

# Acknowledgements

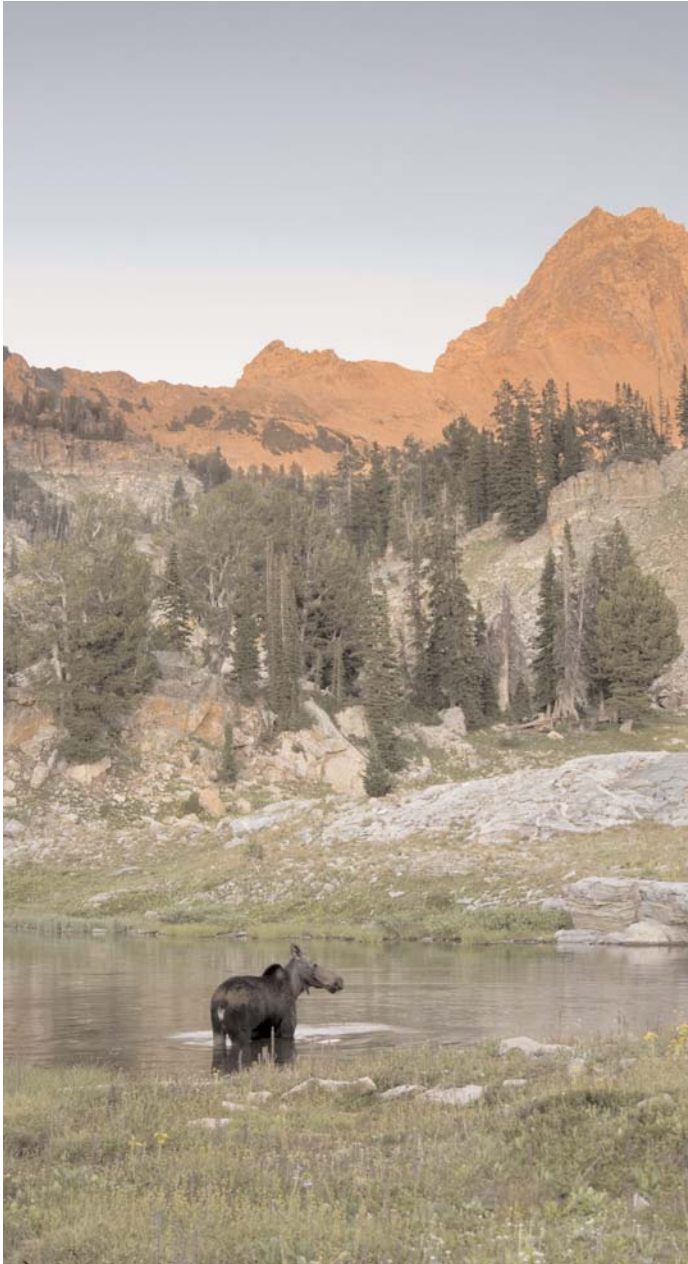


Photo: Howie Garber,  
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## Agencies and Universities we work with:

Bureau of Land Management  
National Forest Service  
National Park Service  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
National Riparian Service Team  
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources  
Utah Partners in Conservation and  
Development  
Utah Governor's Office  
Utah State University  
University of Utah

## Our work would not have been possible in 2008 without support from the following:

Ben & Jerry's Foundation  
Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc.  
George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation  
William & Mattie Wattis Harris Foundation  
Richard K. and Shirley S. Hemingway Foundation  
IGage Mapping Corporation  
JEPS Foundation  
Jones Family Charitable Foundation  
Koinonia Foundation  
The Lund Foundation  
Maki Foundation  
Melling Family Foundation  
New-Land Foundation  
Patagonia  
Peradam Foundation  
Gibbs M. and Catherine W. Smith Foundation  
Steiner Foundation  
Trimble  
The Walbridge Fund  
Wanderlust Images  
Wilburforce Foundation  
XMission

## Groups Wild Utah Project works closely with:

Bear River Watershed Council  
Biodiversity Conservation Alliance  
Boulder Community Alliance  
Center for Native Ecosystems  
Center for Biological Diversity  
DharmaTech  
Earth Justice  
Great Basin Water Network  
Grand Canyon Trust  
Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument Partners  
Great Old Broads for Wilderness  
National Wildlife Federation  
Red Rock Forests  
Round River Conservation Studies  
Save Our Canyons  
Sierra Club  
Society for Conservation Biology  
Society for Conservation GIS  
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Wilderness Society  
Three Forests Coalition  
Trout Unlimited  
Uintah Mountain Club  
Utah Environmental Congress  
Utah Farm Bureau  
Utah Forest Network  
Utah Paws  
Utah Wilderness Coalition  
Utah Wolf Forum  
Western Resources Advocates  
Western Watersheds Project  
Western Wildlife Conservancy  
Wildlands Network  
Wildlands CPR

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Bristlecone pine  
Photo: Jim Catlin.



# Wild Utah Project: Science in Support of Wildlands Health



The Results Are In! Excom Elections page 8

## Healthy Habitat Fights Climate Change Impacts

by Jim Collin

Many are now engaged in responding to our climate crisis. Limiting harmful emissions that drive climate change is an essential task, and rightly so, the Sierra Club is deeply engaged in this. This story is about how the predicted impacts of climate change may be lessened by improving our wild habitats.

Based on the thick reports produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, thousands of climatologists convened by the UN, an long-term weather forecast for the western United States. Temperatures for North America are predicted to rise more than the overall world increase, and, in the southwest, droughts are predicted to be more intense and longer in duration.

The U.S. Drought Monitor scores the severity of drought and displays them on maps on the web. A severity score of D0 applied to abnormally dry conditions, D1 for moderate drought and so on through D4 (exceptional drought). As you might guess, habitat impacts increase with severity. A moderate drought (D1) will cause some damage to plants, a high fire risk, and some water shortage that can be addressed with voluntary restrictions. An extreme drought (D3) leads to major plant loss, extreme fire danger, and widespread water restrictions. These predicted impacts from drought are based on our experience with the conditions that are found on our lands today.

I grew up in Utah and, for the most part, the condition of Utah's wild places is not much different from what I remember as a child. Since then, I have had my eyes opened by scientists who are experts in desert ecosystems. They have helped me understand the condition of plants, communities and quantify the gap between what we see today and what the ecological potential should be. They took me to the



ABOVE LEFT | Haze Draw, photo by David Sessin, Grand Canyon Trust. RIGHT | The Gulch, photo by the Bureau of Land Management

Habitat that is at its ecological potential shows few impacts from even serious droughts.

raw places in good condition and provided descriptions of what habitats should be where habitat. I have also participated in their studies and what I learned has surprised me.

Today, most of our desert habitat is significantly degraded, especially streams and springs. When you compare today's condition to what should be there, typically one third to half of the expected species of plants are missing, native grass productivity is one fourth or less of its potential

and erosion is much more than it should be. These impaired lands are the basis for climate change impact forecasts. The assumption that these forecasts makes is that this impairment will continue in the future. I argue that need not be so.

How do healthy wild lands fare in drought? Two examples of similar habitats, one impaired and the other in good shape, help answer this question. We begin in The Gulch, a perennial stream that crosses the Burr Trail inside the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (see photo 1). This stream has almost no shading, mostly bare banks, and water temperatures are so hot that fish and amphibians die.

Just five miles away is another perennial stream, Haze Draw, (Photo 2). The cross section of the stream channel resembles the bottom of an hour glass, narrow at the top and wide at the bottom. Mostly shaded, this stream is a year round home to fish and frogs. The stream is twelve to twenty feet wide. The geology with elevation and climate are all similar. Other factors

are alike, they should look identical, but they don't. Both these photos were taken during a D1 severity drought, one that has been continuing now for much of the past seven years in these canyons. One stream is near its ecological potential, and has resilience. Habitat that is at its ecological potential shows few impacts from even serious drought.

Uniformly good places like Haze Draw are rare, and most of Utah's desert streams resemble conditions found in The Gulch. The good news is that we know how to restore streams in trouble. We have the opportunity to restore resilience to our wild places. This means that the forecasts for the impacts of climate change can be overcast if we restore resilience to our wild lands.

Jim Collin is a former defender of Utah's wild places and a former member of Sierra Club's national Board of Directors.

The stars are aligned for ensuring that we are able to build on last year's progress at the Wild Utah Project and to leave a healthy wildlife and ecosystem legacy!

We have a new administration in Washington D.C. and western governors concerned about climate change. The Western Governors' Association has made wildlife corridor protection and renewable energy a priority. Positive change is underway for wildlife and ecosystems, and the Wild Utah Project as well as all of our partners and supporters are a part of it. Our work now has an opportunity and an audience. It is an exciting time!

Whether you value wildlife, recreational opportunities, the beauty of our natural lands, grazing productivity for wildlife and livestock alike, or the water resources that flow from our wildlands, Wild Utah Project has been working for you!

In 2008, Wild Utah Project worked with our partners to develop a focus for the thousands of good ideas flooding into the new administration for fixing our climate and protecting

our wild places. Of course, the two are closely linked together. We argue that in addition to reducing climate changing emissions – an obvious and important part of reducing the effects of climate change – we need to pay attention to wildland and watershed health. Our research shows that healthy habitat that has resilience is

often at its ecological potential and is likely to show few of the expected impacts that climate change forecasts. In other words, we can help prevent habitat degradation and even species loss by making sure our wildlands are healthy. It's an opportunity to do something about the effects of climate change at a local, manageable scale.

**. . . With more positive leadership from both our state and federal government, our task is to help land managers and users recognize the relationship between climate change and resilient habitat . . . and make managing for ecological health a priority.**

Example of the story that we hope will raise awareness of the relationship between ecological health and climate change impacts. Here is the lead story in the Sierra Club's newsletter for the Utah Chapter in their winter edition for 2009.



Where Wild Utah Project's neighborhood is going. Spring 2008 construction of billion dollar City Center Mall.



Winter 2009, Major construction seen from the window of our office.

**Based on more than a decade of our scientific work, we have the tools to identify habitat that needs help and the means to reduce habitat stressors.**

Unfortunately, many of our wildlands are well below their ecological potential and are degraded. Because of this, many of these lands are currently very susceptible to the increasing temperatures and droughts predicted by climate change. One of Wild Utah Project's long-term goals is to increase the amount of habitat resilience in our wildlands in order to minimize impacts of forecasted climate change. And now, with more positive leadership from both our state and federal government, our task is to help land managers and users recognize the relationship between climate change and resilient habitat and make managing for ecological health a priority.

### **Wild Utah Project has three objectives for land managers that will help reduce the impacts of climate change on our wild places:**

- 1 The response to climate change must include managing for resilient habitat that has the ability to "bounce back" after disturbance.
- 2 Managing for the health and resiliency of ecosystems needs to be the overarching management goal for land managers.
- 3 Assessments of habitat health need to be validated independently from those that promote and manage land use to ensure an unbiased process.

These objectives are not as far a stretch as it may seem. For example in 1996, the Bureau of Land Management in Utah stated:

**"A new focus is emerging from this continuing uncertainty, one that looks at sustainability of ecosystems rather than production of commodities. . . BLM is now giving management priority to maintaining functioning ecosystems. This simply means that the needs of the land and its living and nonliving components (soil, air, water, flora, and fauna) are to be considered first. Only when ecosystems are functioning properly can the consumptive, economic, political, and spiritual needs of man be attained in a sustainable way."**

Emphasis added. Source: Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management. 1997. Rangeland health, standards and guidelines for healthy rangelands. Utah State Office.

At Wild Utah Project we couldn't agree more!

Now we have the opportunity to make this vision real and offer more hope for our wildlands in a time of climate change. We have the

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chance to help land managers bring their own goals into being. By working together, land managers, land owners, grazing lease holders, recreationists, other conservationists, our funding partners and Wild Utah Project have the power to improve the health of our wild places and to preserve the many amenities we value – from streams that flow year round and provide abundant bird and wildlife habitat to recreational opportunities like birding, fishing, and hiking in some of the most beautiful places on earth, to abundant and sustainable livestock forage.

Wild Utah Project, along with our conservation partners, has practical means to make this happen. Based on more than a decade of our scientific work, we have the tools to identify habitat that needs help and the means to reduce habitat stressors. We have the ability to bring back resilience and health to our wildlands as they face the impact of climate change. Our five interlocking programs support our objectives and include:

- Heart of the West
- Resilient Habitat
- Rapid Stream-Riparian Assessment
- ORV Monitoring and Management
- Conservation Partner Support

This annual report for 2008 elaborates on these core programs, how we have been working in the direction of increased habitat resilience and health in the past year, and how we will continue to use our tools and partnerships in the coming year.

All of us at Wild Utah Project are grateful to the foundations, individuals, land managers, scientists, and partner organizations who make our work possible.

## Heart of the West Program

*Implementing a landscape biologically based plan  
through changes in federal land management*

### **Western Governors' Association Promotes Wildlife Corridors and Renewable Energy**

To help implement part of our Heart of the West Conservation Plan, in 2008 Wild Utah Project became involved in an exciting initiative that will ensure protection of

#### **2008 Heart of the West in a nutshell ...**

The Heart of the West region embraces the Rocky Mountain backbone between Montana and Colorado. The Heart of the West Conservation Plan applies conservation science to describe where development is appropriate and promotes conservation of a wildlands network. This plan will guide land managers and users to act in deference to the needs of the land. The plan identifies areas where habitat is critical for the continued viability of key species and communities. In these areas, we call for the management of human activities in a way that ensures the recovery and maintenance of habitat for these focal species. Equally important, this plan also identifies areas where responsible development can occur with a lower risk to the health of ecosystems.

In 2008, the Wild Utah Project became involved in the Western Governors' Association promotion of wildlife corridors and large scale renewable energy development throughout the West. We have played an important role in providing the information and maps necessary for the Association to minimize conflicts between these two uses. To date, our data have been warmly received by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources that is an important participant in the Association's process.

On other fronts, while sage grouse may receive greater protection in the new administration, land management plans created under the old administration will be problematic because they ignored our feedback regarding the use of conservation science.

some of our most critical corridors within the Heart of the West region. The Western Governors' Association has made the protection of wildlife corridors one of their top three priorities for 2008 and 2009. At the same time, the Western Governors Association wants to promote large scale renewable energy development throughout the West. The key is to make sure that any conflicts between the two uses are minimized. Wild Utah Project and our conservation partners have responded quickly to positively affect these new initiatives.

In Utah, the nucleus of our new Western Governors' Association Corridors partner group includes the Wild Utah Project, Western Wildlife Conservancy, Round River Conservation Studies, and Western Environmental Law Center. With a focus on the larger, west-wide picture the Law Center has a staff team dedicated to help collaborative groups like ours (in ten western states!) as we reach out to the governors and other land management partners to make wildlife corridor protection a high priority.

As part of the process in Utah, Wild Utah Project has been funneling to the Western Governors' Association critical wildlife related data to be used to identify and protect wildlife corridors and plan for renewable energy facilities in deference to wildlife needs. The data Wild Utah Project has produced and supplied includes our Heart of the West Wildlands Network (core areas and corridors). This network was designed with the needs of many species of wildlife in mind, such as wolves, cutthroat trout and sage grouse. Wild Utah Project has also provided our lynx "least-cost path" predicted movement corridors for lynx throughout the Heart of the West region.

Check out our website:  
[www.wildutahproject.org](http://www.wildutahproject.org)  
and go to the library page for the Heart of the West Conservation Plan.

Led by the Western Governors' Association, Utah is identifying which lands might qualify for large-scale renewable energy facilities. Most of the proposed sites for renewable energy avoid candidate wilderness areas and the Heart of the West Conservation Wildlands Network. The cross-hatched areas are draft choices that qualify for these large-scale developments. Wild Utah Project provided key information in GIS form to this process.

It is imperative that the Western Governors' Association use these unique spatial datasets (created by nonprofit groups such as ourselves), alongside the various wildlife agency data they are stockpiling, to identify the most important wildlife movement corridors and come up with multi-state strategies for their

protection. Recognizing how important our data are and how our work often fills voids, the maps, reports, and computer files we have submitted have been very warmly received by our local wildlife agency: the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources.

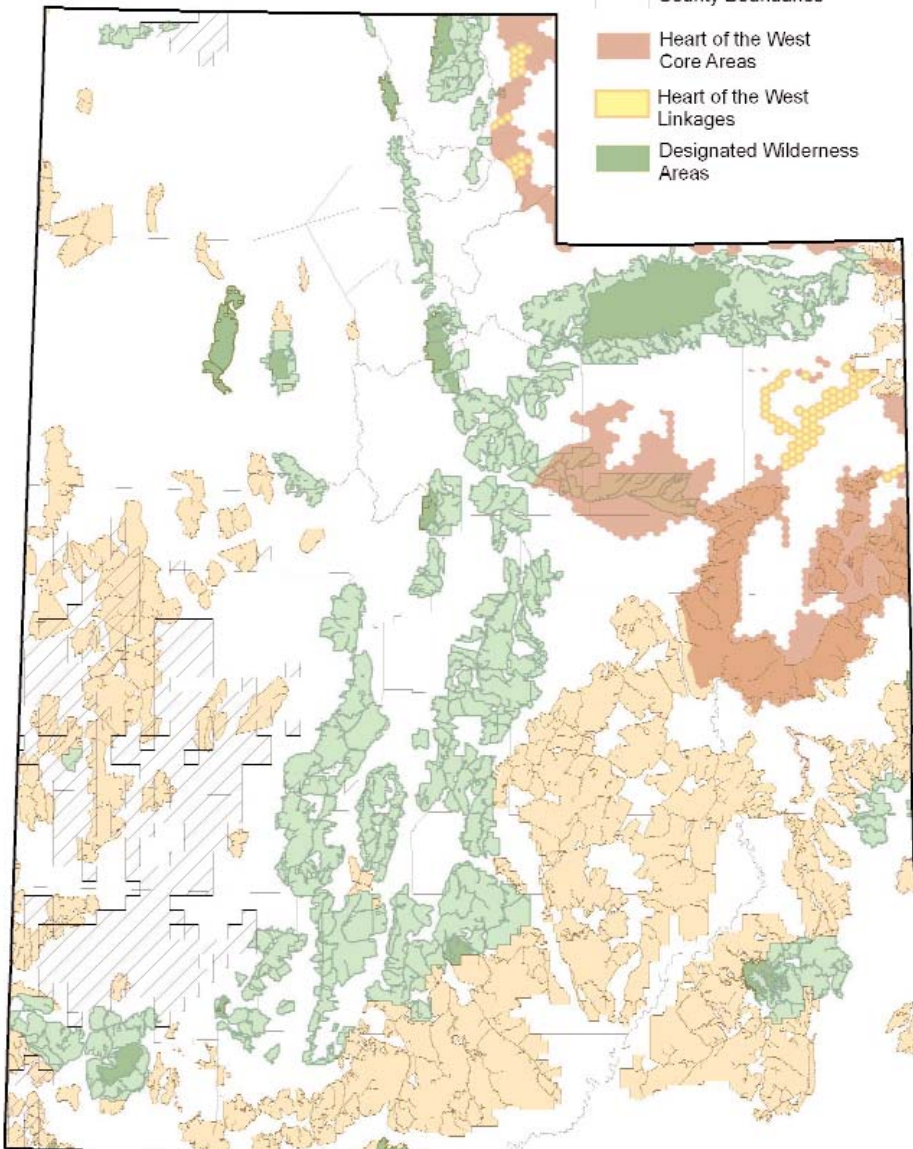
The first use of the information collected by the Division and the Western Governors' Association was to help define where it is appropriate to site new geothermal, solar, and wind energy facilities. To make recommendations on a west-wide scale, each western state established its own Western Renewable Energy Zoning technical analysis group, including one in Utah. Wild Utah Project has been working with this group to make certain that important wildlife areas are considered in defining the renewable energy zones.

Thus far, we are excited about how this apparently progressive Western Governors' Association initiative is advancing, and we think our involvement will help ultimately result in a final product (appropriately sited renewable energy and protected wildlife corridors) that we can embrace.

### Draft WGA WREZ Qualified Resource Areas (potential major wind, solar, or geothermal energy developments in Utah)

#### Legend

-  National Forest Roadless Areas, Utah Forest Network Inventory
-  Redrock Wilderness (BLM) Utah Wilderness Coalition
-  Renewable Energy Qualified Resource Areas
-  County Boundaries
-  Heart of the West Core Areas
-  Heart of the West Linkages
-  Designated Wilderness Areas

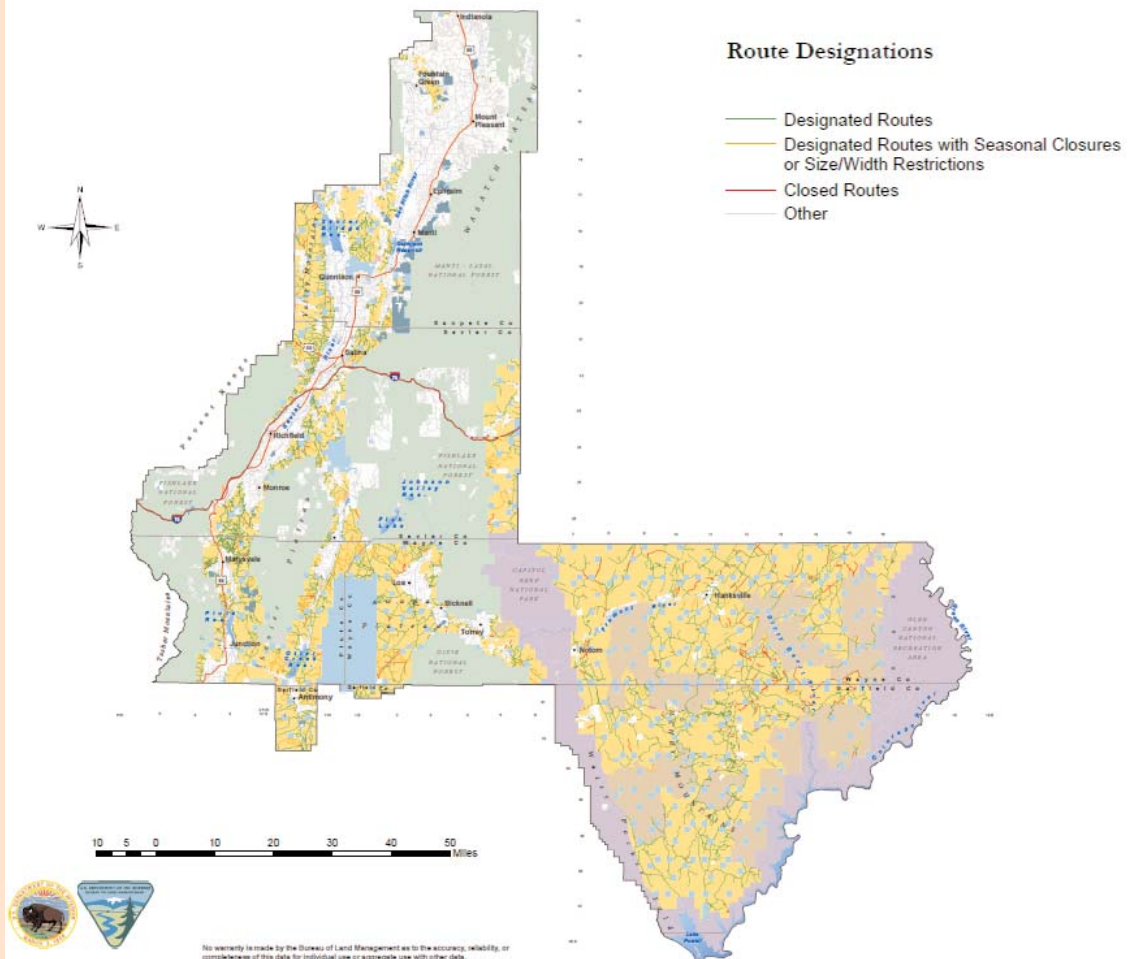


### Land Management Plans from Bush Administration Ignore Conservation Science

Sadly, the previous Presidential administration left office after implementing Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land use plans that are likely to be problematic for us in the coming decades. Included are land use plans for the Vernal and Price Resource Areas, which overlap the Heart of the West. While we and our partners made efforts to bring conservation science into these plans, our ideas were not acted on and our concerns with the final plans were not addressed. Other conservation groups have filed lawsuits to reverse these bad decisions and we will have to see how this develops.

The sections that follow describe work that overlaps our implementation of the Heart of the West Conservation Plan. In particular, our work on resilient habitat and riparian health will help ensure that Heart of the West core areas and linkages function better in the future for the wildlife that depend on them.

This map from the Bureau of Land Management's Richfield Resource Management Plan shows all the routes open to ORV use in green. It demonstrates a recurring problem in BLM resource management plans. They favor opening ATV routes even when they have not been used for decades and have been largely restored to a natural state. These plans fail to limit vehicle use routes not needed for a specific transportation purpose.



## Resilient Habitat Program

*Promoting ecologically-based range management, a key part of our response to climate change*

Many concerned Americans are now engaged in responding to our climate crisis. Lessening harmful emissions that drive climate change is an essential task, and rightly so. But there is more that must be done. In particular, Wild Utah Project believes that the predicted impacts of climate change may be lessened by improving the condition of our wild habitat.

For those of us who grew up in Utah, the condition of Utah's wild places does not look very different than what we remember as children. More recently, scientists who are experts in arid ecosystems have been able to describe what these systems are currently missing. We now know that there is a gap between what we see today, and the ecological potential of Utah's natural habitats. Habitat at its ecological potential is home to all of its native species, with sustained, fully functioning processes to

### 2008 Resilient Habitat in a nutshell...

Many of our wildlands in Utah and throughout the Intermountain West are in poor condition. In order for officials and land management agencies to improve how they manage our wildlands, there must first be a greater understanding both within the agencies and within the land user community about the degraded state of many of our wildlands and how we can improve their health.

Our Resilient Habitat Program seeks to educate land managers and community leaders engaged in land management on the importance of managing for resilient habitat that has the ability to endure or bounce back from the adverse effects of climate change. The challenge we face is that while most individuals who are in positions to influence land management decisions are well intentioned, many do not have the up-to-date tools and information they need to make truly educated decisions that improve the health of the lands they affect.

In particular, our Resilient Habitat Program aims to ensure that land managers and others influencing land management obtain the know-how and tools to help them restore resilience to Utah's wildlands. This will help us ensure that the lands are better able to withstand the effects of climate change including projected shorter winters, higher average temperatures, and increased droughts in the future.

**Today, most of our desert habitats, especially streams and springs, are significantly degraded when compared to their ecological potential.**

meet their needs. When the system has all these native pieces and processes, it is "resilient," or able to bounce back from disturbance.

Today, most of our desert habitats, especially streams and springs, are significantly degraded compared to their ecological potential: Typically one-third to one-half of the expected plant species are missing, native grass productivity is one quarter or less of its potential, and erosion is much more than it should be. Unfortunately, nearly all climate change impact forecasts are based on these lands in an impaired state.

The assumption that these forecasts make is that this impairment will continue in the future. We argue that this need not be so.

### Dramatic Example of Resilient vs. Non-Resilient Habitat

With more drought expected with climate change, we need to ask, how do healthy resilient wild lands fare in drought? To help answer this question we have two

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Photo 1, The Gulch, BLM photo.



examples of similar habitat, one impaired and the other in good condition. We begin in The Gulch, a perennial stream in southern Utah that crosses the Burr Trail inside the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (Photo 1). This stream has almost no plant shading, mostly bare banks, and water temperatures that are so warm that fish and amphibians die.



Just five miles away is another perennial stream, Nazer Draw (Photo 2). A cross section of this stream channel resembles the bottom of an hour glass, narrow at the top and wide at the bottom. Mostly covered in shade, this stream offers a year round home to fish and frogs. Both streams are similar in geology, soils, elevation, and climate, and other factors aside, they should look identical. But they don't. Both photos were taken during a severe drought, one that has been ongoing now for much of the past seven years in these canyons. The healthy stream is near its ecological potential and has resilience, and thus shows few impacts even during serious droughts.

Unfortunately, healthy places such as Nazer Draw are rare, and most of Utah's desert streams resemble conditions found in The Gulch. The good news is that we know how to restore streams in trouble, ensuring resiliency in our wild places thus reversing in part the grim forecasts for the impacts of climate change.

Restoring the ability of habitat to bounce back is straightforward but not always easy. The first step is to maintain habitat that is healthy. The second step is to address the causes of the loss of habitat

Photo 2, Nazer Draw.  
Photo by David Smuin, Grand Canyon Trust.

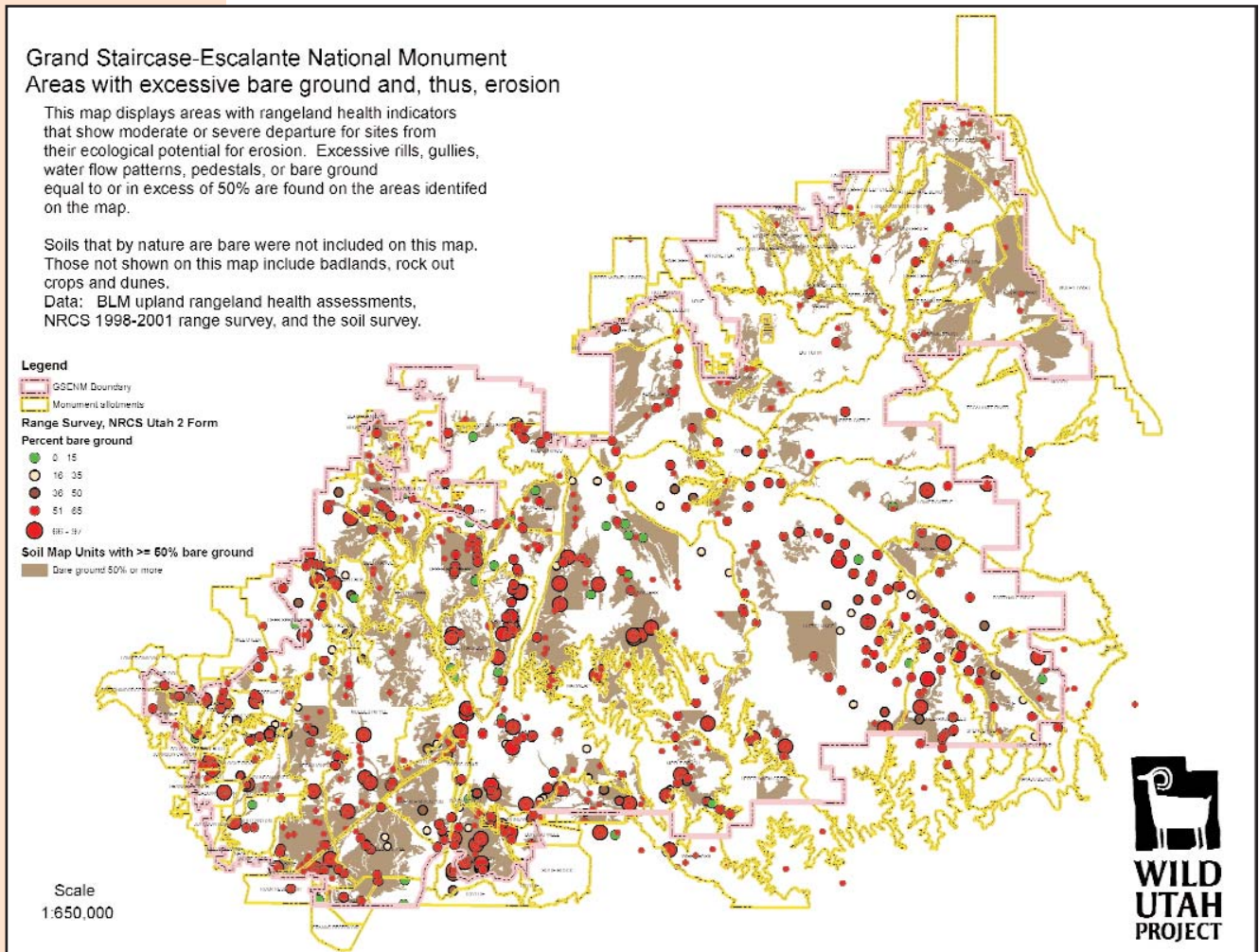
resilience. Some causes are fairly obvious and well-known; roads and associated human use are obvious culprits. Landscape-scale logging is another example. In most cases, eliminating these causes (stopping logging in critical habitat, reducing road densities in wild places, keeping oil pads away from wild habitat, ending or reducing overgrazing, etc.) reduces the stress on wild places and increases their resilience.

**The good news is that we know how to restore streams in trouble, ensuring resiliency in our wild places thus reversing in part the grim forecasts for the impacts of climate change.**

Below, we expand on our 2008 efforts to promote more ecologically-based rangeland management in our three current priority geographic areas in Utah:

### **Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument:**

Last year, after a delay of nearly eight years, BLM finally issued its Draft Environmental Impact Statement for its grazing program for the Monument. At the heart of this decision was BLM's determination of just how many of the 80+



One map that we submitted in our comments on the draft grazing decision. This map shows areas that have too much bare ground and don't meet BLM's habitat health standards. In sharp contrast to this, BLM incorrectly claimed that only nine of the 83 allotments fail to meet standards.

Monument grazing allotments were in good shape, and how many failed to meet standards (and thus where change in management was needed). BLM found that only nine allotments did not meet standards and that these could be fixed without reducing the current grazing use. The proposed decision exactly matched Kane County's request of "no net loss of permitted livestock in the Monument."

Wild Utah Project, armed with years of our own grazing and range health field data and analysis for the Monument, teamed up with our Utah conservation partners and submitted almost 200 pages of hard-hitting comments. With the help of staff at the adjacent Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and past employees of the Monument (who were there when the Draft Environmental Impact Statement was being written but have long since left), Wild Utah Project and our legal and conservation partners offered a clear solution within BLM's authority to solve the many problems found in grazing management in this Monument.

Working with our conservation partners (Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Center

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for Biological Diversity, Wetern Resource Adovates, Sierra Club, Western Watershed Project, Natual Resources Defence Council and the National Wildlife Federation), we were able to recruit nearly 18,000 comments supporting the “conservation alternative” for the draft plan that we helped design. We believe that in a new administration a new approach will trigger a different decision that will improve grazing management in the Monument and enable rangeland health standards to be met in the future.

On another Grand Staircase front, since 2007 Wild Utah Project has been investing significant time to help the Monument Advisory Committee begin the process of designing “Best Management Practices” detailing how to conduct ecological restoration that comports with the current scientific literature.

**Working with our conservation partners...we were able to recruit nearly 18,000 comments supporting the conservation alternative that we helped design.**

Currently, and especially in Utah, “restoration” is a term that is used to support mechanical vegetation manipulation with a rapid return of traditional grazing use.

Early last year, and with the strong science mission of the Monument at hand, the committee working on this project was well underway, and we were pleased with its progress and unbiased approach to the science. However, shortly thereafter this effort was halted by BLM. The BLM state director decided that all Utah BLM advisory committees were to be suspended and did this by not renewing their charter membership.

Hopefully this year with a new administration in Washington, we will see the Monument’s Ecological Restoration Best Management Practices come back to life. If so, we feel it will result in a valuable document with utility for private and public land sagebrush restoration throughout the West.

### **Northern Utah/Rich County:**

Invited by the Rich County Cooperative Resource Management (CRM) Team four years ago, Wild Utah Project has invested significant time working with the team to bring about more ecologically-based range management in this Heart of the West county. Our focus since 2005 has been collecting missing information on range health, forage production and livestock use in two key allotments.

In 2008, we had a setback. BLM released a proposal to renew grazing at unchanged levels in the Duck Creek allotment in spite of the damning story told by our data and BLM’s own monitoring data. We joined Western Watersheds Project to file a request before the Interior Board of Land Appeals that BLM base its decision on the carrying capacity of the land. In October of last year, we submitted a detailed forty page report that outlines the problems found in the Duck Creek Allotment, and our proposed solution. If the Interior Board of Land Appeals judge agrees with our report, the final decision on the Duck Creek allotment might serve as a model for solving similar problems found on a number of allotments in Utah.

## New research in the Wasatch Front:

In 2008, the Wild Utah Project kicked off a collaborative research effort to study range vegetation projects in the context of livestock grazing and the resulting ecological health of the land. Vegetation projects are a kind of vegetation engineering that usually involves the removal of shrubs and trees and the seeding of other species, usually with a focus on grasses. One popular vegetation engineering method uses large tractors to crunch or remove sagebrush in order to encourage regeneration of sagebrush and associated grasses and forbs. The belief is that this kind of engineering is good for wildlife as well as cattle, which is why it is so popular.



Kennecott Utah Copper has generously offered use of their rangelands as part of our research. Photo: Allison Jones

The use of sagebrush treatments is a rapidly growing program in Utah. Since 2003, nearly half a million acres, some on private lands, have been treated. However, the stated assumptions, goals (often said to be watershed restoration), and outcomes of these

projects remain largely untested. As such, the Wild Utah Project, along with collaborators including the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Utah State University, the USDA-Agricultural research Service, and Kennecott Utah Copper are setting out to begin preliminary testing. Our goal with this research is to develop sustainable management of sagebrush restoration sites and to have a better understanding of the long-term interaction of livestock grazing and sagebrush treatment.

Our study methods include mechanically removing sagebrush in 10-20 acre sites in various locations in Utah, followed by reseeding of sagebrush and both native and

**One popular vegetation engineering method uses large tractors to crunch or remove sagebrush in order to encourage regeneration of sagebrush and associated grasses and forbs. . . . Amazingly, independent and controlled studies that look at the interaction between sagebrush “treatment” and livestock grazing have virtually never been done.**

non-native grasses and forbs. Some treatments will then have cattle brought back on immediately, some after two years and some not at all. Vegetation of the sites will then be measured and compared to

untreated grazed and ungrazed sites that are matched to treatment areas over a long term period, perhaps 20+ years.

Amazingly, independent and controlled studies that look at the interaction between sagebrush “treatment” and livestock grazing have virtually never been done. This research will fill a real need in the world of range science and rangeland restoration. Last year, after multiple meetings and field site visits, Kennecott Utah Copper agreed to establish the study on their lands! While we are moving forward there, we are also working with our partners to identify other suitable study sites in Utah.

## Rapid Stream-Riparian Assessment Program

*Ensuring that a biologically based stream health method is used to determine the health of streams in Utah and elsewhere on the Colorado Plateau*

Riparian habitats may be especially hard hit by a changing climate. Although riparian areas represent less than one percent of the land within the Colorado Plateau, they are among the most important and heavily used wildlife habitat in this region. A changing climate, along with other stressors including pressure from expanding human populations and improper land management, have already resulted in most streams and springs failing to meet the needs of wildlife and the human communities that rely on them.

As described earlier, research by the Wild Utah Project has shown that resilient riparian areas continue to offer needed resources for wildlife during drought periods. In other words, healthy riparian habitats will be better able to withstand the stresses imposed by climate change.

### 2008 Rapid Stream-Riparian Assessment in a nutshell...

Our studies show that healthy, resilient riparian areas continue to offer needed resources for wildlife during drought periods. By assessing the health of streams across the Colorado Plateau and working with land managers and community leaders to improve them, we can make our streams and riparian areas more resilient in the face of droughts and temperature increases. Our Riparian Assessment Program allows us to address this important issue.

In 2008, partners that applied our riparian assessment method in their work included The Mancos Conservation District in the San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado, Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument in Arizona, Southern Utah University, University of New Mexico, Wild Earth Guardians, the Arizona and New Mexico Riparian Councils, University of Idaho, the Utah Nature Conservancy, Capitol Reef National Park, Western Watersheds Project, and the Grand Canyon Trust.

The guide is online. Go to:  
(<http://biology.unm.edu/stacey/RUG-cover.pdf>)

In order to establish resilience in Colorado Plateau riparian habitats, we first need to understand the current biological health of each stream in the watershed and how it is functioning for fish and wildlife. The Wild Utah Project and a group of regional riparian scientists have developed a method to rapidly evaluate the current biological health of riparian areas on the Plateau. The survey method, called the Rapid Stream-Riparian Assessment, or RSRA, uses a series of simple but scientifically based indicators, including those to assess conditions for fish and other wildlife, which ultimately measure how much the biological health of the stream differs from what might be found in a biologically healthy reference stream. **This science based method is objective, repeatable, and can be used by anyone with minimal training.**

Our trainings and stakeholder workshops have included county commissioners, teachers, ranchers, other private landowners, citizen scientists, conservation organizations, and public land managers. In 2008, partners that

applied our riparian assessment method in their work included The Mancos Conservation District in the San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado, Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument in Arizona, Southern Utah University, University of New Mexico, Wild Earth Guardians, the Arizona and New Mexico Riparian Councils, University of Idaho, the Utah Nature Conservancy, Capitol Reef National Park, Western Watersheds Project, and the Grand Canyon Trust.

**Week-long Stream Monitoring Training a Success**

One of the highlights of our 2008 riparian program was our spring Rapid Stream-Riparian Assessment training in the Escalante watershed in southern Utah. This training, headed by our veteran riparian scientist Dr. Pete Stacey, brought together ten participants from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, regional conservation organizations and scientific societies, and multiple staff from the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Due to a very



Professor Peter Stacey, University of New Mexico, leads our 2008 field training for Rapid Stream-Riparian Assessments in Calf Creek, Utah. Participants learn on a hot day with their feet in the stream. Photo: Allison Jones

positive response from local landowners to our training, two training days were spent assessing private lands on Deer Creek and Boulder Creek, which are owned by folks interested in further increasing the health of their riparian areas.

The week of intensive training in the use of the stream health assessment method culminated with a two-day community stakeholder Rapid Stream-Riparian Assessment workshop for local landowners, ranchers, and land managers. This is when the trainees-turned-trainers taught the assessment method to folks interested in their local streams. The turn-out to the 2-day locals' workshop included private landowners, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument staff, members of the Boulder Mountain Community Alliance and other regional conservation groups working in the area, and representatives from the regional National Park Service and Nature Conservancy.

The feedback from all participants was extremely positive. One quick story to relate on this note: After two days of lifting rocks to check for stream invertebrates and walking transects to assess the vegetation, the stakeholders, trainees, and instructors gathered around a campfire along Calf Creek to discuss what our work means. One of the National Park Service employees said that he could have applied the full spectrum of Park Service science to this stream. However, based on what he learned with us, the Park Service would have missed what was really happening in terms of stream health. He said that our method got it right. He is now working with us to make our riparian assessment method part of how the National Park Service assesses streams on the Colorado Plateau.

## **ORV Monitoring and Management Program**

*Ensuring that ecosystem health and quiet user needs are central in ORV management*

In the past few decades, we have seen an exponential increase in off-road vehicle (ORV) use throughout the West. The ability of these vehicles to reach even the most remote areas has led to habitat fragmentation and a resulting decline in wildlife, loss of hunting success, increased watershed degradation, and displacement of quiet recreation.

While off-road vehicle management is an acknowledged priority for federal land management agencies, overburdened staff lack effective ORV monitoring procedures and have not allocated sufficient resources to collecting data on ORV use and impacts. As a result, land managers have little hard data on ORVs and no firm policy for handling ORV abuses. Where regulations do exist, the agency often does not have the resources to follow its own rules and policies. In short, the inability to manage and monitor ORV use is having major effects on critical wildlife habitat.

As we detailed in last year's annual report, perhaps the most exciting accomplishment on our Off Road Vehicle Campaign front from late 2007 was the completion of the first ever "Best Management Practices for Off-Road Vehicle

Use on Forest Lands" report to use in Forest Service Travel Plan decisions (which identify which routes should be open and closed to motorized use). Wild Utah Project, along with Wildlands-CPR, took the lead in this effort.

**We've received many reports from our conservation partners of successful application of these Best Management Practices in the Forest Service Travel Planning Process.**

Best Management Practices provide an important structure for public land managers to follow in making natural

resource management decisions pertaining to activities such as timber harvesting, mineral extraction and fire management. The Forest Service has nothing exactly like this for ORV monitoring and management.

In 2008 we were busy getting the word out on the Best Management Practices, disseminating them, and using them to try to affect Forest Service travel planning decisions. All in all, hard copies or CDs of the practices were sent to 150 National Forest Supervisors and Senior Level Forest Service Travel Planners, 600 Forest Service District Rangers, 15 BLM Senior Staff, and 250 Conservation Groups.

### **2008 ORV Monitoring and Management in a nutshell...**

In late 2007 Wild Utah Project and Wildlands-CPR took the lead on completion of the first ever "Best Management Practices for Off-Road Vehicle Use on Forest Lands" to use in Forest Service Travel Plan decisions (which identify which routes should be open and closed to motorized use). In 2008 Wild Utah Project was busy getting the word out on the Best Management Practices, disseminating them, and using them to work to affect Forest Service travel planning decisions.

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We've received many reports from our conservation partners of successful application of the Best Management Practices to the Forest Service Travel Planning Process, especially in Montana. In Utah, our partners with the Three Forests Coalition submitted the Best Management Practices as part of the travel planning scoping process on the Manti LaSal National Forest. We also traveled to Vernal last year to meet with the Ashley National Forest staff to discuss the practices and other forest issues. The Travel Plan team leader assured us that they would use the new Best Management Practices we authored in the revised Ashley National Forest Travel Plan.



A volunteer observes an example of serious erosion on the Uinta-Wasatch Cache National Forest in Rich County. This type of damage will be increasingly avoided as the Best Management Practices that Wild Utah Project and Wildlands-CPR developed for use in Forest Service travel planning decisions are adopted.

## **Additional Support for our Conservation Partners**

*Helping our conservation partners accomplish their wildland and wildlife protection work*

Last year, we provided GIS and other scientific support to conservation groups for a number of different projects, providing Utah's conservation community with much needed analysis of biological and ecological issues. GIS projects in particular comprised the bulk of our project support, and last year these projects included labor-intensive data creation, spatial analysis, cartography, and data and map distribution.

### **2008 Partner Support in a nutshell...**

Land managers are rapidly migrating information about the land into a GIS (computer mapping software) format. As a result, information is now more cryptic and takes special expertise to understand and use. Many of our conservation partners lack the needed technical and scientific skills or cannot afford to pay for this critical support. In addition to this, federal land managers lack the resources for needed ecosystem monitoring and analysis. Decisions are increasingly made in the absence of needed data. Our solution to this problem is offering our scientific support services, including GIS analysis, to our conservation partners.

Wild Utah Project assisted many of our conservation partners in 2008, primarily by providing GIS support. Without our assistance, our partners would often be left without the tools to make their conservation case as powerful and compelling as possible.

GIS analysis is a critical element in the dialog between parties involved in the land management process, serving as a highly effective tool for visually describing the spatial extent and impact of policies and decisions to people at all levels of involvement. Our services also help our conservation partners, and consequently, the public, better understand heretofore cryptic agency information.

Here are brief descriptions of some of the many projects the Wild Utah Project completed for our conservation partners last year:

### **Wild Utah Project's first "bioblitz":**

During a weekend in May of last year, The Moab office of The Nature Conservancy convened a group of some of Utah's leading conservation scientists

and field biologists to rapidly assess the biodiversity of a landowner's property along Deer Creek outside the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. With a group of about 15 people spending the weekend inspecting a variety of transects, nets, and traps, The Nature Conservancy assembled the skill-set necessary to make a rapid assessment of the diversity of fish, terrestrial invertebrates, aquatic invertebrates, small mammals, and birds. The Conservancy also invited those necessary to ascertain whether springs and riparian areas were functioning well; Jim and Allison contributed to this effort by completing a riparian assessment of the creek using our method.



Bioblitz (two) crew in Deer Creek, Escalante River Drainage.

### **The Utah Environmentalist Oral History Project:**

In spring 2008, Jim and Allison were invited by a PhD student with the American West Center at University of Utah to participate in an exciting new oral history project. Between Jim and Allison sharing their personal experiences as Utah conservation scientists turned environmental advocates, approximately six hours of interviews were recorded, covering more than thirty years of our wilderness activism and public lands conservation in Utah. Along with many others, these interviews will be preserved for posterity at the University of Utah.



Photo: Howie Garber

### **GIS Helping to Protect the Great Salt Lake:**

In partnership with Western Resource Advocates, FRIENDS of Great Salt Lake and other user and conservation groups, Wild Utah Project produced GIS maps to support efforts to require Utah state agencies to look at the environmental impacts of water diversion from and discharges into the lake. Great Salt Lake Minerals Corp. currently uses relatively fresh lake water to flush 4.5 million tons of salts each year from its solar evaporation ponds and proposes to increase mining activities substantially. The relatively fresh water the company uses for flushing is critical to sustaining Bear River Bay and the wildlife that depend on it. Great Salt Lake is critical inland resting point for migratory birds travelling the Pacific flyway, and is an invaluable and irreplaceable resource. Species such as snowy plovers and red-necked phalaropes migrate from the Arctic region to South America, stopping at Great Salt Lake to rest and feed. As a result, impacts to the lake and its birdlife will have global impacts.

**Highway 12, Boulder to Escalante Highway, plotting its future:**

Working with local partners and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, we submitted detailed comments to preserve the character of the highway between Boulder and Escalante Utah. One of the most scenic stretches of roadway in the West, highway 12

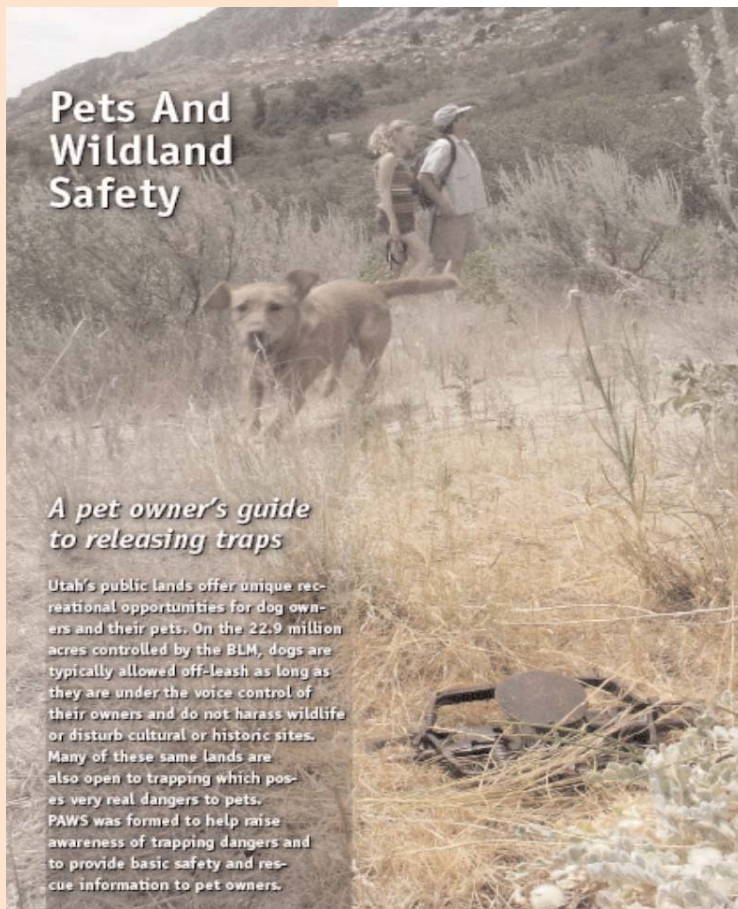
descends and crosses the Escalante

River for travelers going from the town of Escalante to Boulder Utah. Wild Utah Project joined a Utah Department of Transportation advisory committee two years ago to help in the design of "improvements" to the travel corridor. Complex issues were addressed, including RS2477 rights-of-way, candidate wilderness areas, and a broadly supported view to leave this road as it is. While a few of these "improvements"

**While a few of the "improvements" will cause damage, in general, good progress was made to make Highway 12 match the remarkable landscape.**

will cause damage, in general good progress was made to make Highway 12 match the remarkable landscape. Our comments laid out a clear, legally defensible alternative that would make the improvements without expanding the existing footprint of the highway.

Traps are legal on many of Utah's public lands. We helped volunteers prepare this brochure on what to do if your pet gets caught in a trap.



**Pet safety and wildlife trapping:**

We helped a new volunteer group called "Utahpaws" complete a brochure that informs people what to do if your pet is caught in a trap that is set by USDA's "Wildlife Services" on our wildlands. Though these traps are usually set for coyotes at the urging of ranchers, they are indiscriminate and many pets are unintentionally caught. Nothing like this new informational brochure was previously available in Utah. We are now helping Utahpaws distribute the brochures throughout the state. Check out their great website: <http://utahpaws.org/>.

**Least Chub, valiant ally to the people and wildlife of Utah's Great Basin:**

Our 2007 annual report described the submission of an Endangered Species Act listing petition for the imperiled least chub, a small freshwater spring fish endemic to the West desert of Nevada and

UTPAWS  
[www.utpaws.com](http://www.utpaws.com)

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Utah. In short, the future existence of the species could very well hinge on whether Las Vegas is granted the right to pump Snake Valley groundwater out from underneath three of the last six known remaining populations of this fish on the planet.

The petition, brought by the Goshute Tribe and a coalition of regional conservation groups, was based on a status review that Wild Utah Project wrote. Last fall (while still under the Bush administration!), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a “positive finding” on the petition....one of the few such findings in the last eight years. This means there is a good chance the least chub will be listed as either Endangered or Threatened in 2009. If this is the case, it could be a big help for the people in Utah and Nevada currently fighting the “Snake Valley water grab.”

### The Three Forests Coalition Celebrates its 5-year Birthday in 2008



The Three Forests Coalition was born in 2003, when 15 different Utah based and regional western conservation groups came together to work for management that protects the natural heritage of the Dixie, Fishlake, and Manti-La Sal National Forests. Wild Utah Project has been a member since the beginning, and now that we are celebrating the five year anniversary, we'd love to highlight some of our chief coalition efforts and

Three Forest Coalition meeting. Left to right:  
Tim Clark (Boulder Community Alliance),  
Kirk Robinson (Western Wildlife Conservancy),  
Bill Gray (Utah Native Plant Society)  
Rosalie Woolshlager (Western Resource Advocates),  
Tim Peterson, (Great Old Broads for Wilderness)  
Mary O'Brien (Grand Canyon Trust),  
Gavin Noyes (Round River Conservation Studies),  
President Obama (guest speaker),  
Allison Jones (Wild Utah Project),  
Terry Shephard (Red Rock Forests),  
Season Martin (Grand Canyon Trust),  
Jim Catlin (Wild Utah Project),  
Steve Smith, (The Wilderness Society),  
Laurel Hagen (Wildlands CPR),  
Kevin Mueller (Utah Environmental Congress).  
Photographed at the Hawk Watch International office.

share some success stories on these three amazing Utah Forests. We were centrally involved in a number of key conservation actions with the Three Forests Coalition in the past year.

#### *Tushar Mountains Collaboration:*

In response to an appeal (of which we are a party along with five other groups), the Fishlake National Forest agreed to a collaborative two year process to identify and fix serious livestock management problems on two key grazing allotments in the Tushar Mountains. This is breaking news. The collaborative process was sponsored by the Utah Farm Bureau and Grand Canyon Trust and together all the participants hired a facilitator who has been

wonderful. This past winter, after two seasons of field work and countless meetings, the permit holders, Utah Farm Bureau, Forest Service, and the conservation

**This past winter, after two seasons of field work and countless meetings, the permit holders, Utah Farm Bureau, the Forest Service and the conservation community all agreed to major grazing reductions.**

community **all agreed to major grazing reductions** in the two allotments. There seemed to be a strong commitment from all involved to make this happen. The many hours of work to document the loss of young aspen trees,

riparian degradation, and loss of much of the grass community paid off. The Fishlake Forest Supervisor wants to use this success to help with other problem allotments. The methods used to conduct field work and present the results in an allotment management plan will serve as a template that can be applied much more widely. **The benefits of this collaborative monitoring program here and elsewhere in the three southern Utah forests helped convince the Regional**

**Forester to recommend that all forests collaborate with conservation and other scientists as they conduct monitoring.**

*Tackling the decline of willows, cottonwood, and aspen:*

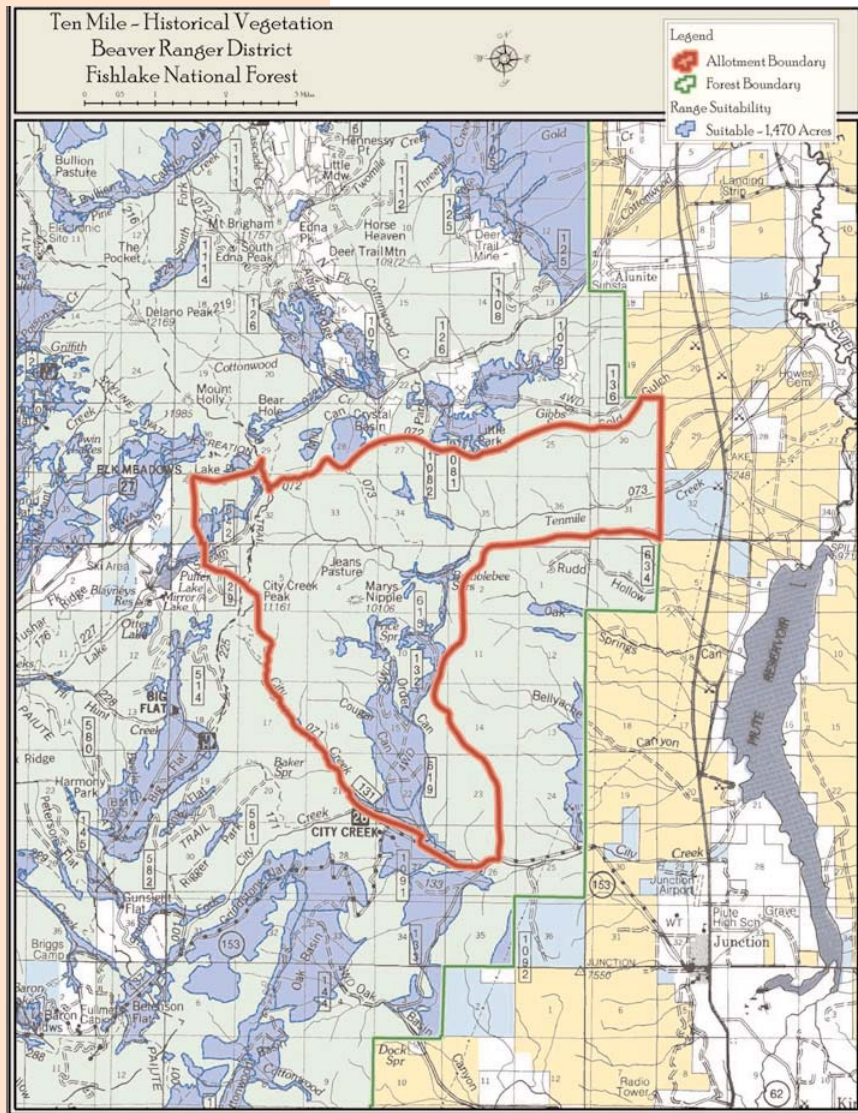
Cottonwood, aspen, and willow share something more than their silky-haired seeds and a common family name (Salicaceae, the willow family): All three are declining throughout the West. One of the main stresses on these three plant groups is repeated damage from browsing by wild and domestic ungulates. Eventually, entire willow plants, cottonwood galleries and aspen stands can and do disappear from the landscape. This can cause a major loss because willow, aspen, and cottonwood are notorious for providing support to an unusually high number of native wildlife species.



How do you identify excessive erosion? Part of our collaborative work in the Tushars was to commonly agree when serious problems occurred. Here is one of the more important indicators showing erosion. Plants standing on pillars of dirt indicate a recent loss of several inches of soil on this site.

Photo: Jim Catlin, Beaver Ranger District, Fishlake National Forest.

Curiously, none of southern Utah's three national forests ever measure the intensity of browsing done by the hundreds of thousands of cattle and sheep which graze and browse on the forests for about five months each year. Last year the Grand Canyon Trust and partners (including Wild Utah Project) measured the level of browsing on these plants on targeted sites on the three forests. We found that cottonwood, aspen, and willow tall enough to have a chance to reproduce are largely absent because of excessive browsing by elk and cattle. This means that too few aspen, cottonwood, and willow are available to replace the old, tall "overstory" aspen, cottonwood, and willow as they inevitably die.



The results of this field work are being used to (1) urge the addition of browsing to Forest Service and Utah Division of Wildlife Resources measurement of livestock and wild ungulate impacts on the forests' plants, and (2) improve management by both agencies to reduce the number of mouths consuming young aspen, willow, and cottonwood, thereby insuring the viability and recovery of all three of these extraordinarily valuable willow family members.

*Reference Areas Project:*

Again with the Grand Canyon Trust at the helm, The Three Forests Coalition's multi-year reference areas project is identifying and examining the healthiest habitats ("habitat gold standards") on each southern Utah National Forest. These reference areas will help the Forest Service and users understand potential conditions that would be possible under conservation-based management as compared to conditions in many similar habitats under current management (i.e., roads, ORV routes, oil and gas, coal mining, livestock grazing, logging).

Tushar Mountains: Forest Service map of one of the allotments that the collaborative process addressed. The blue areas indicate those lands that are able to support livestock grazing. Beaver Ranger District, Fishlake National Forest.

The Reference Areas Project has three legs:

- (1) identifying, mapping and describing potential reference areas,
- (2) stressing to the Forest Service the need for each Forest to have and use reference areas, and
- (3) making comparisons between reference areas and comparable impacted habitats.

The managers of the three Forests currently observe conditions and predict consequences of forest projects by looking at other heavily impacted areas (e.g., over grazed, logged, and mined sites, and high use motorized recreational areas). This

amounts to six million acres of "impact experiments" without non-impacted reference areas that, when used in comparison to other areas, act as a management control.

In 2007 and 2008 members of the Coalition searched for the "best of the best" of the following habitat types: Riparian areas (including beaver habitat), aspen communities, sagebrush communities, springs, meadows, and ponderosa pine communities. The tireless work of Mary O'Brien, scientist with the Grand Canyon Trust, has paid off. Late last year, **The US Forest Service Regional Office signaled they will support the Three Forests' use of reference areas.** Thus, the Three Forests

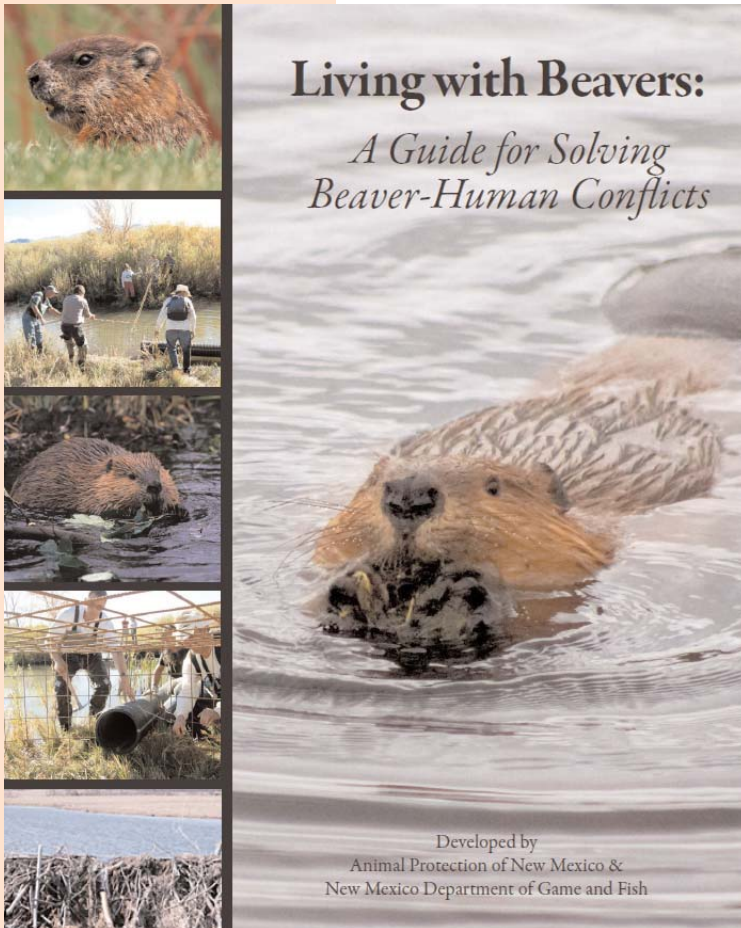
Coalition's Reference Areas Project is moving the Forest Service toward a more professional, ecological vision for these Colorado Plateau forests.

*The restoration of beaver onto the three southern Utah Forests:*

This is one of the key programs of the Three Forests Coalition. Beaver are a most critical player in our forest communities, for a number of reasons. Their dams slow water, allowing for recharge of groundwater rather than allowing the water to run off the forests. Beaver dams trap sediment to repair damaged, incised creek channels. Dam-slowed water extends and increases late summer flows. Beaver ponds create habitats for frogs, salamanders, fish, ducks, and cavity-nesting birds. And, beaver-expanded ribbons of riparian areas are welcomed and used by the vast majority of the forests' species.

The partners of the Three Forests Coalition, again with Mary O'Brien in the lead, are in the third year of planning for long-term habitat for beaver in southern Utah. We are doing this principally by photographing the benefits of beaver and the

losses caused when beaver colonies or their dams are destroyed, and by communicating with landowners, permittees, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and the Forest Service about where and when beaver can be reintroduced and accepted.



This brochure developed by one of our partners helps people live with beavers. This was developed by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and Animal Protection of New Mexico. Bringing beaver back is not enough; we also have to help them live with people.

## The Road Ahead

We at Wild Utah Project are thrilled to announce the addition of Amy O'Connor to our staff in spring of 2009! While this news comes with the sad departure of Erika who did a fabulous job developing funding for our work and is now focusing her attention and energy on her family, Amy is a wonderful addition to our organization.

**Never before in our experience with wildland conservation in Utah have opportunities opened as much as they have recently.**

As our new Development Director, Amy will continue Erika's legacy as an integral part of our team. While her background is in biology, Amy worked eight years for one of our partner organizations, the Southern Utah Wilderenss Alliance, where she grew the membership and

produced outreach materials. She then moved on to run her own consulting business that has served primarily envi-

ronmental and conservation organizations across the country for the past dozen years.

### Wild Utah Project's Mission

The Mission of Wild Utah Project is to protect and, where needed, restore the health of our lands in Utah and surrounding states. Based on an undisputable body of evidence, there is a common consensus that we face an ecological crisis beyond any in recorded history. Climate change on top of our growing human population, with its expanding demands on our landscapes, has led to large-scale habitat fragmentation, loss of watershed health and land productivity. This fact is not just an abstract scientific theory but a conclusion that is important to our lives. Healthy ecosystems will be most resilient to coming climate shifts. Furthermore, the health of the land is a fundamental trust we all have responsibility for that is eventually linked to almost all human endeavors. Damaged ecosystems jeopardize not only wildlife but the continued existence of rural communities.

A bold new vision is needed to address this ecological situation. Conservation biology has taught us that in order to maintain biological richness and ecological processes across the landscape, it is necessary to design and implement landscape-level wildland networks, comprised of roadless core areas connected by habitat linkages. Proper management of these networks can ensure the viability and resilience of wildlife populations and the health of wildlife habitat for the long term. Together with other scientists and our conservation partners, an important part of Wild Utah Project's mission is to create and implement wildland networks for Utah's diverse landscapes.

The Wild Utah Project works productively with many people in the scientific community to provide ecological research and GIS support for the conservation community in Utah and surrounding states. Such an assistance program provides a framework to help shape land use in a way that restores native wildlife (including large carnivores), maintains ecological integrity, expands wilderness, protects biodiversity, and provides for ecosystem resilience.

Never before in our experience with wildland conservation in Utah have opportunities opened as much as they have recently. Both in Utah and on the national scene, people are listening to our solutions. We are finally seeing adoption of some of our scientific analysis and protocols (for example, the Utah Department of Wildlife Resources is now poised to use an aspect of Rapid Stream-Riparian Assessment to implement their Wildlife Action Plan...more on that in the 2009 annual report!).

As this annual report is being written, the new administration is sending a clear message to federal land mangers that **wildlife and their habitats are again to be given high priority**, and science will again be the basis for decision-making. These are substantive changes that we can use to amplify the results of our work here at

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Wild Utah Project. Thanks to the help of our partners, our research for the past decade has given Wild Utah Project solid footing to understand the problems wild habitat faces in a changing climate. We have solutions that are practical and understandable to those who use and manage wildlands, and we are hopeful that in the next few years we will see some of them applied on a large scale.

This year we are starting a new research program in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Working with a new group called the Grand Staircase Partners, in partnership with ranchers, BLM, and the Park Service, we will begin a study of resilient habitat in the Monument. This is exciting! This research effort brings together our riparian work, burrowing owls, resilient plant communities, and livestock grazing in an effort to demonstrate that cooperation and the best information can lead to habitat improvements on the ground. We can honestly say, for the first time in what feels like a long time, that we feel much hope going into this next year.

## **Wild Utah Project Staff**

**Wendy Bates** has been working as a GIS Analyst for the Wild Utah Project since June 2003. After earning a B.S. in Geography with a GIS emphasis from the University of Utah in 2002, she was employed collecting GIS field data and later as a Quality Assurance supervisor for Pacificorp. This entailed use of a GPS unit in conjunction with a variety of field data collection equipment and methods, a number of which she is now helping employ to the benefit of the conservation community. Since joining the Wild Utah Project, Wendy has been working on GIS analyses and mapping projects associated with a multitude of public land issues including land use plan revisions, off-road vehicle use, roadless inventories and wilderness proposals. She most recently completed WUP's lynx least-cost corridor analysis, a habitat suitability and connectivity model identifying priority lands for conservation of habitat in an effort to restore lynx connectivity between southern Colorado and the greater Yellowstone region. She also assists with WUP's day-to-day computer information technology issues and GIS technology upgrades.

**Jim Catlin**, project coordinator and native Utahan, has been active in public land issues for more than 25 years. His PhD from the University of California at Berkeley focused on GIS and land use planning. His MS in regional land use planning at the University of Utah analyzed Wasatch Front air quality. In 1996 under the guidance of The Wildlands Project, Jim founded the Wild Utah Project to support the work of other Utah conservation activists. In addition to overseeing data collection and analysis necessary for reserve design projects in Utah, Jim provides GIS support and scientific analysis. Jim is widely recognized as one of the principle architects of the present day conservation movement in Utah. His awards include the Alexis Kelner Award from the Wasatch Mountain Club, John Muir Award, the

Sierra Club's highest conservation award, and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance Conservation Award. Jim served on the Sierra Club Board of Directors for six years.

**Allison Jones** received her B.A in Environmental Studies at the University of California at Santa Cruz under the guidance of her mentor and advisor, Michael Soule. She then completed her M.S in Conservation Biology at the University of Nevada, Reno in 1996. Her Masters study analyzed the effects of cattle grazing on small mammal communities in the Great

The "Red Party" held its once-a-year party to raise money for a worthy cause. In 2008, this party was for the Wild Utah Project. Erika Pollard, Lisa Schmidt (Save our Canyons), Allison Jones and Lindsey Oswald (DharmaTech).



## *Wild Utah Project 2008 Annual Report*

Basin. She then worked as an ecological consultant in both Colorado and Utah as an endangered species specialist, where she performed habitat assessments and surveys for federally threatened birds, small mammals and plants. As staff conservation biologist for The Wild Utah Project, Allison collects and assembles biological data to be used in reserve design for Utah. Allison also provides biological analyses for Utah conservation groups that do not typically have these services in-house. Examples include detailed conservation biology analyses of proposed federal land management agency plans and actions. Allison served the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources as a member on two state task forces: one to rewrite Utah's black bear management plan, and another to write Utah's first wolf conservation and management plan.

**Erika Pollard** helped the Wild Utah Project in 2007 and 2008 with development. She brought over 10 years of experience working in conservation with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, the National Park Service, the Colorado Bird Observatory, The Nature Conservancy, and most recently the Nevada Wilderness Project. Erika has a B.S. in Natural Resource Management with a minor in Wildlife Biology from Colorado State University, and an M.S. in Conservation Biology and Sustainable Development from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Erika's combined background in conservation biology, public land protection efforts and organizational development skills helped Wild Utah Project take the next steps in fundraising by strengthening existing relationships and cultivating new and diverse funding sources.

**Amy O'Connor** joined the Wild Utah Project in April 2009. Amy came to the non-profit world with bachelor's and master's degrees in biology from the University of Utah. For eight years (1988-1996), she served as Membership Director of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance. During this time, the membership grew from 1,000 to over 20,000, while Amy worked on membership recruitment, retention and upgrade. For six years of her tenure at Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, Amy was the publisher and managing editor of the organization's newsletter and other outreach materials. In 1997, Amy began full time work for Integrated Development Consulting, Inc., which she established and where she built the financial and organizational stability of nonprofits through training, facilitation and coaching. Her areas of expertise include comprehensive development planning, strategic planning, donor stewardship, board development, membership recruitment and cultivation, and communication.

## **Wild Utah Project Board of Directors**

**Amy Barry** worked for the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance from 1995-2001 as the Administrative Coordinator and Grassroots Organizer in the Salt Lake City and Washington DC offices. After leaving SUWA Amy returned to graduate school to expand her expertise and earned a M.S. degree in Environmental Studies from the University of Montana. The beauty of Montana simply couldn't compete with the spectacular deserts of Utah. She returned to Salt Lake City and earned a second M.S. degree in Political Science/Public Administration from the University of Utah. Her education and experience bring a broad view of Utah environmental issues to the WUP board. Amy currently works as an Elections Coordinator for Salt Lake County.

**Jeff Kessler** is a long time conservation activist, working as paid staff, board member, and volunteer for organizations protecting wildlife and wild places in Wyoming, Colorado, South Dakota and Utah. Jeff is co-founder and was for many years Executive Director of Biodiversity Conservation Alliance (Laramie, WY). Jeff was a board member of the Wyoming Outdoor Council (Lander, WY) for ten years and the Center for Native Ecosystems (Denver, CO) for four years. He also was a steering committee member of the Southern Rockies Conservation Alliance for many years. Jeff's conservation interests include the application of conservation science and GIS to federal land and wildlife management, protection of imperiled native species, and the protection of natural areas. After nearly 25 years in Wyoming, Jeff now resides in Salt Lake City, UT where he is employed by the University of Utah as a mechanical engineer.

**William Newmark** is a research curator and conservation biologist in the Utah Museum of Natural History. He holds a B.A. in biology from the University of Colorado, a M.S. in wildland management from the University of Michigan, and a Ph.D. in ecology from the University of Michigan. His research is focused on patterns of extinction of vertebrate species, protected area and wildlife corridor design, vertebrate species movement, and conservation and development. He has been conducting field research for over twenty years in western North America and East Africa. His findings on patterns of extinction of large mammals in western North American and Tanzanian parks and birds on tropical forest fragments have highlighted the problems that nature reserves face in conserving biological diversity and have provided an important justification for a series of worldwide initiatives to link national parks and related reserves with wildlife corridors. He also serves as an international consultant in conservation biology to a number of bilateral and multi-lateral donor organizations and has been a planner and a technical adviser on a number of conservation projects in East Africa.

**Stephen Trimble** was born in Denver, his family's base for roaming the West with his geologist father. After a liberal arts education at Colorado College, he worked as

a park ranger in Colorado and Utah, earned a master's degree in ecology at the University of Arizona, served as director of the Museum of Northern Arizona Press, and for five years lived in Indian Country near Santa Fe, New Mexico. He has been a full-time free-lance writer and photographer since 1981. Trimble has received significant awards for his photography, his non-fiction, and his fiction—and the breadth of those awards mirrors the wide embrace of his work: The Sierra Club's Ansel Adams Award for photography and conservation; The National Cowboy Museum's Western Heritage Award; and a Doctor of Humane Letters from his alma mater, Colorado College, honoring his efforts to increase our understanding of Western landscapes and peoples and his choice to remain a stubborn generalist. Trimble has published twenty books, almost all focused on western wildlands and natural history. One of those books Trimble co-compiled with Terry Tempest Williams was a landmark effort by writers that played an important influence on public policy on Utah's canyon country.