

GLEN CANYON SIERRAN

Volume 2

Newsletter of the Sierra Club Glen Canyon Group

Issue 1

WHITE MESA CAMPAIGN PICKS UP SPEED

SIERRA CLUB GRANTED HEARING REGARDING MOLYCORP WASTE

At the end of January 2002, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) granted the Sierra Club's request for a hearing on International Uranium Corporation's (IUC's) proposal to import 17,750 tons of radioactive lead sulfide sludge from Molycorp's mine at Mountain Pass, California, to the White Mesa uranium mill six miles south of Blanding. Written presentations were due in the hearing April 1. Based on those presentations, the judge will determine whether oral testimony will be allowed.

IUC proposes to store the sludge on a concrete pad, process it for uranium, then put the tailings into ponds. The sludge is both hazardous and radioactive. The ponds are not covered, which makes them a hazard to waterfowl and other wild animals, including bald eagles. One of the tailings ponds has already leaked.

Sooner or later the sludge will get into the environment and contaminate soil, surface water, and/or groundwater. In addition, toxic emissions from the uranium milling process may be unhealthy for people living in Blanding and the White Mesa Ute community.

All communities along the transportation route (Las Vegas, St. George, Cedar City, Moab, Monticello, and Blanding) are at risk of contamination from a sludge spill, either dripping from trucks or in the event of a truck accident.

IUC LOSES BID FOR MAYWOOD, NEW JERSEY WASTE

IUC lost its bid for 840,000 tons of radioactive thorium byproduct and contaminated soil from the former

Maywood Chemical Works site in Maywood, New Jersey. Instead, the contract went to Cotter Corporation uranium mill in Cañon City, Colorado, in February 2002. Colorado Governor Bill Owens put a stay on shipments of the material until the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment can determine whether shipments are covered by Cotter Corporation's current permit.

The residents of Cañon City oppose the importation of this waste to their community. The Sierra Club Colorado Chapter is assisting the residents in this fight.

IUC WANTS THE ATLAS TAILINGS

IUC is vying for the contract to clean up the Atlas mill tailings pile west of Moab. They propose to slurry the tailings to the White Mesa mill, where approximately 3 million tons could be processed for uranium and the other 10 million tons would be stored for 400,000 years.

The Sierra Club opposes this proposal. The Utah State Division of Radiation Control says the mill's existing tailings ponds were improperly constructed and will eventually leak. Furthermore, the volume of Atlas tailings far exceeds the capacity of the existing ponds, so new ponds would have to be constructed, impacting Native American graves and artifacts. Finally, dust from the 10 million tons of tailings that would not go into tailings ponds would create a health hazard for residents of the White Mesa Reservation and Blanding.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities for volunteers in this campaign include submitting written or oral testimony in NRC hearings, helping to write or distribute literature, writing letters to state agencies, tracking waste-hauling trains and trucks, getting cities, counties and Native American governments to pass resolutions opposing bringing nuclear waste to the White Mesa mill, etc.

To get active in this campaign, contact Tori Woodard at 435/826-4778 or torewoodard@scinternet.

STATE OF UTAH DECLINES TO PROTECT SOUTHEASTERN UTAH FROM HAZARDOUS WASTE

The State of Utah refused, on March 21, 2002, to protect the public in southeastern Utah from the processing of waste material, coming from California to the International Uranium mill near Blanding, that contains 17% lead sludge.

The Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste (DSHW) has been given the authority by the EPA to regulate and classify hazardous waste coming into our state. This authority of the state is one of the few safeguards that protects the public from the contamination of our groundwater, air and environment from hazardous material.

The DSHW first declined to do the analysis of the Molycorp waste from California because there was no money in their budget. The DSHW not only refused to do the required testing of the material, but on March 21, 2002, they told the NRC they would accept the opinion of a private consultant paid for by international Uranium Corporation that the material from Molycorp contain no listed waste.

The Sierra Club believes that the State of Utah has jeopardized the safety of over 12,000 people in Moab, Monticello, Blanding and the White Mesa Ute Reservation by refusing to identify the hazardous material in the Molycorp waste. The Governor of Utah needs to make an emergency allocation to provide funds for

an analysis of the Molycorp, California, waste before the leads and arsenic in the material enters the groundwater under the mill.

Write or call:

Michael O. Leavitt
Governor of Utah
210 State Capitol
Salt Lake City, UT 84114
801-538-1000
800-705-2464

Dianne R. Nielsen, PhD
Executive Director
Department of Environmental quality
168 North 1950 West Wilson
Salt Lake City, UT 84116
801-536-4405

Dennis R. Downs, Director
Department of Solid and Hazardous Waste
288 North 1460 West Wilson P.O. Box 144880
Salt Lake City, Utah
801-538-6170

Thumper Trucks Continue Assault on Moab Area

Hot on the heels of last Fall's seismic project in the Bull Canyon/Gemini Bridges area comes another attack on Utah wilderness, this time in the Dome Plateau area.

The "Yellow Cat 2-D" project covers 36 square miles on Dome Plateau, between Arches National Park and the Colorado River. The project area is visible from many points in Arches NP. Those who closely follow the Moab BLM's mismanagement of public lands will not be surprised to learn that:

* The four 50,000 pound thumper trucks will blaze new trails cross-country. The BLM could have required the exploration company to stay on nearby existing roads/trails, but decided not to inconvenience the company in this way.

* BLM mysteriously failed to analyze the visual impacts to views from Arches NP (within 6 miles of the project area), preferring instead to concentrate on views from highways that are further away.

Printed on tree-free paper from the kenaf plant

GLEN CANYON CONNECTIONS

The topography of the territory within the Glen Canyon Group is famous throughout the world. The Henry Mountains, for example, launched the brilliant career of Grove K. Gilbert, considered by many to be America's finest geologist. Gilbert explored the Henry Mountains in 1875, an assignment given to him by John Wesley Powell. Gilbert would become the chief geologist for the U.S. Geological Survey and was Powell's most trusted friend; Powell died in 1902. In 1903, Gilbert became a member of the Sierra Club.

During Club expeditions into the High Sierra's, sometimes organized by Gilbert himself, he met Alice Eastwood. Eastwood was then a botanist and curator for the California Academy of Sciences; the two developed a relationship that eventually led to marriage.

In the summer of 1892, Eastwood disembarked from the Thompson, Utah, train station and began a botany tour of Grand and San Juan counties; Al Wetherill was her guide. She collected and classified 162 plant species during this pioneering reconnaissance. Gilbert died in 1918 at age 74 and Eastwood in 1953 at age 94.

SIERRA CLUB SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Sierra Club has inaugurated a four year scholarship program for graduating high school seniors in the Class of 2002 who reside on Utah's portion of the Colorado Plateau, including the counties of Carbon, Emery, Garfield, Grand, Kane, San Juan and Wayne; as well as eastern Washington County.

The \$2,000 scholarships will be awarded for four years to ten students from rural communities who maintain good academic standing in an institution of higher learning. With a due date of February 25, applicants were required to submit an essay up to 1,000 words identifying problems and suggesting solutions, preferably related to environmental challenges in local communities.

Winners will be announced in April. More information is available on the website <utah.sierraclub.org/scholarsip.html> or by calling the Utah Chapter office at 801.467.9297.

THE GLEN CANYON GROUP LEADERSHIP

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TREASURER'S REPORT, 2001

BALANCE ON HAND, Jan. 1, 2001: \$100.50

RECEIPTS:

Donation, 5-12-01	\$ 50.00
Start up funds, 6-22-01	200.00
Utah Chapter, 9-21-01	200.00
TOTAL	\$450.00

EXPENDITURES:

Post Office Box Rental, 2-14-01	22.00
Post Office Box Rental, 2-14-01	22.50
Post Office Box Rental, 9-21-01	22.50
Postage for election, 10-19-01	49.30
TOTAL	\$116.30

BALANCE ON HAND, Dec. 31, 2001:\$434.20

WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT ATTACKS HOT SPRINGS NEAR ZION NATIONAL PARK

On January 16, 2002, the Washington County Water Conservancy District (WCWCD) dug a hole 50-75 feet in diameter, 25-30 feet deep, on the edge of the Virgin River near Hurricane, Utah. The excavation broke into a hot mineral water aquifer, causing the hot water to flow into the Virgin River rather than into the soaking pools at Pah Tempe Hot Spring and shutting down the resort.

The resort's owner, Ken Anderson—who has been a Sierra Club member for forty years—called GCG for help. Upon looking into the matter, we learned that WCWCD has done this before, putting Pah Tempe out of business for four years (!) from 1992-96. In both cases, the District caused the problem while working on a pipeline that carries Virgin River water to a hydroelectric plant and a reservoir.

Pah Tempe and over 3,000 supporters have signed petitions against the actions of the WCWCD. They wish water development to be done in a responsible way, which respects the environment and the aesthetics of the area, and adheres to federal, state and local laws and regulations. WCWCD deviated from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' approved 404 permit plans for its pipeline and is ignoring a November 15, 2001, court order to use caissons (water-tight structures in which construction work can be carried on under water).

In the past WCWCD tried to condemn the hot springs as a source of pollution in the river.



Pah Tempe Hot Springs before WCWCD

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service put an end to that attempt because the mineral salts in the hot water are essential for the survival of endangered fish that live in the river (the spine-dace, chub, and woundfin).

Ken says, "The Conservancy District wants to squash Pah Tempe because we are the only people who won't knuckle under to their little fiefdom. No one oversees how they spend taxpayer money. The cities that use their water have no representation on their board. They don't bother to get permits from local, state or federal authorities."

Pah Tempe has a lawsuit pending against the WHWCD in the Fifth Judicial District Court in Washington County. In conjunction with the American Canoe Association, the resort plans to file another lawsuit to force the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to enforce the Clean Water Act.

This same Water Conservancy District proposes to bring water from Lake Powell to St. George via a pipeline. They want to use the water to develop southwest Utah into a metropolitan sprawl of over 500,000 people! The Sierra Club will work together with Ken to save Pah Tempe Hot Spring, stop the proposed pipeline, and rein in sprawl around St. George.

Pah Tempe needs your help now. Write a letter to the editor or ask Governor Leavitt to intervene (210 State Capitol, Salt Lake City UT 84114.)

e-mail: <governor@utah.state.ut.us>
Phone: 801.538.1000. Fax: 801-538-1557. For more information, call 888-726-8367 or visit: <http://www.naturalfrequency.net/PahTempe/PahTemp.htm>>



Pah Tempe Hot Springs after WCWCD

* BLM largely ignored the fact that the project area overlaps de facto wilderness areas currently under consideration by Congress.



Thumpers crunch fragile biological soil crusts

Unfortunately, this project may be only a small first step in a large oil industry assault on Dome Plateau. Nearly all of Dome Plateau is open to oil and gas leasing (including areas **within 1/2 mile of Delicate Arch**), and much of it is already leased. The Bush administration has instructed the BLM to prioritize oil exploration over all other public land values — to them, Dome Plateau’s Entrada sandstone domes and Pinyon-Juniper forests are merely irritating obstacles between industry and hypothetical oil deposits.

If every U.S. citizen were to spend a hour learning what the Bush administration is doing (and plans to do) to our public lands, the resulting public outcry would put a quick end to this nonsense. GCG activists are working hard to spread the word about Dome Plateau in the news media.

UPDATE: After the above article was written, there were two dramatic new developments.

First, on Thursday February 21 conservationists monitoring the project observed thumpers creating huge ruts over one foot deep in wet soils. The permit stipulations for the project state clearly and unambiguously that BLM must halt work when this happens. The some of the most shameful BLM conduct I’ve witnessed in the twelve years that I’ve been involved in public land issues.

But the news was much better Friday afternoon. In response to an appeal filed several days earlier by the Sierra Club, SUWA and other groups, an administrative law judge issued an interim stay halting work on the project. (The project was a little over half complete by this point, but the second half has the most conflicts with proposed wilderness and other sensitive lands.) This caused BLM to freak out and file an extraordinary Saturday morning appeal to Interior Board of Land Appeals Director Robert More. On Saturday afternoon Director More, clearly annoyed at the BLM, turned the in freak out and file an extraordinary Saturday morning appeal to Interior Board of Land Appeals Director Robert More. On Saturday afternoon Director More, clearly annoyed at the BLM, turned the interim stay into a full blown stay, and opined that the environmental groups would likely prevail on the merits of the case. More also stated that any financial harm sustained by the oil company pales in comparison the the potential environmental damage.

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 Card Number _____

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LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
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LIMITED INCOME	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.



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MARK YOUR POLITICAL CALENDAR

It may seem that November 5th is a long way off. But it's time to start thinking now about our representation in Congress, in the State Legislature, and in our respective County offices, including Commission or Council seats.

Filing dates for candidates are March 7-18. Where there are more than two choices in each race, there will be a primary election on June 25.

All registered voters in the Glen Canyon Group area will have the opportunity to vote for U.S. Congress in the newly redistricted Second District, a seat now held by Jim Matheson of Salt Lake County. The enormous new Second District will consist of: Daggett, Duchesne, Emery, Garfield, Grand, Iron, Kane, Piute, part of Salt Lake, San Juan, Uintah, Utah, Wasatch, Washington and Wayne Counties.

There will also be elections for the State House of Representatives, State and local School Boards, Judicial and County offices.

Grand County will be electing Council members in Districts 1 and 3 and one at-large. Other County officers to be elected are: Assessor, Sheriff, Attorney, Clerk/Auditor, Recorder, Treasurer and Surveyor.

What can you do? Make sure you are registered to vote at your current residence. Check with your local County Clerk for nomination information and petitions. Consider running as a candidate for local offices if there is no one running who represents your views. Find out where candidates stand on issues and problems that concern you. Vote June 25 and November 5. If you're going to be out of town on those dates, find out how to vote in advance or by absentee ballot. Any questions you have about these procedures can be answered by your County Clerk. Here are their phone numbers: Carbon, 636-3224; Emery, 381-5106; Garfield, 676-8826; Grand, 259-1322; Kane, 644-2458; San Juan, 587-3223; and Wayne, 836-2731.