of funds), recently proposed two similar projects. The Cedar Mountain vegetation project (with a 59,000-acre project area) and the East Emery vegetation project (with a 34,000-acre project area) will result in more unnecessary impacts to wilderness-quality lands.

Not surprisingly, in a time of government shutdowns and sequestration, the availability of funding is driving these projects. UDWR and other partner organizations continue footing part of the bill, the BLM appears tickled to continue taking the bait and, once again, science takes a back seat.

We'll continue to challenge these projects and will keep you posted.

—Neal Clark

canyon country updates



© Liz Thomas/SUWA

Flash flooding in September scoured this off-road vehicle route in Arch Canyon, creating downcuts five feet deep. SUWA is (once again) asking the BLM to close the trail in order to protect this extraordinary canyon and its sensitive riparian area.

BLM Sees Arch Canyon through Road-Colored Glasses

With its clear, spring-fed perennial stream, its ancient cultural rock art and cliff dwellings, and its magnificent scenery, Arch Canyon is an exceptional place. Unfortunately, the BLM sees nothing there but a route for motorized recreation; all the other resources are forfeit to that single, destructive use.

We've repeatedly asked the BLM to close the route. So have the Hopi Tribe and the Utah Navajo Commission. We have also engaged scientists to survey and inventory the route. They've concluded that off-road vehicle (ORV) use increases the risk of damage and vandalism to the archaeological sites and is the primary cause of negative impacts to the riparian system.

Despite all evidence to the contrary, the BLM claims that the 8-mile ORV route, which crosses the stream 120 times per round-trip, doesn't hurt a

thing. The BLM's position is perfectly aligned with San Juan County's (where motor vehicle routes are considered a birthright).

Recently, the BLM proposed to re-route a half-mile of the ORV route near the mouth of the canyon, claiming it "is necessary because the existing road segment becomes impassable after heavy flooding." No surprise there—after all, it's in a floodplain!

The choice between allowing San Juan County to gouge a new route in the canyon, versus allowing the county to reconstruct the washed out section of the route is a bogus one. Neither will protect the canyon's resources. There will remain the same number of stream crossings along the route, each causing erosion and stream-bank damage. And neither choice would end the invitation to drive-up archeological pillaging.

Despite the agency's history of taking orders from San Juan County, we are asking the BLM to select the only sane option: Close the 8-mile route.

—Liz Thomas

canyon country updates

Vernal BLM Office Begins New Travel Planning Process

The BLM has initiated a new round of travel planning for lands in the northern portion of the region overseen by its Vernal field office. Encompassing nearly 1.2 million acres, the planning area abuts the north side of Dinosaur National Monument and continues to the Utah-Wyoming border.

According to off-road vehicle Executive Orders (issued by Presidents Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter) and federal regulations, travel planning is the process by which each BLM field office is required to designate motor vehicle routes while balancing a number of factors, including protection of public lands and resources and the minimization of conflicts among various public lands users.

Unfortunately, the 2008 Bush-era travel plans suggest quite another goal. The agency is equally likely to use this process as a means to expand off-road vehicle use and codify the endless spider-web of rarely traveled two-track routes and decades-old seismic exploration lines into an “official” motorized trail system.

SUWA has submitted preliminary comments on the travel plan and will remain engaged in the process to ensure that it does not result in designated routes in wilderness-quality lands with all their associated impacts.

RS 2477 Update: Laying Solid Legal Groundwork

When we last left our story, SUWA was struggling mightily to stem the tide of a tsunami of RS 2477 lawsuits and road claims that threatened to overwhelm Utah’s federal public lands. National Parks were imperiled. So was the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and millions of acres of redrock wilderness. Would we survive?

We’re pleased to report that SUWA and our conservation partners have not only survived, but we have laid the groundwork for participating to the fullest extent we’re allowed to defeat many of the State of Utah’s unsupported RS 2477 “road” claims.

Notably, SUWA has filed and fully briefed motions to participate in 23 of the state’s RS 2477 lawsuits. We expect a ruling shortly that will grant SUWA the right to intervene. This is no small feat when you consider that at this time last year we had not yet filed a single one of these motions, each of which must be adapted to fit the county at issue. The motions are essential to our being permitted to actively defend the United States’ title to the more than 14,000 road claims in the state’s litigation.

We are also reviewing maps, aerial photos, musty BLM files, and tens of thousands of pages of state and county documents dating back to the turn of the last century, all in an effort to better understand the background and basis for the state’s thousands of claims.

Finally, we’re deploying teams of attorneys across the state to attend and help “defend” depositions being conducted by the state and counties. “Law and Order” this ain’t. These depositions are often held in cold, poorly lit conference rooms in county buildings scattered around the state and can run on for days as elderly witnesses strive to remember the condition and use of dirt roads and trails more than half a century ago. Because the state has pinned so much on these depositions, and because the U.S. Justice Department attorneys are so over-worked, our presence and engagement is hugely important.

None of this would be possible without your support and the support of a team of attorneys from national and local firms who are working alongside us to protect Utah’s redrock wilderness. We thank you all.

—Steve Bloch

inside SUWA

Redrock Advocates: Passionate, Always There When Needed

Time and again, whenever the call goes out, the community of redrock activists surprises, delights and inspires us with its enthusiasm, passion and concern for this landscape that brings us together.

We've seen some splendid examples recently. This fall in Salt Lake City over 600 people flocked to booths SUWA staffed at two popular street festivals. They were keen to learn how they could sign on, speak out and show up to express their support for protecting the redrock—so keen that we nearly ran out of postcards for people to sign asking President Obama to protect Greater Canyonlands and fliers alerting folks about an upcoming San Rafael Swell Rally (see page 12).

Across the country in Unity, ME, we enjoyed an equally enthusiastic response as more than 500 citizens at the Common Ground Fair signed postcards asking their members of Congress, as well as President Obama, to protect Utah's matchless wild country. And, in July, a lively crowd of 100 wilderness devotees of all ages—from babes in arms to more seasoned activists—turned out at the annual Backyard Bash at SUWA's Salt Lake City headquarters to mingle, chat and celebrate.



© Terri Martin/SUWA

Wilderness supporters sign postcards to President Obama at the Avenues Street Fair in Salt Lake City.

The community of redrock activists in Utah and across the country is truly what energizes and sustains both the SUWA staff and the campaign to win protection for the redrock. You are the reason we have come as far as we have come over the last three decades. Thanks so much for all your support!



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SUWA members and friends socialize at our Backyard Bash in July.

inside SUWA

Comings and Goings in SUWA's DC Office

Peterson-Cremer Moves to Colorado

Richard Peterson-Cremer joined the SUWA staff in 2006. But for a mishap, we might not have met him at all. The avid outdoorsman was laid up at his family home nursing an ankle he'd broken while climbing. His misfortune was SUWA's good fortune: the ankle injury caused him to put his outdoor adventures on hold and apply for an internship in our Washington, DC office. Richard—smart, quick and a joy to work with—moved rapidly from intern to legislative assistant and, for the last four years, legislative director.

Survival in Washington depends on good humor; success demands wit and thoughtfulness. Richard has more than his share of all of them. He led our work to advance America's Red Rock Wilderness Act in Congress and worked with both the Bush and Obama administrations on public lands management issues. Alas, this summer Richard left SUWA to pursue a law degree at the University of Colorado. His love of the redrock and all wild places is fundamental to his character, so we have no doubt he will find some way to continue working to protect them.

Utah Native to Head Washington Office

Jen Ujifusa has replaced Richard Peterson-Cremer as our legislative director in Washington, DC. Jen takes the reins as wilderness discussions heat up in



Richard Peterson-Cremer heads for the Rocky Mountains.



Jackie Feinberg leaps into something new.

Utah and we're glad she's here at this important time. She came to DC as a journalist and then joined SUWA three years ago as our legislative assistant. Since then she's walked the halls of Congress building up cosponsors for America's Red Rock Wilderness Act and has become our go-to when writing skills matter. She brings a long familiarity with the redrock to our DC shop: she was raised in Ogden, Utah and graduated from Utah State University, learning to love hiking while traveling through Utah's redrock country as a child.

Feinberg is Off to New Adventures

Jackie Feinberg joined SUWA in the autumn of 2007 as our national grassroots organizer. Many of us first met Jackie at a SUWA Roundup, our membership gathering held annually in the San Rafael Swell. That year, it was snowing, cold and damp, but Jackie seemed perfectly at home—a small person in a very large white snowmobile suit, drinking peppermint schnapps (which we later learned was her festive beverage of choice). Jackie is also a climber and sometimes lugs around a bouldering pad that's as big as she is.

Jackie was largely responsible for developing SUWA's social media presence, creating Facebook, Twitter and YouTube platforms for us. Among many other things, she also very adeptly organized our annual "Wilderness Week" event, which brings activists from around the country to Washington, DC to advocate for wilderness. Anyone who saw her in action was certainly awed by her ability to sort congressional visit assignments, provide essen-

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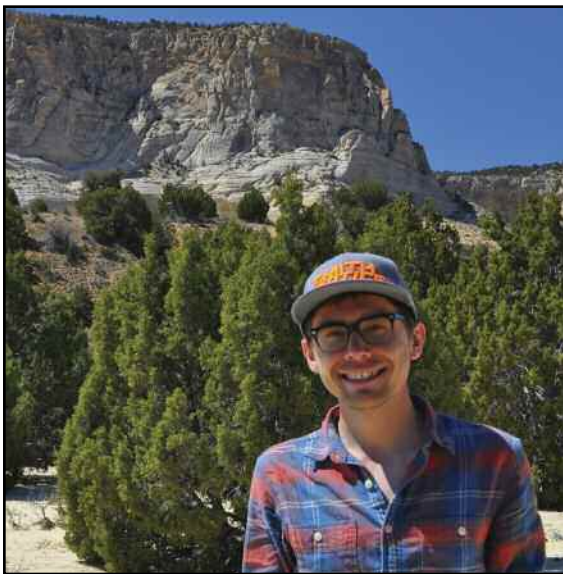
tial background information, and reschedule canceled flights while giving directions to the metro and remembering to order a vegan sandwich for someone who requested it.

Jackie is moving on to new work. We wish her the best, and we will certainly miss her.

SUWA Welcomes Two New Attorneys

Responding to the spate of recently filed RS 2477 lawsuits and backsliding by the Obama administration on public land policies, we're pleased to announce that SUWA has hired two new attorneys—Landon Newell and Joe Bushyhead. This brings our total to six full-time attorneys in our Salt Lake City and Moab offices.

Landon Newell is a Utah native who obtained his undergraduate and law school degrees from the University of Utah. Last summer he clerked at Western Resource Advocates and this past spring he



Landon Newell exploring southern Utah.



Joe paddling the "Miracle Mile" section of Oregon's Willamette River.

interned at our Salt Lake City office. While in law school, Landon worked closely with Professors Robert Keiter and Robert Adler, two of the University of Utah College of Law's most accomplished public land and environmental law faculty members. Landon is an avid rock climber and devoted caretaker of his English bulldog, Abbie.

Joe Bushyhead grew up in Seattle, went to Washington University in St. Louis for his undergraduate degree and attended the University of Oregon for law school. Prior to coming to SUWA, he clerked for Earthjustice's Seattle office, the Western Environmental Law Center in Eugene, and the Hells Canyon Preservation Council in La Grande, Oregon. Joe has a passion for whitewater kayaking and is already looking forward to boating the spring runoff on some of Utah's desert rivers.

We're delighted to be able to add this additional legal firepower to our efforts to protect the redrock from a seemingly never-ending parade of half-baked plans and get-rich-quick schemes.

Follow Us On Social Media

Want to stay on top of all the latest Utah wilderness news and events? Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and our new Tumblr page!

[facebook.com/SouthernUtahWildernessAlliance](https://www.facebook.com/SouthernUtahWildernessAlliance)

twitter.com/SouthernUTWild

<http://utahwilderness.tumblr.com>

inside SUWA

SUWA's legal team thanks Luke Henry for his valuable assistance this summer.

Thank You Luke Henry, Summer Legal Intern

We offer a big thank you to our summer 2013 law clerk, Lucas (Luke) Henry, for his excellent work on behalf of Utah's redrock wilderness.

A Sandpoint, Idaho native, Luke came to SUWA after his second year of law school at Tulane University in New Orleans, where he is the editor in chief of the Tulane University Environmental Law Journal. Luke had a chance to visit many of Utah's far flung corners as he crisscrossed the state traveling from Kanab (to attend a hearing on the Coral Pink Sand Dunes Tiger Beetle) to Manila and Vernal (to attend scoping meetings for a travel management plan). With his dry wit and honed ability to turn a phrase, Luke fit right in.

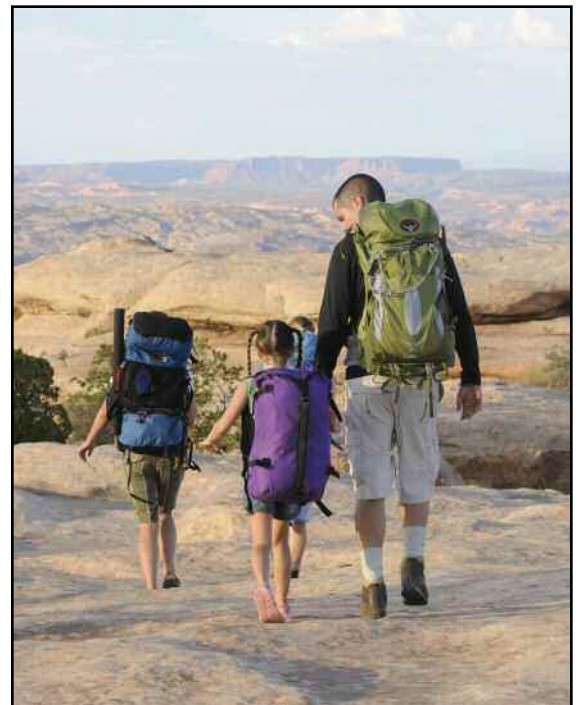
We wish Luke the best luck in his third year at law school.

Build a Legacy of Support for the Redrock

Please consider leaving a gift to SUWA in your will or trust. Bequests are a simple, effective way for those of us who love the redrock to ensure that when we're gone, the work to protect these amazing landscapes continues.

A gift to SUWA from your estate—whatever the amount—is entirely free from federal estate taxes. This means we are able to use the full amount of the bequest to protect the redrock, whereas if it were left to an individual, a significant amount might go to federal estate taxes. Also, bequests generally are not subject to state inheritance or estate taxes. You can also create a bequest so that the needs of your heirs are taken care of first.

A bequest for SUWA (or any other charitable organization) is very simple to establish. Just name the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance in your will, trust, retirement plan, or life insurance policy, along with our contact information and tax I.D. number and the dollar amount or percent of your estate you wish to contribute.



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If you'd like to make a gift to SUWA or have already included a gift to SUWA in your estate, please contact Deeda Seed at deeda@suwa.org or (801) 428-3971. You can also visit us online at suwa.org/plannedgiving.



In August, we relaunched our media campaign, which is now in full swing throughout Utah, with television, online and outdoor advertising reaching hundreds of thousands of Utah residents to promote the value of wilderness. Here's an action shot of one of 18 city transit buses in downtown Salt Lake City wrapped in our pro-wilderness message. To watch the television ads now airing throughout the state, visit utahwilderness.org.

Make a Difference: Join or Donate to SUWA Today!

SUWA's critical work advocating for and protecting the wild lands of southern Utah is primarily funded by individual contributions. If you are not yet a member, please join us today. Annual dues are just \$35. You can easily join or renew at www.suwa.org/donate or by using the envelope at the center of this newsletter. SUWA is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, so contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Three Easy Ways to Make Your Contribution:

- **By Mail:** fill out and return the enclosed remittance envelope with your check or credit card information.
- **Online:** join or renew with your credit card through our secure website at www.suwa.org/donate.
- **By Phone:** call us at (801) 486-3161 with your credit card, or with any questions you may have.

Many employers will match your donation to SUWA, doubling the amount of support you give to Utah wilderness. If your company or firm has a matching gift program, simply enclose the form along with your donation.

Monthly Giving

If you're looking for a convenient and painless way to support SUWA, then consider monthly giving. Monthly giving is easy and secure, and provides SUWA with reliable, year-round funding to fight for Utah wilderness. Best of all, you're off the hook for annual membership renewals! To sign up, go to www.suwa.org/donate.

Thank you for your support of SUWA and Utah wilderness!

inside SUWA**Give a Gift Membership and Save \$10!**

If you share a love of the outdoors with your friends, why not share your activism too? Gift memberships make wonderful gifts for birthdays and holidays. Simply mail in this form with **\$25 for each membership** (a \$10 savings) or order online at suwa.org/goodies.

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Please make your check payable to SUWA or include credit card information below (VISA, MC, AMEX, DISC):

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Salt Lake City, UT 84111**

Order a Copy of SUWA's *Wild Utah* Video on DVD

SUWA's popular multi-media slideshow, *Wild Utah! America's Redrock Wilderness* includes video interviews, stunning photos, and compelling narration by longtime wilderness activist Robert Redford. These DVDs make great gifts and educational tools!

Please send _____ copies of the ***Wild Utah* DVD** at \$10 each (includes shipping).

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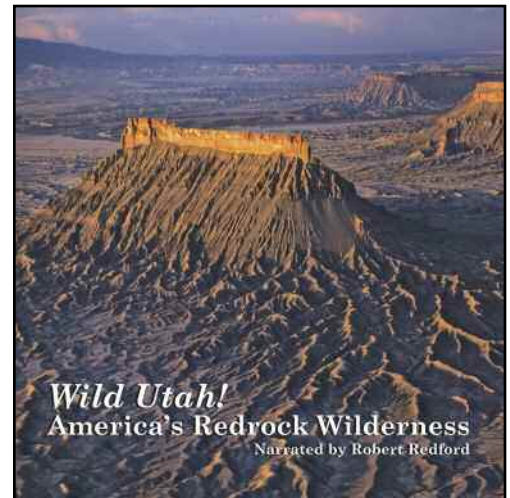
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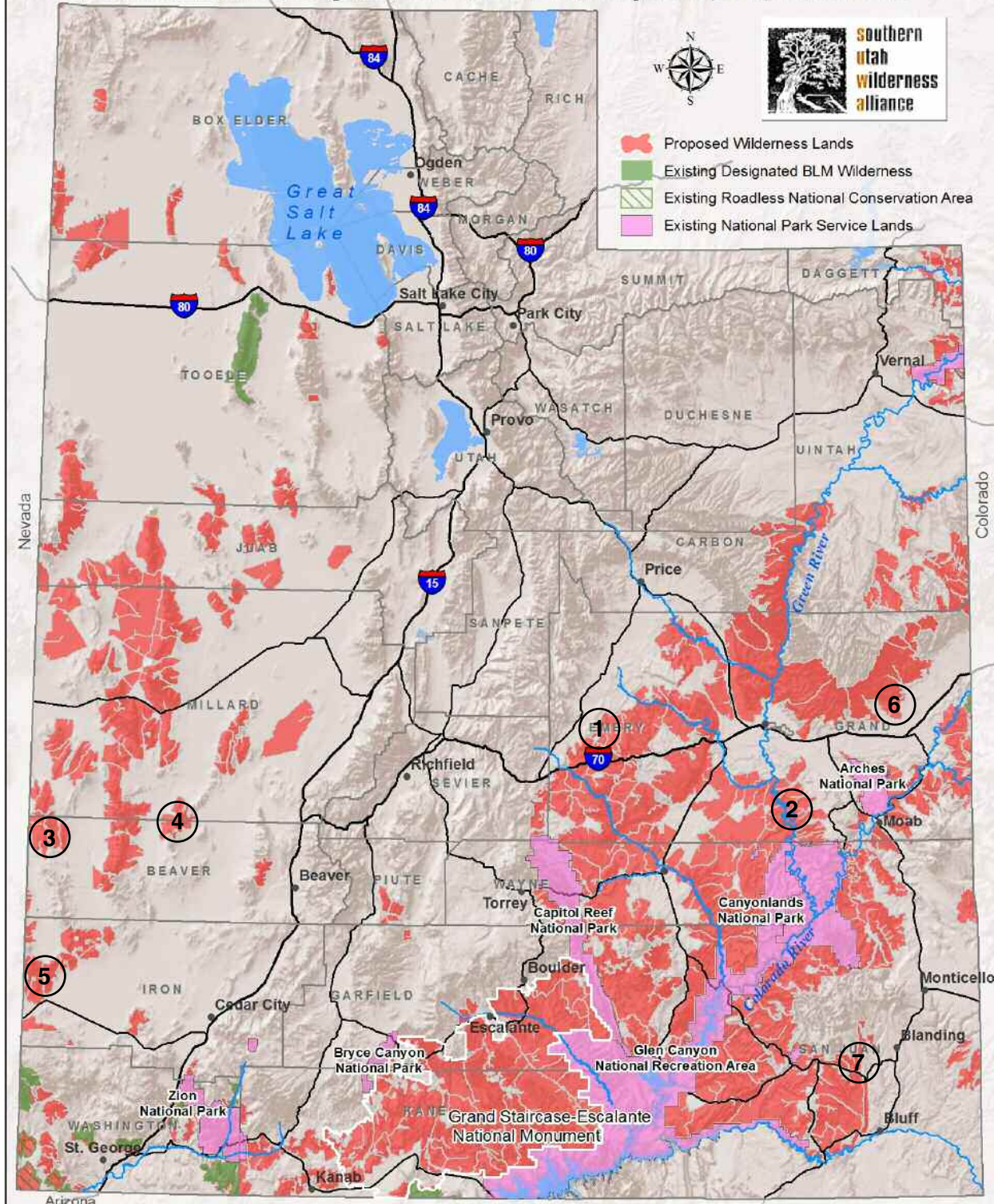
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Wild Utah DVDs can also be ordered online at suwa.org/goodies.

America's Red Rock Wilderness Act

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



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| ② Labyrinth Canyon (p. 13) | ⑤ Indian Peaks Range (p. 14) | |
| ③ Mountain Home Range (p. 14) | ⑥ South Book Cliffs (p. 14) | |



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“We cannot afford an America where expedience tramples upon esthetics and development decisions are made with an eye only on the present.”

—Stewart L. Udall, U.S. Interior Secretary, 1961-1969