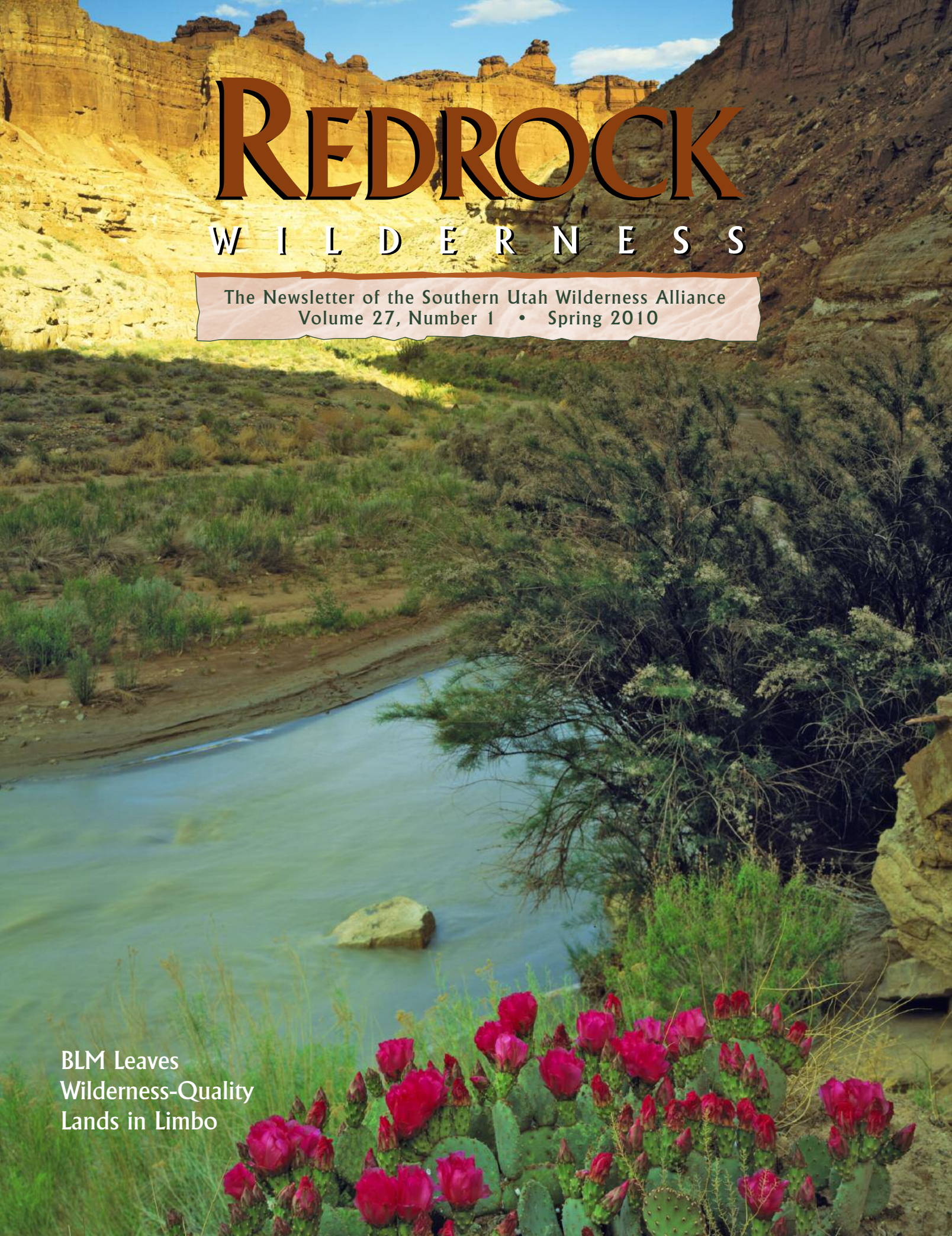


# REDROCK

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

The Newsletter of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance  
Volume 27, Number 1 • Spring 2010

BLM Leaves  
Wilderness-Quality  
Lands in Limbo





**Cover Photo:** *Cactus blooms within the Muddy Creek proposed wilderness in Utah's San Rafael Swell. The area currently lacks protection and is vulnerable to damage from off-road vehicles. Copyright Tom Till (www.tomtill.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.

SUWA is qualified as a non-profit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code. Therefore, all contributions to SUWA are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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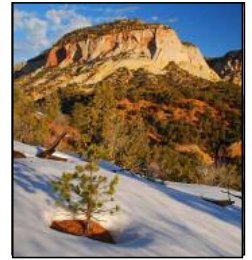
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## Redrock Wilderness • Volume 27, Number 1 • Spring 2010

This issue of *Redrock Wilderness* was written by the following staff and outside contributors: Steve Bloch, Ray Bloxham, Scott Braden, Jackie Feinberg, David Garbett, Scott Groene, Heidi McIntosh, Gregory Osborne, Richard Peterson-Cremer, Deeda Seed, and Liz Thomas. It was edited by Darrell Knuffke and laid out by Diane Kelly.

Newsletter design by Leslie Scopes Garcia.

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.

*Redrock Wilderness* is published three times a year. Articles may be reprinted with credit given both to the author(s) and to the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.

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## wilderness notes

### Back to the Future

Winter has been persistent in Moab this year, but I am not complaining. Among its gifts is a sort of time machine that returns travelers to the days before off-road vehicles (ORVs) invaded the Redrock.

Traction-busting snow keeps the machines off the difficult routes. Quiet and solitude have returned to places where they had become mostly memories. Nature has provided a cosmetic snow cover for insults and ravages: black rubber skid marks that scar the slickrock and the mindless routes smashed through fragile soils are now, however briefly, concealed. I've especially enjoyed the spectacular Sand Flats mesas and fins above town that are usually crowded with conquering jeeps, dirt bikes, and all-terrain vehicles.

There is joy in this return to the old, natural quiet but sadness too because it is so surely ephemeral. It reminds us—me, at least—of how this landscape used to be and what we have lost. But it reaffirms the absolute rightness of SUWA's efforts to make at least some of the redrock country that way again.

Almost a decade ago, I stood on top of Factory Butte and listened to the whine of dirt bikes below. That was before SUWA's advocacy persuaded the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to move to protect the surrounding badlands from machines (although ORV users are now pressuring the BLM to reopen the area and the agency seems, as usual, poised to comply). The effort was imperfect and poorly enforced. Defiant ORV users ignored BLM signs and, like a malevolent Energizer Bunny, kept on going. (See article, p. 15.)

Still, Factory Butte demonstrated that we can win back balance, even where heavy ORV use is established and even though we are called again and again to defend such victories.

The next few years look to be an exciting time in this effort. We intend to take advantage of recent political changes to gain protection for much of the land the BLM manages in Utah, either through congressional wilderness designations or administrative decisions.

Because of SUWA's 25 years of advocacy, discussions are now underway at a regional level involving over 3 million acres of proposed redrock wilderness. Though nothing is guaranteed, there is potential for protecting wilderness in places like the San Rafael Swell and Cedar Mesa. As part of the Utah Wilderness Coalition, we're working locally with friends from the Sierra Club and Grand Canyon Trust to make that happen.

We also hope to leverage our litigation against the Bush administration's resource management plans into lasting protection. These plans opened million of acres of proposed BLM wilderness to oil and gas development and ORV use. We believe that the Obama administration will ultimately choose not to defend these atrocious decisions. Over the next few years, this litigation could secure additional administrative protection for millions of acres. (See article, p. 12.)

These opportunities didn't simply fall from the desert sky. They are the result of good, generous people standing together to leave the world a better place than they found it. And together we will do just that.

For the Redrock,



Scott Groene  
Executive Director



## features

# One Year in, BLM Leaves Wilderness-Quality Lands in Limbo

At the Obama administration's first anniversary, too many of the Bush administration's most damaging environmental policies live on, with serious consequences for some of the West's most scenic landscapes.

Among the worst is a 2003 deal the Bush administration and its Interior Secretary, Gale Norton, hatched with Michael Leavitt, then Utah governor. In it, Norton disavowed the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) well-established authority to protect the wilderness character of spectacular landscapes such as Utah's Dirty Devil, Valley of the Gods, Factory Butte, Upper Muddy Creek and others.

In what came to be known as the "No More Wilderness" policy, Norton and Leavitt agreed to "settle" a lawsuit that had languished in federal court for years. Using the so-called settlement, Norton upended years of precedent and reinterpreted the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) which governs the BLM. The deal would strike at the heart of Utah wilderness.

Under Norton's new policy, there would be one—and only one—resource the BLM could no longer manage: wilderness. And it would force the BLM to deny protection to lands whose wilderness character even the BLM recognizes.

### Comb Ridge, Labyrinth Canyon and Other Magnificent Wild Lands Left Vulnerable

Comb Ridge, which rises like a jagged wall at the eastern edge of Cedar Mesa, is a breathtaking geologic formation harboring ancient Puebloan artifacts. It is one of the scenic hallmarks of southern Utah. The BLM gave it no wilderness protection. Nor did it offer any to Dome Plateau, a wondrous expanse of old-growth sagebrush and undulating, multi-hued sandstone just east of Arches National Park, nor to Labyrinth Canyon, where the languorous waters of the Green River carry boaters in a circuitous route around Bowknot Bend beneath sheer, 1,000-foot sandstone cliffs.

Yet FLPMA includes a provision which requires the BLM to continually update inventories of all of the



© Tom Till

*The 2003 No More Wilderness policy, which stripped the BLM of its authority to manage places like Labyrinth Canyon as wilderness, still stands under the Obama administration.*

lands and resources it manages, including wilderness-quality lands. Based on those inventories, the BLM is then required to develop plans for the management of those resources and lands. The plans govern, for example, where and under what terms oil and gas development can take place, where off-road vehicle use may and may not occur, and, at least until 2003, which areas would be protected for their wilderness character. FLPMA also directed the agency to protect these "wilderness study areas" (WSAs) until Congress makes decisions about whether to permanently protect them under the Wilderness Act of 1964.

### Deadly Deal for Wilderness

Before the 2003 No More Wilderness policy, every prior Interior Secretary recognized that the BLM, which manages 258 million acres of the nation's public lands—23 million in Utah—had the authority under FLPMA to identify and protect WSAs. Norton was monumentally wrong in her attempt to rewrite the law and forsake millions of acres of scenic, awe-inspiring public lands.

*(Continued next page)*

## features

“President Obama’s interior secretary, Ken Salazar, has reversed many of the Bush administration’s damaging environmental policies. Maddeningly, however, the “no more wilderness” policy is still in place. It is past time for Mr. Salazar to renounce it.”

—From a Nov. 24, 2009 *New York Times* editorial (see [www.suwa.org/NYT\\_NoWild](http://www.suwa.org/NYT_NoWild))

In the wake of the new policy, the BLM auctioned off to oil and gas companies leases for millions of acres of public lands. And BLM land use plans released late in 2008 included thousands of miles of ORV trails in places Utah BLM offices had recently identified as having wilderness character. In the Moab plan, typical of the other Utah plans, the agency protected just 10 percent of the lands it identified as having wilderness character—and not as WSAs, but in other, vaguer categories.

Shortly after Norton put the policy in place, SUWA and 10 other conservation groups sued the Department of the Interior, asking the federal district court in Utah to invalidate the policy. The district court denied our request, but did find that the policy was not binding on future administrations. On appeal, the Tenth Circuit held that our case was not yet ripe for review. We have renewed our challenge to the Norton wilderness policy in our lawsuit challenging the six BLM land use plans made final in late 2008. Because the BLM relied on the No More Wilderness policy in those plans and refused to consider designating spectacularly scenic and wild places as wilderness study areas, our legal arguments are now timely.



© Ray Bloxham/SUWA

*A hiker walks atop the tilted escarpment of Comb Ridge, a scenic gem of great archaeological importance left vulnerable by the No More Wilderness policy.*

### ***New York Times: ‘A Devastating Blow’***

The No More Wilderness policy is a non-binding, backroom deal made to order for extractive industries. The *New York Times* called it a “devastating blow,” and a “fundamental reinterpretation” of the law. The *Albuquerque Tribune* called it “shortsighted,” “absolutely wrong,” and called for its rescission. So did the *Arizona Daily Star* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. President Obama’s Interior Secretary Ken Salazar has ample authority to rescind this ill-conceived policy and direct the BLM to extend full WSA status to deserving lands. And he should do so now.

The last thing we need is for these lands to be chipped away, road by road, drill pad by drill pad, until little is left. Preserving Congress’s role in deciding the future of these lands under the Wilderness Act is crucial. Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), who sponsors America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act in the House of Representatives, recognizes that. Together with 89 of his House colleagues, Mr. Hinchey wrote Secretary Salazar asking him to rescind the No More Wilderness policy.

Utah’s economy is not an issue, either. Even if all these lands were permanently protected as wilderness, the vast majority of BLM lands here would still be available for energy development. Indeed, oil and gas companies now hold leases on over 32.5 million acres of public lands throughout the West that they are not developing. Similarly, in FY 2009 the BLM issued 4,487 permits to drill for oil and gas; 1,220 went unused. (See <http://wilderness.org/files/BLM-Oil-Gas-Data-Through-FY2009.pdf>.)

Scrapping the Norton policy and extending interim protection to deserving lands as wilderness study areas is a critical step along the path towards lasting protection. Secretary Salazar has every reason to act immediately, none to delay further.

—Staff



## More Wild Places Jeopardized by the No More Wilderness Policy

To view more photos, visit [www.suwa.org/NoWild](http://www.suwa.org/NoWild).



*Dirty Devil proposed wilderness, © Ray Bloxham/SUWA*



*Red Desert proposed wilderness, © Ray Bloxham/SUWA*



*Valley of the Gods proposed wilderness, © Ray Bloxham/SUWA*



*Upper Desolation Canyon proposed wilderness, © Ray Bloxham/SUWA*



*Upper Kanab Creek proposed wilderness, © Ray Bloxham/SUWA*



*Upper Muddy Creek proposed wilderness, © Ray Bloxham/SUWA*

**DC news**

## SUWA Thanks One of Our Greatest Redrock Champions

Since 1993, Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) has been the chief sponsor of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act and its most ardent supporter in the U.S. House of Representatives. He has gone to bat for the redrock again and again, organizing sign-on letters to administration officials asking for interim protections for Utah's wild lands.

Last year, I had the opportunity to visit his district twice, most recently in November to speak to the Susquehanna Group of the Sierra Club in Binghamton. I was delighted to discover that many of Rep. Hinchey's constituents not only know about his work to protect Utah wild lands, but are strongly supportive of it. (Some of Rep. Hinchey's critics argue that he should stay out of the Utah wilderness issue and concentrate on land use issues in his own state. They aren't paying attention: Mr. Hinchey does that, too. Among other things, he has sponsored a bill that would study whether the Hudson River Valley area is suitable for national park designation.)

At my presentation in Binghamton in Rep. Hinchey's district, constituents wrote thank-you notes to the congressman on a Cedar Mesa poster



*public domain photo*

*Redrock champion Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY)*

to show their appreciation. SUWA's DC staff presented the poster to Rep. Hinchey. His grateful response? "It made my day!" he said.

It is we who are grateful to you, Rep. Hinchey, for all you have done to advance the protection of Utah's wild lands. Thank you!

*—Jackie Feinberg*

## Congress Presses Salazar on Wilderness

The October hearing on America's Red Rock Wilderness Act generated exceptional energy. One solid sign of this is the letter that the bill's sponsor, Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), wrote to urge Interior Secretary Ken Salazar to restore wilderness as a priority at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). A bipartisan group of 88 wilderness supporters in the House of Representatives promptly signed the letter with Mr. Hinchey.

As laid out in the letter, the critical first step in this shift would be to overturn the Bush administration's 2003 "No More Wilderness" policy that denied the BLM the ability to appropriately protect wilderness-quality lands through wilderness study area designation (see feature story, p. 5).

Fortunately, what these Members of Congress understand—and what seems lost on the new administration—is that designation of wilderness study areas (WSA) carries weight. "Designation of WSAs is a crucial means of interim protection that enjoys the recognition of agency professionals and the laws under which they operate . . ." said the letter to Salazar.

While we have seen progress in reining in oil and gas leasing and drilling on proposed wilderness lands, the threat from off-road vehicles continues unabated. Most of the harmful Bush-era policies remain in place and Utah's redrock wilderness remains vulnerable to them. We hope and expect our congressional champions to continue their tremendous advocacy on behalf of the landscapes we all cherish.

*—Richard Peterson-Cremer*



## Oil and Gas Leasing Reform: So Far, So Good

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar in January outlined a series of important reforms to fix the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) broken oil and gas leasing and development program. Secretary Salazar is promoting an approach that puts protection of wilderness, wildlife, and recreation on the same level as energy development.

These changes are long overdue, urgently needed, and stand in marked contrast to the last administration's directive that oil and gas was Utah BLM's "number 1 priority." (Really: the Bush Interior Department actually said this in a January 2002 internal memo to Utah BLM staff.)

Here are some important provisions of the new policy approach:

- ◆ BLM staff must, in most instances, conduct onsite field visits before offering oil and gas lease parcels for sale (previously, the BLM sold leases without first seeing the lands that it was selling);
- ◆ The BLM must adopt a more thoughtful approach to oil and gas leasing, including preparation of 'master leasing development plans' before selling leases in sensitive, largely unleased landscapes like much of Utah's redrock wilderness; and,
- ◆ The BLM may only use the procedural shortcut, known as "statutory categorical exclusions," in instances that don't threaten sensitive lands or resources. (Congress enacted the procedure in 2005 to speed approval of new oil and gas drilling and the agency used it in blanket fashion).

"Under the previous administration, the oil and gas companies were [essentially] kings of the world, with Interior their handmaiden. Those from the industry who are crying out are simply crying because we are being thoughtful and supporting development in the right way and the right places."

—Secretary Salazar announcing his oil and gas reforms to reporters on Jan. 6, 2010

Many of these reforms were outlined in an Interior Department report detailing the missteps and breakdowns that led to the Utah BLM's infamous December 2008 oil and gas lease sale (what we dubbed the Bush administration's "Christmas, going out of business, fire sale."). This illegal sale drew national attention because of the proximity of proposed oil and gas lease parcels to Arches National Park, Dinosaur National Monument, and Desolation Canyon. The sale was scuttled after a federal district court judge granted our motion for an emergency injunction to block issuance of the leases.

Of course, the devil dwells in the details. Rather than immediately release the new policies to BLM state and field offices, Secretary Salazar circulated these documents internally for additional reviews and feedback.

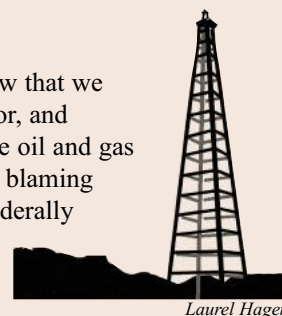
We expect the final guidance to be released before spring and look forward to working with the administration to bring balance back to public land management in Utah.

—Steve Bloch

## Some Economic Truth about Energy

"It is hard to believe that there is anyone in the country who does not know that we are in the midst of a deep recession. It has dramatically cut the demand for, and therefore the price of, most basic raw materials, especially energy. But the oil and gas industry keeps pretending that this has not happened and instead has been blaming Interior Secretary Ken Salazar for the decline of leasing and drilling on federally owned lands and the resulting job losses. Oil and gas firms know better."

—Economist Thomas Power in the Jan. 29 *High Country News*



Laurel Hagen

## DC news

Good News!

## America's Red Rock Wilderness Act Gains Cosponsors

This has been an exciting Congress for America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. We have gained a record number of Senate cosponsors (22!), and a higher number of House cosponsors than in the previous Congress (159). (See complete list, opposite page.)

The legislation took a huge step forward in October with a hearing before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands. Our House champion, Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), made a superb case for protecting Utah's special places.

Building momentum in Congress is central to passage of the Red Rock bill; increasing the number of cosponsors is at the heart of the effort. And nothing advances that work so effectively as the active support of SUWA members across the country. Your calls, emails, presence at town hall meetings—even encounters with members of Congress in casual settings—make all the difference. They signal to your representatives that Utah wilderness may be far from their districts but important to their constituents. SUWA staffers marvel at the tenacity and energy of our grassroots activists. We talk about Renee de

Nevers, who cornered Rep. Dan Maffei (D-NY) at a street fair to extract a promise to support the Red Rock bill. We remember the persistence of Pennsylvania activists that led Rep. Patrick Murphy (D-PA) to send a staff person to a SUWA slideshow to announce that the congressman had agreed to cosponsor the Red Rock bill. And we think of the dogged Mainers who didn't stop until Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME) agreed to cosponsor the bill.

These are examples of a passion that can't be bought but can only be freely given by people who love a place and will not stint to protect it. Small wonder, then, that America's Red Rock Wilderness Act is firmly established as a national issue. You, our grassroots advocates, are priceless and indispensable. We can't thank you enough!

—Scott Braden

To learn more about America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, to ask your Members of Congress to become cosponsors, or to thank them for supporting the bill, please visit [www.suwa.org/arrwa](http://www.suwa.org/arrwa)



SUWA file photo

Utah wilderness activists pose in front of the U.S. Capitol during Wilderness Week 2009. Activist letters, phone calls and in-district meetings are also vital to educating members of Congress and building cosponsorship of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act.



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Edward Kennedy, D-MA  
John Kerry, D-MA  
Deborah Stabenow, D-MI  
Frank Lautenberg, D-NJ  
Robert Menendez, D-NJ  
Kristen Gillibrand, D-NY  
Chuck Schumer, D-NY  
Jeff Merkley, D-OR  
Jack Reed, D-RI  
Sheldon Whitehouse, D-RI  
Patrick Leahy, D-VT  
Bernie Sanders, D-VT  
Maria Cantwell, D-WA  
Russell Feingold, D-WI

## canyon country updates

### SUWA Enters Next Stage in Protecting Washington County Wilderness

The Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 became law just about a year ago, designating thousands of acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands as wilderness in Washington County (the very southwestern corner of Utah).

This was a wonderful step forward in our mission to protect the spectacular public lands of the Colorado Plateau, but the job isn't finished. Because not all deserving BLM lands in Washington County received wilderness-quality protection in that legislation, SUWA continues to work on their behalf.

With our Utah Wilderness Coalition partners and congressional champions, we fought hard to improve the Washington County bill, and we did. But because it was a fight to the end, there was never any agreement between us and the bill's proponents (though a single national wilderness group did prematurely endorse the deal). And so the

proposed wilderness lands omitted from the Washington County legislation remain in Congressman Maurice Hinchey's America's Red Rock Wilderness Act (H.R. 1925/S. 799) and remain very much a SUWA protection priority.

The Washington County measure required the BLM to prepare an off-road-vehicle (ORV) plan for public lands in the county and management plans for the National Conservation Areas (NCAs) which the bill created. It is critical that the BLM's ORV route designation plan is environmentally sensitive and that the NCA plans actually protect the extraordinary values for which the areas were designated.

In a December 2009 letter, SUWA urged the BLM to begin work on an ORV plan. We specifically asked the BLM not to designate any routes in areas proposed for wilderness designation in America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. SUWA and its coalition partners have inventoried these areas and found them to be roadless. We expect the BLM to keep them that way. We are optimistic about this ORV route designation plan and the opportunity that the BLM has to implement a sensitive, environmentally-friendly approach to ORV management.

The NCA plans will encompass the Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash NCAs. They will be critical components in helping to ensure that wilderness-quality lands receive adequate protection. We will keep you updated on these plans as we continue to defend BLM wild lands in Washington County.

—David Garbett

### Washington County Bill Piques Other Counties' Interest

SUWA staff bet that the Washington County wilderness bill would encourage other southern Utah counties to begin their own public lands processes. They were right. To ensure that the organization could take advantage of these opportunities, it created a Moab-based field advocate position and picked me to fill it.



© Ray Bloxham/SUWA

SUWA is working to ensure that the BLM develops environmentally sensitive management plans and ORV route designations for wilderness lands and National Conservation Areas in Washington County—including Beaver Dam Wash, above.



## canyon country updates

Emery County has probably been involved in such a process longer than other southern Utah counties and I engaged there first. With colleague Ray Bloxham, I have kicked dirt, gawked at brilliant sunsets, and traveled thousands of back-road miles with very knowledgeable residents—people who have been wandering this remarkable country since they could wander at all. They know their ‘place’ as well as Ray does, and that’s saying something.

Sometimes, standing together with southern Utahns in their backyard wild places, agreement is quick and obvious. Other times, our basic philosophical differences—about wilderness, access and who should decide—form a wall between us. Blunting those differences is the goal of the work SUWA’s field team is doing on the ground.

The Beaver and Piute County commissioners are also working on a public lands bill. We’ve made a number of trips to Beaver, and to even quieter places like Junction and Marysvale. We’ve hiked in places I had never heard of and now will never forget. Walking through them, I wonder when the world will begin to understand just how important and precious they are. In large part, that depends on how well we do our work.

A huge and important chunk of America’s Red Rock Wilderness can be found in San Juan County (Cedar Mesa, including Grand Gulch and Fish and Owl Creeks, for example). We’ve attended months of county commission meetings and sorted through



© RayBloxham/SUWA

*In the field: SUWA staffers Brooke Williams and Scott Groene discuss potential wilderness legislation with members of the Emery County Public Lands Council.*

numerous rumors. We expect to hear soon about a public lands process in San Juan County. Another in Grand County may be in the offing. There, Moab’s diverse—and often competing—recreational interests promise to make this process challenging.

These may be the most important times in SUWA’s history and I’m excited to be a part of it.

—Brooke Williams

## Our Challenge to Utah RMPs and Travel Plans Continues

As we have reported over the past year, at the end of 2008 a coalition of conservation groups led by SUWA challenged the last minute decisions by the Bush administration to approve devastating new land management and off-road vehicle plans in much of eastern Utah.

The lawsuit—appropriately named *SUWA v. Allred* (C. Stephen Allred was the Assistant Interior Secretary for Land and Minerals who signed the Moab, Price and Vernal resource management plans and ORV travel plans)—is pending in federal district court in Washington, DC. It may take several months or even years before it finishes wending its way through the legal system. Thanks to your support, we will continue to pursue this lawsuit as well as to challenge the BLM’s decision to approve three other plans in the Monticello, Richfield and Kanab field offices.

Watch SUWA’s website at [www.suwa.org](http://www.suwa.org) for the latest information on this important case.

—Steve Bloch

## canyon country updates

### BLM Offers Glimmer of Hope for Upper Kanab Creek

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was recently poised to approve an intrusive vegetation project on 50,000 acres of land—including areas within the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and pristine proposed wilderness areas of Upper Kanab Creek and Timber Mountain—until SUWA members swooped to the rescue.

The BLM planned to use an enormous machine (aptly named a “masticator”) on some parts of the monument to uproot, chew-up, and spit out pinyon, juniper, sagebrush, and other natural vegetation. This machine leaves little in its wake. Just in case, the BLM also planned to use other tools such as prescribed fire, grazing, and herbicides to “manage” these ecosystems.

The project would have disturbed erosion-prone soil and left a battered and desolate landscape behind. The target is a remarkably beautiful area characterized by high forested plateaus atop steep and scenic Navajo sandstone walls. The cliffs here form one of the principal “steps” in the Grand Staircase-Escalante and offer a striking view for travelers along Highway 89.

What is the “why” behind this harebrained scheme? It is the agency’s devout belief that natural vegetation must be rehabilitated and managed. The BLM

sees no irony in the notion that untouched landscapes must be manipulated by monster machines to remain healthy. Not coincidentally, the agency intended that grasses, which livestock prefer, would replace the native vegetation.

Thanks to SUWA members and their overwhelming response to our alert about this vegetation project, the BLM has decided to reopen the environmental assessment for public comment. That is a hopeful sign. We will keep you informed of opportunities to get involved in the future. Together, perhaps we can steer the agency away from its historic reliance on damaging and costly management projects.

—Gregory Osborne

### Obama BLM Issues Wildly Misguided ORV “Guidance”

For 30 years the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) had both the duty and the authority to control rampaging off-road-vehicles (ORVs) on our public lands, though the Utah BLM used it rarely.

President Jimmy Carter granted that authority in Executive Order 11989. The order and accompanying federal regulations empower the agency to close public lands immediately to ORV use that is “causing or will cause considerable adverse effects” to resources (all resources: soils, vegetation, wildlife, cultural resource and wilderness suitability) until damage is reversed and provisions made to prevent recurrence.

The federal regulations also authorize the BLM to close areas to ORV use to “protect persons, property and public lands and resources,” even when the adverse impacts are not imminent. That common-sense rule gives the agency the ability to think ahead, on the off-chance that it wants to, to protect resources while crafting solutions.

The Carter order and federal regulations notwithstanding, the BLM in December inexplicably issued new ORV guidance that effectively denies field staff the ability to move promptly to protect the land from ORVs. The guidance arbitrarily places a 24-month limit on ORV closures. And it requires that some proposed restrictions go to Washington for approval three months in advance of implementation. ORV



© Tiffany Bartz/SUWA

The ugly aftermath of a vegetation “treatment” in Utah.



## canyon country updates

restrictions are intended to prevent and reverse damage; that's what the Executive Order was all about. Requiring approval three months in advance guarantees damage that is otherwise preventable.

Apparently, the message to BLM field staff is to schedule their emergencies very, very carefully. It is painful to think that the intent of the Obama administration's new ORV guidance was to discourage BLM field staff from using temporary closures against ORV abuses. That will surely be its result, and the Utah BLM needs no additional excuses for ignoring ORV damage.

SUWA has joined with The Wilderness Society and 50 other organizations and businesses calling for the BLM to revoke this ill-conceived guidance.

—Liz Thomas

## BLM Plans to Capitulate to Factory Butte Lawbreakers

Just east of Capitol Reef National Park looms Factory Butte, one of southern Utah's best-known landmarks. In 1980, Brigham Young University geologists classified Factory Butte and its badlands as one "of the most extensive and one of the most spectacular badland sequences on the Cretaceous Mancos shale in the Colorado Plateau . . ."

In apparent recognition of those values, the BLM identified Factory Butte as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. But its management of motorized use has reflected precious little environmental concern. Over the years, agency staffers have recommended an end to the unrestricted cross-country motor use that has shredded the landscape. Managers, under considerable pressure from SUWA and others, finally limited vehicular use to one logical and clearly identifiable area near Highway 24.

Problem solved, eh? Scarcely. Remember, this is the Utah BLM. One of the reckless Resource Management Plans (RMPs) the BLM put in place just as the Bush administration was leaving office was for the Richfield field office which covers Factory Butte and its badland environs. The Richfield office used the RMP to slip in an outrageous scheme to re-open thousands of acres to motorized cross-country travel.



© RayBloxham/SUWA

*Despite the BLM's efforts to manage off-road vehicles in the Factory Butte area, 4-wheelers continue to violate the agency's vehicle restrictions.*

The BLM has failed to enforce the restrictions it so tardily imposed to protect Factory Butte. Irresponsible ATV users flout the rules, plowing right past clear BLM signs and information kiosks. A reasonable response would be to try harder to enforce the closures. The BLM's bizarre solution is to change the rules and reward vehicular users for their illegal activity.

We need your help to prevent the reopening of Factory Butte and its badlands to ATV pillage. Please write the BLM and ask that it protect the area, not sacrifice it to motorized use.

—Ray Bloxham

### Send your comments to:

Selma Sierra  
Utah State Director  
PO Box 45155  
Salt Lake City, UT 84145-0155  
selma\_sierra@blm.gov

Todd Christensen  
Color Country District Manager  
176 East DL Sargent Drive  
Cedar City, UT 84721  
todd\_christensen@blm.gov

## canyon country updates

### Let the Punishment Fit the Crime, Just Not in Utah

The *Billings Gazette* recently reported that building an illegal off-road vehicle (ORV) trail on National Forest lands got an axe-happy ORVer five months in federal prison, a \$2,000 fine and a \$25,000 restitution bill for the damage.

That story surely confounded some irresponsible Utah ORVers who enjoy an open invitation to ride roughshod over public resources. ORVers built an illegal trail eight miles long in Recapture Canyon directly through archaeological sites. The Utah Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will NOT tolerate illegal trails! So the agency is considering granting San Juan County a right-of-way for the trail. (What illegal trail?)

In Kane County, ORVers cut dozens of pinyon and juniper trees to build a network of illegal ORV routes in the Hog Canyon area, also rich in cultural artifacts. The BLM will not tolerate illegal trails in Kane County, either. So these are now legal: the agency designated them as official routes.

Prosecuting lawbreakers is so unpopular. Easier by far just to change the rules. That practice—leaving no bad deed unrewarded—apparently runs top to bottom in the BLM. How else could the Utah BLM managers who flatly refuse to protect our outstanding public lands resources remain so stubbornly in place?

—Liz Thomas

### The Men from Mars Meet ARRWA

Hollywood is coming to Utah to film “John Carter of Mars,” which is being hyped as the largest-budget movie ever to be filmed here. The Disney production company will reportedly spend upwards of \$30 million in Utah during filming. With numbers like that, you can bet that the governor and other state officials are making sure Disney is very happy in Utah and will be inclined to return.

Utah’s eye-popping scenery attracted Disney to use our redrock country as the stand-in for Mars. Apparently, Disney started looking at filming locations on Bureau of Land Management lands (BLM) lands nearly a year ago. But the BLM failed to inform the location crew that filming (which generally includes set construction and a lot of motorized and heavy equipment) would be controversial in areas included in America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act (ARRWA). The BLM finally notified the public (including SUWA) in December that Disney had applied for a filming permit. By that time, Disney

had essentially made many final location decisions, with plans to start set construction in March. Sure enough, many of the locations Disney wants to film are in ARRWA.

Although it is late in the game for the “John Carter of Mars” movie, the BLM has agreed to arrange field trips to the various film locations around the state. We are hopeful that we can find creative ways to ensure that the filming project has a minimal impact on the landscape.

This film may be only the beginning, as there are 11 “John Carter of Mars” books in the Edgar Rice Burroughs series. We are working toward a better process, one that will make filmmakers aware of ARRWA early in the game rather than when locations have already been selected. That will minimize opposition and delays.

There’s an object lesson here. Private industry fulminates against environmentalists for delaying projects. Often, as in this case, it is land managers who bog things down by failing to do their jobs.

—Liz Thomas



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**canyon country updates**

## Déjà Vu All Over Again: Another Coal Mine Outside Bryce Canyon National Park

This is yet another story (familiar to SUWA supporters) of how bad ideas never seem to really go away.

In the late 1970s, the Sierra Club successfully petitioned the Interior Department to have certain lands in southern Utah near Bryce Canyon National Park declared “unsuitable” for coal mining. The petition defeated a mine planned right next door to the park, but the petition was denied for lands slightly further away to the southwest that were also in the crosshairs for new development. A few years later the Sierra Club, National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and others defeated a proposed coal strip mine in that area which was, in theory, suitable for mining.

Last October, the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining (DOG M) approved a permit for the Coal Hollow strip mine in the same area. The permit allows the company—Alton Coal Development—to mine 2 million tons of coal per year for approximately three years.

SUWA, the Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, and NPCA have appealed the division’s approval of the mine permit. That appeal is in process and resolution may be several months away. In the meantime, because the company has not paid its reclamation bond or submitted a complete air quality permit application, it cannot begin any on-the-ground operations.

Many of the same concerns that existed nearly 30 years ago are present today, including impacts to air quality and night skies at Bryce (even if the mine

can’t be directly seen from the park, the pristine air quality and dark night skies will suffer); harm to wildlife, including sage grouse and trophy big game; damage to water quality; and impacts to local communities. A major new concern that we didn’t understand then is the threat that global warming from burning fossil fuels—such as coal from this proposed mine—poses to current and future generations.

Mining operations will require up to 300 coal truck trips per day traveling 110 miles one-way from Alton to Cedar City. That could translate to one truck leaving the site every seven minutes. The proposed haul road for taking the coal to market would run through several small towns along State Highway 89—Utah’s nationally recognized “Heritage Highway.” That highway also runs through the town of Panguitch, which was recently placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Several local business owners who rely on the natural beauty of Bryce Canyon National Park and the surrounding public lands to attract tourists fear that the mine and its related operations could drive them out of business.

This is just the beginning!

The state board’s approval is just the camel’s nose under the tent. The BLM is now analyzing a proposal by Alton Coal Development to lease a larger tract of public land immediately adjacent to the just-approved mine which involves private land and minerals. Approval of that proposal would vastly expand the size of the project to the tune of 46 million tons of coal strip mined over the next 15 years.

We’ll keep you updated at [www.suwa.org](http://www.suwa.org) about the BLM’s review, release of a draft environmental impact statement for public review, and the progress of our appeal before the DOGM.

—Steve Bloch

## Monkeys Good, Public Lands Bad

No spring newsletter would be complete without some update on the public lands-related shenanigans of the Utah Legislature. Rep. Chris Herrod of Provo introduced a bill that would allow Utah to use eminent domain (the power to take private land for public purposes) to condemn federal public land. Impressively, this bill violates both the U.S. Constitution *and* Utah’s original promise to Congress upon joining the Union. Other priorities for Rep. Herrod: a bill allowing people to keep monkeys as pets and a bill lifting pesky requirements that parents properly restrain five-year olds in cars.

## inside SUWA

### Staff Mourns Loss of Colleague Thomas Burke

We are very sad to report that SUWA staff member Thomas Burke passed away on December 19, 2009, from natural causes while on a trip to Cambodia. Thomas joined SUWA as Development Manager in 2008 after 17 years working with other non-profits, including Salt Lake City's Indian Walk-In Center.

Thomas, a South Carolina native, moved to Utah to climb and ski. An adventurous spirit, he had recently fine-tuned his skydiving skills and was working toward base jumping certification. True to character, he was as modest about these achievements as he was about everything else he did.

Thomas lived in an enviable location up Big Cottonwood Canyon in the Wasatch Mountains and commuted daily to our Salt Lake City office. This arrangement once led to a marmot hitching a ride down to the big city, where it scavenged for food in SUWA's back parking lot. Always a soft-hearted animal lover, Thomas vowed to humanely trap the critter and return it to its mountain home, only to be thwarted time after time by a wily squirrel looking for a free meal.

Thomas had unusual cuisine preferences and knew just about every ethnic food purveyor in the Salt Lake Valley. He would regularly offer to share packaged seaweed and other interesting treats he discovered at Asian markets, prompting skeptical

looks from fellow co-workers but delighting the office dogs (who followed him everywhere). He was also a skilled and ethical hunter who enjoyed sharing his hard-won elk, deer, and pronghorn meat with friends and colleagues.

Above all, Thomas was a gentle and kind man who loved wild places and wanted to see them protected. His smile, sense of humor, and generous nature will be missed, and long remembered, by his friends at SUWA.



Paris Latham

*Thomas with his buddy Sirius, the office lab who shared his love of ethnic cuisine.*

### Barbara Eubanks Moves On, Terri Martin Is SUWA's New Western Regional Organizer



*SUWA thanks Barbara Eubanks for all her great outreach work.*

SUWA says farewell to Barbara Eubanks, our western regional organizer, who left in October to pursue other adventures. Not only will we miss Barbara's remarkable organizing skills and enthusiasm, we'll also miss her sidekick Ginger, a Pomeranian who was a frequent visitor at the Salt Lake City SUWA office. Best of luck to both of them!

Replacing Barbara is Terri Martin, who is well-known to Utah wilderness advocates. Terri has worked part-time with SUWA over the last two years on our Faith and the Land and Women Protecting Wilderness projects. In her new role, she will work with activists across the West to galvanize support for Utah wilderness.

*(Continued next page)*



Terri has a long history with Utah's red rock country. She arrived at Lake Powell in 1973 to work as a lifeguard for the National Park Service and quickly came to love the surrounding country. That led to a 14-year stint as the regional representative for the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA). She led some epic battles in that post, including the successful fight to prevent a nuclear waste repository from being located in Lavender Canyon just outside of Canyonlands National Park. Terri left NPCA shortly after the birth of her daughter, Zoe (now 17).

Terri has a degree in architecture from the University of California at Berkeley and a master's degree in communication from the University of Utah.



*Photo by Emily Moroz*

*Seasoned activist Terri Martin is SUWA's new western regional organizer.*

## Join SUWA's Wild Utah State Activist Network!

In Utah and across the nation, thousands of people are taking action to protect Utah's matchless redrock wilderness. They meet with members of Congress, write letters, respond to SUWA's action alerts and work with others who love Utah wilderness.

If you would like to become more involved in working to protect Utah wilderness, please consider joining the Wild Utah State Activist network. The network will link you with others in your state who share that passion. There are already Wild Utah State Activist networks in Arizona, California, Colorado, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and of course, Utah.

As a member you will have the full support of SUWA's organizing staff as you help advance wilderness protection. Activists meet with their congressional delegation, help host Wild Utah slideshow presentations and other outreach events in their states, and write letters-to-the-editor in support of Utah wilderness. They attend "Wilderness Week"—our annual trip to Washington, DC to educate Congress about Utah's redrock wilderness—and attend our annual Grassroots Leaders' Retreat which brings activists from across the country to Moab, Utah, to share stories, plan and strategize.



*© Terri Martin/SUWA*

*Grassroots leaders at a 2009 retreat in Moab, Utah.*

Sign up at [www.suwa.org/statenetworks](http://www.suwa.org/statenetworks) and we'll add you to the Wild Utah State Activist Network list. One of our regional organizers will contact you to explore ways you can get involved with others in your state who are working to protect Utah wilderness.

**inside SUWA****Enter SUWA's "Wild About Utah" Photo Contest**

Above: activists wearing their yellow buttons in front of the U.S. Capitol (© Allen Gilbert), bumper and bike stickers.

Is your "Protect Wild Utah" button pinned to your backpack? Have you been someplace far from Utah and seen a "Protect Wild Utah" sticker on a building, sign or car bumper? By design, our bright yellow buttons and stickers are easy to spot from far away. Now, you can win a prize for displaying your love of Utah's redrock country and being a good photographer. Just send a photo of yourself or a friend wearing a "Protect Wild Utah" button or sticker OR submit a photo of a button or sticker in an interesting location (let's keep it clean, please!). SUWA will award prizes in the following categories:

**1) Most Creative – People's Choice**

- ◆ SUWA will select the top 10 entries to be voted for on our website from May 1, 2010 to June 1, 2010.
- ◆ The online vote will select one grand prize winner, but all top 10 finalists will receive a small prize.

**2) Furthest from Southern Utah**

- ◆ Entries will be judged based on distance, in miles, from Moab, Utah.
- ◆ There will be one grand prize, with smaller prizes for the second and third place winners.

**3) Best Photo Taken in Utah**

- ◆ SUWA staff will select the winner.
- ◆ There will be one grand prize, with smaller prizes for the second and third place winners.

**The contest begins on March 1, 2010; entries close on May 1, 2010.** We will tally votes in May and publish the winning photos in our summer newsletter and the July Redrock Report e-newsletter (winners will also be notified by email or telephone). If you do not have one of our "Protect Wild Utah" buttons or stickers, please email a request to [photocontest@suwa.org](mailto:photocontest@suwa.org). Buttons and stickers are free of charge if mailed to addresses within the United States (while supplies last!).

**How to Enter:**

1) Email your photo, the location of the photo, and contact information (name, address, and email or phone number) to [photocontest@suwa.org](mailto:photocontest@suwa.org).

OR

2) Mail the photo, the location of the photo, and your contact information to:

Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance  
c/o Molly Neel  
122 C Street NW, Suite 240  
Washington, D.C. 20001



**Grand prizes include an ultralight backpack from Ultralight Adventure Equipment ([www.ula-equipment.com](http://www.ula-equipment.com))**

For more information and complete rules, please visit [www.suwa.org/photocontest](http://www.suwa.org/photocontest).



## Give Two Gift Memberships 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 order form with **\$50 for two memberships** (a \$10 savings) or **\$30 for one membership** and get your pals involved in the wilderness cause!

### Gift Membership #1

From: \_\_\_\_\_  
(your name)

To: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

### Gift Membership #2

From: \_\_\_\_\_  
(your name)

To: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Credit Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ CVC# \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. date: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail form with payment to:

**SUWA, 425 E. 100 S.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111**

## Fine Art Posters by David Muench

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ White Canyon or  
\_\_\_\_\_ Cedar Mesa fine art posters at \$20 each  
(including shipping).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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

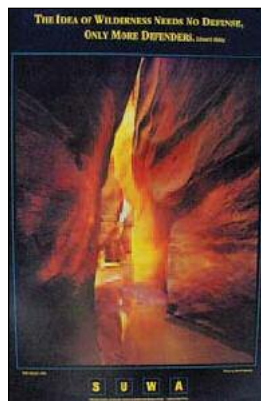
CC# \_\_\_\_\_ CVC# \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. date: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail form with payment using enclosed envelope

**SUWA, 425 E. 100 S.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111**

White Canyon

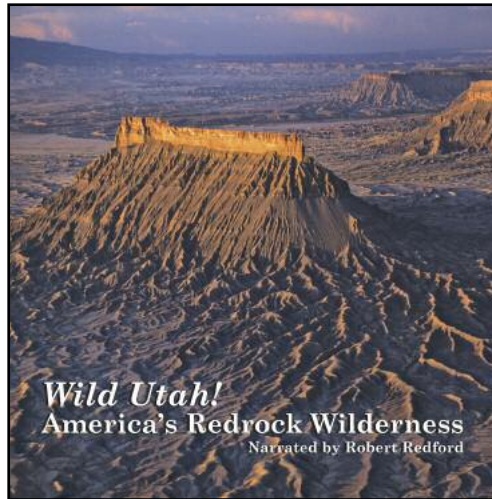


Cedar Mesa

These now classic 24" x 36" SUWA posters feature full-color images of southern Utah by world-renowned wilderness photographer David Muench. The White Canyon poster (on black) features Edward Abbey's words, "The idea of wilderness needs no defense, only more defenders." The Cedar Mesa poster (on natural fiber ivory) includes a quote by the Wallace Stegner: "...the spiritual can be saved..." Either one would make a great gift for that wilderness lover on your shopping list!

**inside SUWA****Get 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!



*Wild Utah* DVDs can also be ordered online at [www.suwa.org/goodies](http://www.suwa.org/goodies).

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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

CC#: \_\_\_\_\_ CVC# \_\_\_\_\_

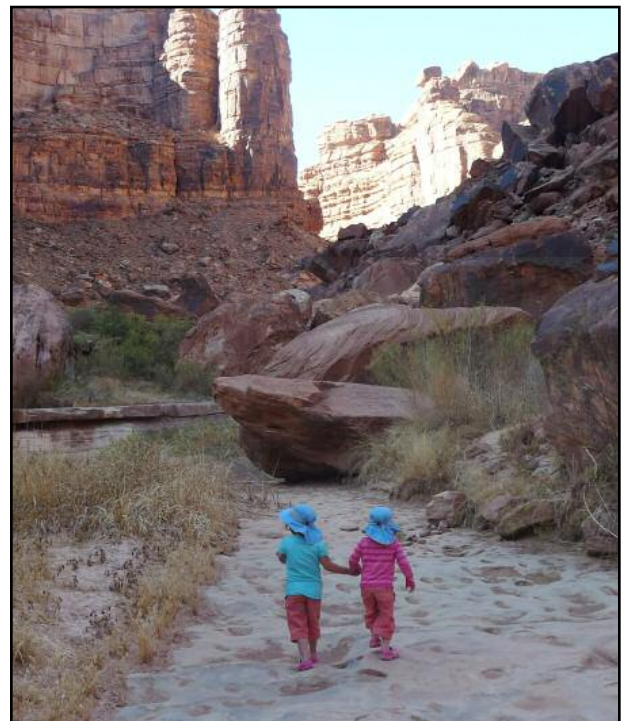
Exp. date: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail form with payment using enclosed envelope  
SUWA, 425 E. 100 S. Salt Lake City, UT 84111

## Planned Giving: A Legacy of Support for America's Redrock Wilderness

Many of us are unable to make major donations to the causes we love during our lifetimes. A planned gift gives us an additional opportunity to make a difference. It is not necessary to make a huge gift. Even a modest percentage of an estate can have a major impact on protecting the redrock. What is important is to make a gift that reflects the values you cherish. Your legacy gift to SUWA will enable us to accomplish your goal of permanent preservation and protection for these lands.

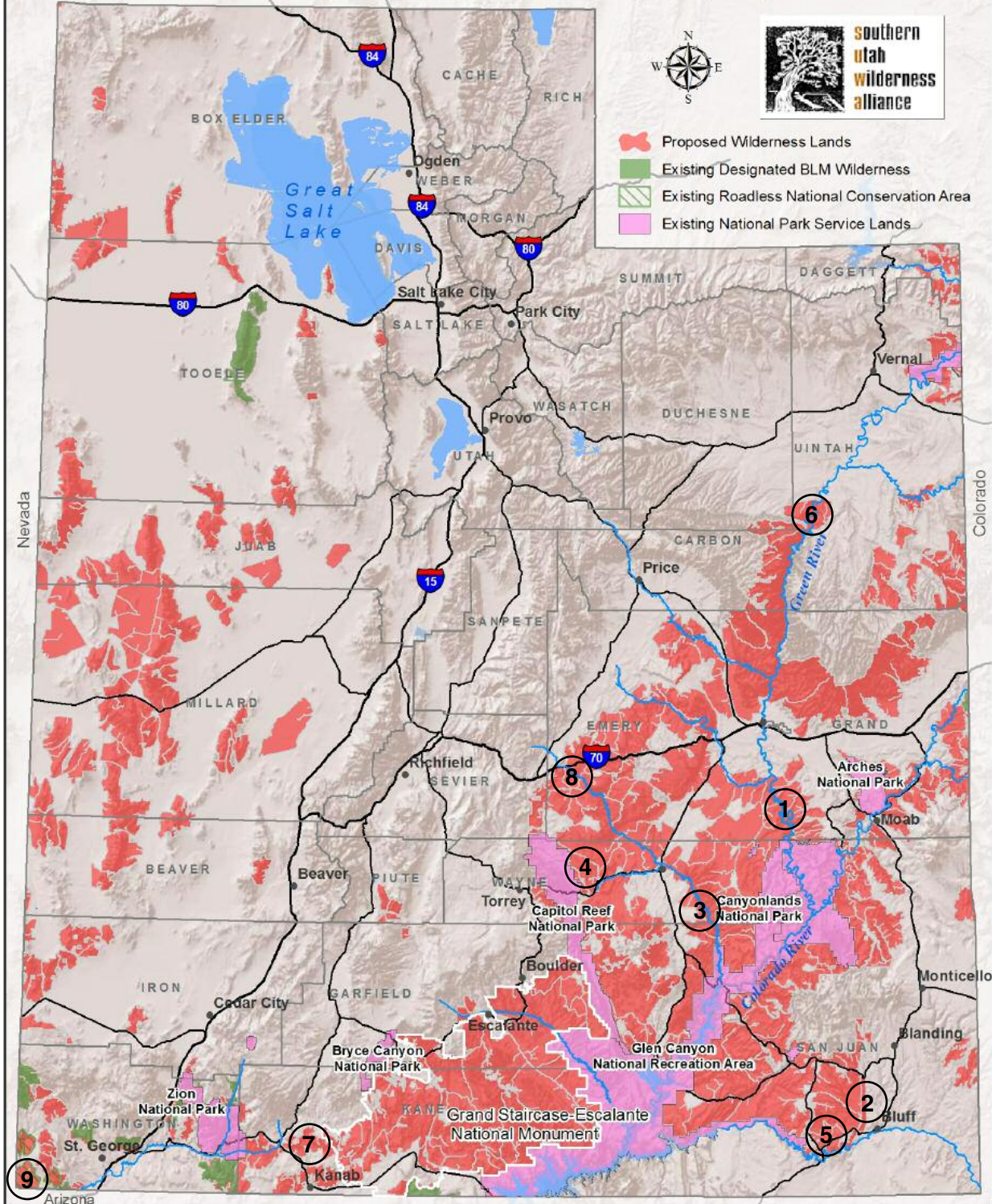
If you are interested in making a planned gift to SUWA, or have already included SUWA in your will, trust, retirement plan, life insurance policy, or other estate gift, please contact Anne Williams at [anne@suwa.org](mailto:anne@suwa.org) or (801) 428-3972, or learn more at [www.suwa.org/plannedgiving](http://www.suwa.org/plannedgiving). We would love to recognize your deep commitment by welcoming you to SUWA's Redrock Society as a legacy donor, joining the 150 individuals and couples who have taken that important step.





# America's Red Rock Wilderness Act

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



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| ② Comb Ridge (p. 6)       | ⑤ Valley of the Gods (p. 7)      | ⑧ Upper Muddy Creek (p. 7)      |
| ③ Dirty Devil (p. 7)      | ⑥ Upper Desolation Canyon (p. 7) | ⑨ Beaver Dam Wash (p. 12)       |





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## Join Us for the SUWA Roundup this Fall

Mark your calendar for SUWA's 2010 membership gathering at Hidden Splendor, **September 24-26**.

Held in the heart of the San Rafael Swell, the SUWA Roundup offers our members and SUWA staff the opportunity to meet one another and to enjoy the beautiful Indian summer of redrock country with fellow desert rats from Utah and other states. Activities include a discussion of Utah wilderness issues with SUWA staff and board members, a potluck dinner, evening music around the campfire, and—best of all—guided day-hikes in our Muddy Creek proposed wilderness area. Sunday morning you'll awake to freshly brewed coffee followed by a deluxe continental breakfast prepared by the SUWA staff in thanks for all your support and dedication.

If you plan to attend this year's Roundup, here's what you should bring: a potluck dish serving five people for Saturday evening (if you plan to eat with the group), your own food for Friday evening and Saturday breakfast and lunch, camping gear, plenty of drinking water (none is available on site), utensils, folding chairs, and, if you have them, lanterns and tables to share with the crowd. Feel free to bring your own musical instruments and favorite libations, too. For more information or to RSVP and sign up for Saturday's guided hikes, contact Deeda Seed at (801) 428-3971 or [deeda@suwa.org](mailto:deeda@suwa.org). Information and driving instructions will be posted at [www.suwa.org/roundup2010](http://www.suwa.org/roundup2010).



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*Hikers enjoy a sunny day in Muddy Creek Canyon during SUWA's 2009 Roundup.*

Enter our "Wild About Utah" photo contest and win great prizes! See page 20.