What are the Jemez Principles?

What are the Jemez Principles? The Sierra Club’s journey on the path toward greater equity, inclusion, and justice goes back to 1976, when the Inspiring Connections Outdoors program was created to provide urban children from minority and low-income communities with outdoor experiences. Among the many milestones of progress along the way, one of the most important was official adoption of the Jemez Principles of Democratic Organizing in 2014. These principles of introspection and community action affect not only national Sierra Club’s outreach efforts, but also inform a systemic transformation of the organization itself.

The six Jemez Principles call for:

1. inclusion [a “big tent”];
2. bottom-up organizing;
3. letting people speak for themselves;
4. working together in solidarity and mutuality;
5. building just relationships among ourselves;
6. committing to self-transformation.

The principles were developed in 1996 at a Jemez, New Mexico meeting on globalization and trade hosted by the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice.

Utah Sierra Club’s Equity Task Force embraces the Jemez Principles as we seek a transformative, strengthening process for our members, the Utah Chapter, and the nature of our community engagement through projects such as the Equity Partners network.

Implementing the principles involves answering core questions, such as: “How are we encouraging respect for people with identities, expressions, behaviors and ways of being that are different than our own?” and, “What are our strategies for building just relationships, accountability, dialogue with and support for non-environmental organizations and movements?”

For more info about activities of the Equity Task Force, contact: Katherine Dwyer kmdwyer910@gmail.com
Ogden Dissolution

We are still exploring new structures to ensure the most efficient use of our volunteer capacities. Sierra Club Chapters can permit groups to form to serve more local constituencies. The downside is that groups need to have the same overhead structure as a chapter. Elections must be held, exec meetings must happen, and finances have to be managed per Sierra Club standards. To streamline accountability, we will be formally dissolving the Ogden Group. The group dissolution will be formally done through a vote by the Utah Chapter Executive Committee on Wednesday May 13 from 5-8pm at the Sierra Club conference room located at 800 S 42.5 W Suite A103. Members are welcome to come discuss this change and learn more about the opportunities at hand. Ogden area outings will go through the Salt Lake Outings Group and Dan Schroeder will monitor the Ogden area for us. Please contact Will McCarvill at 801-694-6958 or will@commercialsolutions.com if you’d like to provide input prior to this meeting so we can anticipate numbers and/or provide a digital conferencing option as necessary.

UTAH SIERRA CLUB ENDORSES SLATE OF CANDIDATES FOR NATIONAL BOD

T he Executive Committee of the Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club has thoroughly reviewed the entire slate of candidates for the national Board of Directors. After discussing the merits of each of these fine and worthy volunteers, we have selected five we believe can make the greatest contribution to the efforts of this organization. They are Marion Klaus, Peter Sargent, Natalie Lucas, Patrick Murphy, and Igor Tregubl. Regardless of whom you choose to vote for, please show your support and vote soon. YOUR VOTE MUST BE RECEIVED BY NOON (EDT) WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2020.
Earth Day 50-year Celebration on Shaky Ground
By Lisa Rutherford

As I began writing this article for the Utah Sierra's spring 2020 edition, I was busily organizing an April event for Conserve Southwest Utah on whose board I serve. Then COVID-19 became part of our lives and we have all been asked to make adjustments.

The event would have served to expand CSU's reach into our rapidly-growing southwestern Utah community, with a focus on celebrating 50 years of Earth Day. Now the event has been cancelled, along with so many other activities. Our focus would also have been protection of our Red Cliffs Desert Reserve and National Conservation Area, a spectacular area that's home to a variety of threatened and endangered species including the Mojave desert tortoise. It's an area worthy of our protection and one about which I've written in the past. The challenge is providing that protection. Even as we are hunkered down and wonder what the future holds, Earth Day on April 22 gives us a chance to refocus our efforts, remember those who came before and paved the way, and consider our future options.

Fifty years ago, on the first Earth Day, people came together to share concerns about what was happening to their environment: pesticides, burning rivers, pollution pumped into the air and more. Today we deal with many of the same issues and now have added plastic proliferation and climate change to the mix. We have made some improvement during the fifty years but much more care is needed and the challenges are great and growing.

Back in 1969, the news media jumped on the inaugural Earth Day like few environmental stories in history, and the publicity gave concerned citizens a chance to rally and speak out. From LA to NYC, thousands gathered to hear speeches by passionate, concerned leaders and citizens and entertainers such as Pete Seeger and others. It was like a big party to help generate passion to save the Earth. After 50 years, it's been a great ride. But today we badly need to re-establish that passion.

For most of those years, congress even went into recess so that members could speak to their constituents. The first Earth Day resulted in new laws to protect our environment, many of which are being challenged today, as those of us in the environmental community are well aware. Efforts to stop this administration from eliminating long-standing protections are underway but it's a heavy lift.

For the past fourteen years our organization, Conserve Southwest Utah, has worked to protect what is important to our quality of life in Washington County: land, water, air, and the threatened and endangered species we humans are here to protect. We were able to stop a coal-fired plant from being built a mere thirty miles to the west of us. We have tracked and worked to bring reason to the Lake Powell Pipeline and Northern Corridor discussion by meeting with local and state leaders.

So, as we celebrate fifty years of Earth Day, let's renew that passion and fight for a good future for our precious planet Earth.

We've conducted presentations with local groups and to the governor's Executive Water Task Force. And citizens are learning there are better ways to deliver water and deal with traffic than a pipeline and a highway through our Red Cliffs National Conservation Area, a dire threat to all of America's NCAs.

For the past twenty years I have been-and continue to be-astonished by the beauty of this area. But there are forces that would undermine what we have, merely for economic gain. Most people who live in and visit our area have seen the indelible scar on the hillside in St. George showing what can happen without good regulations planning and execution. We must stop the annihilation of environmental laws, laws that resulted from the first Earth Day, and the passion of leaders and citizens half a century ago. We need laws that provide protection to prevent "scarring" our nation's special areas that deserve our protection. So, as we work to protect ourselves and others from COVID-19, let's remember to celebrate fifty years of Earth Day even if only by ourselves in our own homes. Let's renew that passion and fight for a good future for our precious planet Earth.

Sierra Club takes action to defend immigrant communities
By Lindsay Beebe

On Saturday, February 29th the Utah Sierra Club gathered to stand in solidarity with the Utah Coalition to Keep Families Together at Mary Jackson Elementary in Salt Lake City. The event, “Creating Beloved Community: An Evening of Stories & Reflection” brought together community and activists working to prevent the construction of an immigrant detention center in Evanston, Wyoming that would increase incarceration of community members from Utah and the Intermountain West. Beyond Coal organizer, Margarita Satini spoke powerfully about the economic transition underway in Utah’s coal country, drawing parallels to the plight of southwestern Wyoming and this ill-conceived plan to replace extraction jobs with low-wage private prison jobs. In addition to being morally reprehensible, private prisons come with significant environmental effects. Light pollution disturbs people and wildlife, facilities suck up and dirty massive amounts of water, they put a strain on towns' utilities, and have major health effects on imprisoned populations as well as prison workers.

The detention center in Evanston would be constructed adjacent to Bear River State Park. Water pollution and depletion stands to affect three downstream National Wildlife Refuges: Coleville Meadows NWR in Wyoming, Bear Lake NWR in Idaho, and Bear River Migratory NWR in Utah. As the largest tributary to the Great Salt Lake, the Bear River is critical for millions of migratory birds that pass through this globally important flyway stopover, to which Wasatch Front communities are also intimately interconnected. The Sierra Club and partners are currently seeking opportunities to intervene in the permitting process for the proposed prison through the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). **In March, the Executive Committee of the Utah Chapter sent a letter to Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) requesting information on the project’s environmental assessment.**

**Action yet to be finalized - awaiting Ex-com vote – likely to be sent after the next Ex-com meeting**

Margarita Satini shares first-person experiences in an impassioned call for action.
Protecting Utah’s Bees from an Unexpected Threat
By Thomas Meinzen, Grand Canyon Trust

Visit any of Utah’s national forests in the summertime—and assuming cattle haven’t gotten there first—you’ll find a dazzling variety of wildflowers, from delicate sego lilies and columbine, to bold spikes of fireweed, lupine, and larkspur. Take a closer look, however, and you can peek into a world of biodiversity perhaps even more staggering than the wildflowers: Utah’s native bees. In a single flower patch, you may find iridescent blue mason bees, millimeters-long Perdita bees, long-horned bees with amazing antennae, large, furry bumblebees and, perhaps, even bee species still undescribed by science. Utah is home to approximately 1,100 species of native bees—more than all the states east of the Mississippi combined. These bees are indispensable. As highly efficient pollinators, they help produce the next generation of dazzling wildflowers and maintain our forests’ biodiversity. Unfortunately, Utah’s bees are in trouble. Here on Utah’s public lands, native bees face a slew of familiar threats, including drought, climate change, and overgrazing. However, they also face a threat that few might expect: honeybees. Although our state flag and highway signs feature a honeybee hive—a symbol of industry and cooperation—honeybees are actually a non-native species in Utah, introduced from Europe by settlers. Unlike North America’s native bees, which are solitary or live in small colonies, honeybees live in huge hives of tens of thousands of bees. This allows thousands of workers to exploit patches of nectar-rich flowers. In such numbers, honeybees handily outcompete native bees for limited pollen and nectar, which all bees need to survive. I witnessed this displacement firsthand while out hiking in southern Utah last summer. In a canyon near Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, miles from where a few honeybee hives were located, I noticed that the area’s rich diversity of native bees (660 species in the monument alone!) had been all but replaced: everywhere I looked, I saw only European honeybees. Where had the native bees gone? Most native bees are not long-distance travelers. When honeybees take over the flowers in their area, native bees that can’t find enough nectar and pollen are likely to starve. Scientists have shown that native bees living in proximity to honeybees have lower body weight, are able to raise fewer young, and struggle to collect enough food. Native bees are also susceptible to many diseases that can be transmitted from honeybees, including diseases like deformed wing virus that can render both honeybees and native bumblebees flightless. And disease transmission is a two-way street—native bees may also infect honeybee hives with dangerous new diseases. With this in mind, I was shocked to hear that some Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managers are permitting hundreds or thousands of commercial honeybee hives on their land—without ever analyzing their potential effects in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. Although commercial honeybee permits (“apairy” permits) are given out on public land across the West, the greatest threat may be here in Utah, where the continent’s beekeeping giant, Adee Honey (headquartered in South Dakota), has pending permit requests to place over 10,000 hives across four of Utah’s national forests. Not surprisingly, many land managers are unaware of the dangers honeybees pose to native bees, while others feel one-sided pressure to allow beekeepers to use public lands. As a pollinator fellow with the Grand Canyon Trust, a regional conservation organization, I have been working to change that. Mary O’Brien, the Trust’s Utah Forests Program director, and I have been contacting land managers across Utah to tell them about this issue and urge them to ban permit commercial honeybee apiaries in their districts. But our voices are not enough! We need your help. As fellow Sierra Club members, you can help native bees by voicing your concern about this issue to your local Forest Service district ranger or BLM field manager. Since local land managers decide whether to grant or deny apiary permits on their land, you have the chance to help protect the native bees in your area with a quick email or phone call. To learn more and get contact information for land managers, please visit: https://tinyurl.com/bees-publiclands
DON’T IGNORE TRUMP’S DANGEROUS BEHAVIOR
By Patty Becnel | The Public Forum; March 1
The following letter appeared in a recent issue of the Salt Lake Tribune.
As a teacher, I tried to focus on the good things about the “troubled” kids, much as our Republican legislators did in a recent citation to Donald Trump.
However, if I only praised these kids, and never addressed their unacceptable behavior, I would have been complicit in their misbehavior. This is what our Republican lawmakers did with the citation they sent to Trump.
I understand Trump is known for his vindictive behavior and they wanted to mitigate any backlash Utah would receive from Sen. Mitt Romney's honorable vote. But they did not address the “troubled,” nor defend a senator’s right to vote his conscience. The things they praised are not praiseworthy.

Many of the regulations Trump reduced endanger our health — from the unmonitored release of methane, pollution of waterways and use of pesticides threatening the bee population. The shrinking of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments will open those lands to more drilling and oil exploration, with the resulting fossil fuels making our air quality even worse.
The tax cuts may have slightly increased employment rates, but they also favor the wealthy and have tasked the United States with unprecedented debt, a debt so high it leaves no room for infrastructure projects, health care or innovative technologies to minimize global warming. Trump’s measures threaten to undo one of Utah’s biggest economic drivers, tourism.
Maybe Trump has done some good things, but let’s stop treating him with kid gloves and hold him accountable for his recalcitrant, dangerous behavior and actions.

TRUMP CHIPS AWAY AT ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS
By Patty Becnel | Jan 24, 2020
The following letter appeared in a recent issue of the Standard-Examiner.
While Donald Trump immerses us in a series of conflicts that become prime news, he is also quietly chipping away at environmental regulations that protect our health, our air, our water supply and our natural resources (not including coal, uranium and oil). His latest attack was on relaxing the rules for NEPA (The National Environmental Policy Act), a program begun under Richard Nixon in order to set environmental standards that regulate any federal projects, allow policy review and open it to public comment.
Like so many of his environmental rollbacks, this makes it easier for oil and gas companies to acquire land leases to open up drilling and mining. This follows Trump’s general disdain for climate science and his refusal to take action on reducing global warming. Instead, he has attempted to rollback 95 environmental regulations (58 have been completed; 37 are pending). This will have a huge impact on Utah.
At a time when scientists warn us we need to mitigate global warming, Trump’s policies lead us into further environmental damage, worse air pollution and an attack on our public lands.

UTAH DOESN’T WANT DEPLETED URANIUM
By Maurena Grossman | February 28
The following letter appeared in a recent issue of the Salt Lake Tribune.
Thank you to Utah state Rep. Casey Snider and state Sen. Daniel Hemmert for trying to create a board that will support open space, habitat and endangered species. Unfortunately, the funding mechanism of taxing depleted uranium, which is currently not allowed to enter Utah, seems to be a bad idea.
I’m not sure if you are looking out for the best interests of Utahns by being good stewards of our environment or if the intent is to accommodate EnergySolutions’ request to store 800,000 tons of depleted uranium. Either way, the board sounds like a great idea. The depleted uranium, not so much.
As the current bill stands, I would have to say it is a no for HB0233.

If you agree, feel free to contact your legislators and let them know you’d like them to oppose HB0233.
While it may be hard to believe, the aphorism, every cloud has a silver lining, has proven true in the three years following the election of Donald Trump. But the hopelessness he instills in those interested in equity, justice and the health of our planet, has led many to become activists. Maurena Grossman is one of them.

A Utah native, Mauren is the essence of a behind-the-scenes volunteer who brings important issues to the forefront through letter writing. She makes her voice known at legislative meetings and protests of the Inland Port. She volunteers and is involved because as she says, “it is the right thing to do.” This nurse, meditation coach, and volunteer at Ronald McDonald House is often frustrated by people who complain but don’t do anything. “Sometimes, all you have to do is show up,” she notes.

Maurena gets emotional when she discusses her worry over choices the Trump administration and Utah leaders make, yet this also gives her the incentive to participate. She tries to keep her focus on just a few things because it takes a lot of planning, and a lot of physical and mental energy to prepare for meetings. Not comfortable talking in front of others, she does it anyway. “It’s not fun; it can be lonely. They [legislators] don’t listen; they don’t seem to care what their constituents have to say.”

But she keeps going with the support of her husband, Nate, and her two children, Sam and Zemi. This is important because, “There are things I love and cherish here. I want my children to have them and stand up for them.” Her children are learning to be activists. When her fifth grader, Sam, didn’t agree with a schedule change at school, he sponsored a petition. Zemi, a second grader, spoke recently at an Inland Port meeting to tell the representatives to vote against HB 347. Part of what she said illustrates why Maurena keeps fighting:

“... I AM HERE because I love where I live. I AM HERE because I care about the things, people and places that are here and that I love. I AM HERE because I love this beautiful state. I AM HERE because I wish you loved it as much as I do. I AM HERE because my quality of life is in your hands. I AM HERE because the bill you plan to vote on threatens to destroy my quality of life...”

She often feels depleted as she maintains a balance between caring for her family and her activism. Receiving a certification in Meditation under her nursing license helps, as well as gives her another tool to help others. Loving-Kindness Meditation, which she practices, stresses giving love to self, to loved ones, to someone neutral and to someone you’re struggling with; and it’s not always easy. Sending loving-kindness to some of our legislators and Trump is a challenge. Mindfulness also helps one connect more with the earth, something about which Maurena feels very strongly. She and her family visit the desert as often as possible. In 2018, they managed to go to Bear’s Ears twice. “This land has something that needs to be protected: the tribes and language, and the way they care for the land.”

In Maurena’s view, a better Utah would be one where legislators listen to constituents, where we continue to preserve and expand our green spaces, where we focus on sustainable practices, and where our leaders won’t say one thing (i.e. air quality is important.) and do something else (i.e. praise an expansion of oil and gas drilling, or favor the Inland Port).

Maurena is drawn to the Utah Sierra Club, in part, because of a camaraderie with other Sierra Club members who share her passion, her beliefs, and her willingness to fight. She is here because, as her daughter said, “... I care about the things, people and places that are here and that I love.”

Utah Chapter Outings

Enjoying and exploring the great outdoors is at the foundation of our organization. While we are canceling outings activities for an indefinite period of time, we ask that you find your nearby nature, and continue to carry out our fundamental goals to enjoy, explore, and protect the planet — and each other. We look forward to sharing the trail with you again soon.
Utah’s ‘Unholy Alliance’ of Fossil Fuel Developers

by Stan Holmes

OurLand

Photo taken at a Feb. 21 rally protesting the actions of the Community Impact Fund Board and Seven County Infrastructure Coalition. At that rally, Utah Sierra Club’s newest Ex.Com. member, Ingrid Griffies, spoke truth to power regarding the continued misuse of public funds to promote fossil fuel development and coal exports. The rally was held outside the CIB headquarters in SLC.

One might wonder how the Price, Utah based Seven County Infrastructure Coalition (SCIC) connects to Salt Lake County’s Inland Port debate. And it may seem curious that while Salt Lake County is not part of the Coalition, SCIC has for the past three years held its monthly meeting in Salt Lake City during the Utah Legislature session. Note that SCIC is comprised of Carbon, Emery, Sevier, Uintah, Duchesne, Daggett, and San Juan counties.

Here’s a hint to what’s going on: those Salt Lake City meetings are hosted by the Community Impact Fund Board (CIB). Another hint: one of the Seven County commissioners (Garth Ogden, Sevier) also sits on the SCIC board...and the CIB...and the Utah Inland Port Authority board. The only things ‘green’ about this situation are the public funds going to fossil fuel businesses and promoters.

SCIC is funded by the CIB, which handles royalty money the state gets from mining leases on federal public land in Utah. That Mineral Lease Act (MLA) revenue is supposed to help local communities deal with negative impacts of mostly oil, gas, and coal extraction. Traditionally, this money fixes streets, upgrades water and sewer lines, and builds community centers and public safety facilities.

While those funds should be helping economically depressed SCIC area communities transition from their dependence on the fossil fuel industry, the CIB –with legislature support– has instead been authorizing increased spending on fossil fuel projects, some out of state.

Those projects include: $55 million to help Sevier County’s Wolverine Fuels ship more coal to Asia, $28 million toward a Uinta Basin Railway (UBR) that would encourage more oil and gas [and ozone] production and exports; and, since 2012, $53.8 million to SCIC member Uintah County for road projects that mostly benefit fossil fuel extraction, such as expanding the Steep Ridge road to a tar sands deposit and south through the Book Cliffs to Interstate 70.

Not surprisingly, former Uintah County commissioner Mike McKee is now SCIC’s executive director, replacing state senator Ralph Okerlund, who is a leading Inland Port coal exports advocate. Congratulations if you, too, detect a revolving door. More evidence of that follows.

Sen. Okerlund brings us back to the Inland Port connections. Though there is no specific reference to satellite ports in the 2018 legislation creating the Utah Inland Port Authority, SCIC wasted no time exploring possible Inland Port development connections, as evidenced in a January 2019 memo from its engineering contractor, Jones & DeMille. That memo, which also addressed UBR planning, suggests that Sevier County’s satellite port planning was already underway and that site selection had begun.

In chronological context, it should be noted that the Legislature’s first clear suggestion of a satellite ports system—termed “hubs and spokes” by the bill’s sponsor—didn’t occur until March 2019; and Inland Port promoter Envision Utah’s campaign for public support didn’t publicly discuss satellite ports until a meeting in April: several months after the Jones & DeMille update to the SCIC.

Though open to the public, the Envision Utah meeting’s participants were primarily county commission and trade representatives and lobbyists from across the state. Several were ready to propose satellite port hubs when offered markers and two large maps of Utah as the meeting ended.

The 2019 Inland Port Amendments, H.B. 433, had made clear that the Inland Port was intended to be a network of “project area” ports well beyond the Utah Inland Port Authority’s original “jurisdictional authority” in the Northwest Quadrant of Salt Lake City.

Senator Okerlund’s S.B. 248, in 2019, reaffirmed legislative support for CIB’s authorized investment in a “bulk commodities ocean terminal” on the west coast of the U.S. or Mexico. Export options south-of-the-border solidified when the coal-friendly Utah Office of Energy Development signed a memorandum of understanding at the Baja port of Ensenada to ship Utah’s “natural energy resources” abroad.

Legislation in the 2020 session further strengthened the Inland Port Authority’s statewide satellite ports reach, letting it issue bonds to fund project area developments outside the Wasatch Front. The requisite approval by local governments is essentially guaranteed through SCIC member commissions.

Let’s have a look at a few more of the fossil fuel alliance enablers.

Weying in to promote carbon mineral extraction in the Seven County area is state Senator Ronald Winterton, a former Duchesne County commissioner, CIB member, and consultant for SCIC contractor Jones & DeMille. Sen. Winterton each year sponsors legislation seeking additional tax breaks for oil and gas companies. Those incentives would cost taxpayers millions of dollars annually and boost fossil fuel production to levels that could justify the UBR. Thus far, Winterton’s bills have been beaten back.

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Utah’s ‘Unholy Alliance’
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7
Utah’s dirty energy alliance also includes state Senator David Hinkins, who sells mining equipment in Emery County and was in Mexico for the coal export deal signing. During the 2020 legislative session, Hinkins unsuccessfully sought $150,000 in MLA funds to build a coal export facility there. Hinkins did manage to pass a bill expanding the size of mine operations exempt from rigorous impact assessments.

A top the Utah Legislature fossil fuel supporters is Senate President Stuart Adams, whose pro-carbon efforts include 2016 sponsorship of legislation allowing the CIB to bypass MLA guidelines and invest $35 million out-of-state in the proposed Oakland coal export terminal, now sidelined in litigation. Of the SCIC-SCIC members, Adams claimed “They are vested in coal, their economies are built on coal, their jobs, their livelihoods are dependent on coal. It’s their money, they can surely do what they like with it.”

The list of second tier carbon cronies includes state Representative Scott Chow, who is a reliable Uinta Basin cosponsor of Hinkins’ and Winterton’s bills, and Utah County’s Rep. Francis Gibson, whose bills created a new fossil fuel export path through the Utah Inland Port Authority, that body’s power and influence is bestowed through the nascent system of satellite ports that SCIC and CIB have embraced.

A leader in the beneficiary column is Wolverine Fuels, Utah’s top coal exporter. Its Sufco coal mine is located in Sevier County. As the domestic coal market has declined, Wolverine and its Utah allies have been shipping more coal overseas. Of the nearly 3 million tons Wolverine has exported yearly, almost 50 bulk carrier loads went to Japan through Richmond, CA, in 2019. Oil and gas companies benefiting from state and local policies are too numerous to list, collectively operating over 16,000 wells statewide.

One thorn in the side of the CIB-SCIC relationship is State Treasurer David Damschen, who sits on the CIB and has criticized SCIC’s lack of transparency and questionable procurement practices. He warned that the coalition “needs strong oversight and accountability.” Sen. Winterton was not amused and tried to kick Damschen off the CIB. His 2019 legislation to funnel MLA funds directly to the SCIC would have replaced Damschen by someone from the fossil fuel-based State Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA). Fortunately, Winterton’s bill failed.

Lest we forget, the State Legislative Auditor also earned CIB-SCIC disdain for his report last year that lax government oversight of Utah’s oil and gas industry let environmental scofflaws go unpunished and put taxpayers on the hook for at least $1 million in remediation costs.

Another thorn causing problems for the fossil fuel crowd is the Utah Sierra Club and its allies that include the Center for Biological Diversity and the Stop the Polluting Port Coalition. In February, a CBD-led rally and press conference drew nearly 20 activists to an SCIC meeting being held at the CIB office in Salt Lake City. Public statements calling for responsible behavior were given to SCIC members directly and at the press conference outside.

According to protest organizer Ryan Brean, “The Seven County Infrastructure Coalition thrives in darkness and obscurity. The Community Impact Board illegally granted them tens of millions of dollars to subsidize the oil industry. We are shining a light on this massive waste of money, time, and energy. We are calling for a new path that moves us away from fossil fuels while supporting workers and communities instead of coddling corporations trying to suck rural Utah dry.”

Utah Sierra Club’s newest Executive Committee member, Ingrid Griffie, displayed her 2015 letter to the CIB opposing the Oakland coal export terminal proposal. Back then, she was director of Utah Moms for Clean Air. Five years later, the SCIC-CIB-Legislature nexus is still fueling climate change and rural economic insecurity with its corporate-profits-over-people misbehavior and creative accounting gambits joined now by the Inland Port Authority and the Utah Office of Energy Development.

Ingrid took them all to task for failing to provide leadership toward a sustainable future, saying “Envisioning something completely new is really hard; but if you don’t want to do hard stuff then maybe you shouldn’t be a leader. And if the current leaders won’t do the hard stuff, then we need the people to need to find some new leaders!”

Fortunately, the base of support for sustainable rural economic development has broadened over the past year with two initiatives through the Kem C. Gardner Institute at the University of Utah. The Coal Country Strike Team, noting that jobs in Utah’s Coal Country declined 16% since 2010, recently signed its first work plan agreement to help Carbon and Emery counties diversify through “workforce training, housing revitalization, tourism infrastructure, and customized economic development incentives.”

A second Gardner Institute project brought together a diverse team of 37 specialists that produced a report titled Utah Roadmap: Positive Solutions on Climate and Air Quality. That January 2020 report to the Utah Legislature recommends that “the state prioritize economic development investment and partnerships in energy-transition areas,” specifically mentioning that SCIC member rural counties need “transition assistance.” The report also calls for creation of a state-level “carbon policy committee.”

Utah Sierra Club volunteers tracking these interrelated developments realize that the Utah fossil fuel industry’s profiteers and their political allies are not about to give up. And neither are we! Anyone who would like to join this cause is invited to contact our Political Committee, Conservation Committee, Utah Needs Clean Energy team, and/or Communications Committee to find out where your talents are most needed. Contact  utahsierraclub.org.

Lobbying for America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act
By Kiko Sweeney

Every spring in Washington DC, as the daffodils start to emerge and the cherry blossoms begin to show signs of life, activists gather in our nation’s Capitol to lobby for legislation to protect Utah’s Wilderness. About thirty volunteers and staff from Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA), Utah Sierra Club and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), under the umbrella of the Utah Wilderness Coalition (UWC), gathered in support of America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act (ARRWA), a bill circulated annually in Congress since 1989. This annual “citizens’ day” exemplifies the dedication to wild land in our organizing community. For thirty years, UWC advocates have worked diligently to wrangle up co-sponsors, meaning senators and representatives who sign on in support of the bill. Because of persistent support for ARRWA from members of congress such as Senator Dick Durbin from Illinois, the Emery County Land Management Act passed last year, designating 665,000 acres of wilderness in the county. When Utah Senator Orrin Hatch introduced the bill, Durbin leaned on him to greatly increase the land protected.

In 1989, Utah Senator Orrin Hatch first introduced the bill, but Durbin leaned on him to greatly increase the land protected in Emery County. Hatch referenced the robust national support for Utah Wilderness, as evidenced by ARRWA, to bolster the acreage of Wilderness, National Wild and Scenic River and Recreation Area. The UWC got a hard-earned win when the Emery County Land Management Act passed in the 116th Congress, doubling the acreage of wilderness originally proposed by Hatch. Senator Mitt Romney supported the bill after Hatch’s retirement.

This year, Andie Madsen and I gathered in DC as Utah Chapter representatives within the UWC. We joined friendly faces from SUWA and NRDC, along with folks from many organizations such as the Sierra Club Chapter in New Jersey, the Escalante and Boulder Chamber of Commerce, Women Who Hike and many others. Paired with volunteers from other states, we collectively set up hundreds of meetings to advocate for Utah’s public land. As partners, we worked within our pair to form a one- two punch of constituents and Utah perspectives. I had the great pleasure of meeting with the office of Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois. As the sponsor of the Bill, we thanked his team for persistent support of Utah’s wild places.

All of us activists flocked to DC to lobby for America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act with powerful motivations in mind: we want continued access to our public land; to help solve the inextricable issue of the climate crisis, to vocalize the power of the Outdoor Recreation Industry and the business it brings to Utah, and more. One reason clearly resonated with everyone: Utah’s wilderness is a treasure and deserves preservation as such.

Help us gain a wilderness designation for 8.4 million acres of land in Utah by getting in touch with your representative in regard to America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act! Check www.utahsierraclub.org/our-land and find your representative to freshen up on your delegation and give them a call to express your support. You can also send a message to your Congreepserson by going to suwa.org/ America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act.
T

he 2020 session of the Utah State Legislature is now history. Spanning forty-five days and featuring hun-
dreds of bills: some good, some bad, and some downright awful, this year’s edition is more or less typical of what we’ve come to expect from our lawmakers. The legislative session opened at a small’s pace, and closed with a host of precautionary measures designed to resist the spread of the COVID 19 pandemic. What a year indeed!

The Utah Sierra Club tracked fifty-plus bills, testified more than ten times, and hosted almost a dozen community lob-
bystis. I’m proud to say I only tripped up the steps about a dozen times. Equipped with unwavering support of our volunteers, two interns, national field staff, and long-time conservation lobbyist Steve Erickson, our small but mighty Chapter staff pushed the bounds of what is possible.

Check out the full list of bills on our website at utah.sierra-
club.org/priority-bills.

Let’s dive in!

BAD BILLS THAT PASSED

HB 125 - Division of Wildlife Resource Amendments by Rep. Carl Albrecht. Hotly contested, this bill erodes the balance in wildlife management by allowing for additional permits. Already, the Division of Wildlife Resources holds the authority to issue permits depending on herd populations. The bills below are below optimal limits, and did so this year because of last year’s harsh winter taking a toll on herd populations.

HB 228 - Livestock Predators Removal Amendments by Rep. Casey Snider. Allows a livestock owner, an immediate family member, or an employee of the owner to kill predators that harass, chase, disturb, harm, attack, or kill livestock, subject to the requirements of this section, including issuance of a permit from the Director of the Division of Wildlife Resources.

HCR19 - Concurrent Resolution Opposing the Introduction of Wolves by Rep. Logan Wilde. This is the resolution opposing the introduction of wolves. This is an unnecessary bill because there already exists a wolf management plan to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts specific to wolves. This remained on trend with the predator bashing of the session.

HB 294 - Mining Operation Amendments by Rep. Walt Brooks. This bill makes it so interlocal authorities can apply for and be funded by federal grants--encouraging hydrogen and nuclear projects.

GOOD BILLS THAT PASSED

HCR 13 Concurrent Resolution Supporting the Protection and Restoration of Wildlife Corridors by Rep. Mike Schultz. This resolution acknowledges that healthy wildlife and landscapes are crucial to Utah’s quality of life and economy. During the session, testimony specifically called out the success of the wildlife overpass in Summit County.


HB259 Electric Vehicle Charging Network by Rep. Fredzone. This bill requires the Department of Transportation to create in the creation of a statewide electric vehicle charging network plan to provide electric vehicle charging facilities along certain state highways. A big win for gaps in the electric highway!


SB26 Water Banking Amendments by Sen. Janye Swamato. This bill enacts the Water Banking Act, including outlining how statutory and contractual water banks are established and regulated, essentially, advancing an optional program that supports water conservation efforts.

GOOD BILLS THAT DIDN’T MAKE IT

HCR11 Concurrent Resolution Supporting the Utah Roadmap for Positive Solutions and Leadership on Climate and Air Quality by Rep. Joel Broscio. This bill would have affirmed commitment to addressing climate and air quality issues by adopting the Utah Roadmap as the guide in the pursuit of improving air quality and lowering emissions. Produced by the prestigious Kern C. Gardner Policy Institute, the Utah Roadmap outlines positive solutions on climate and air quality. Unfortunately, the legislature wouldn’t allow this legislation to even receive a subcommittee hearing!

HB463 Climate and Air Quality Task Force by Rep. Joel Broscio would have created the Climate and Air Quality Task Force. The task force would have been charged with studying and recommending ways to address air quality and climate change; and the recommendations in the Utah Roadmap.

HCR21 Concurrent Resolution Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day by Rep. Jon Hawkins. I guess the legislature did not want to celebrate the Earth because this one died quickly.

SCR12 Concurrent Resolution Concerning Climate Action by Sen. Kirk Cullimore. This bill recognized climate change’s risk to the state and its economy and communities. It would have urged Utah’s federal delegation to consider a bipartisan national solution and nationwide plan to address climate change.

HB281 Tax Credit for Alternative Fuel Vehicles by Rep. Suzanne Harrison. This bill would have created a 3-year nonrefundable corporate and individual income tax credit for certain alternative fuel vehicles.

HB317 Nonroad Engine Study by Rep. Stephen Handy. This bill requested 50% from the General Fund to conduct a study into the number and type of nonroad engines in nonamortizement areas of Utah.

SB78 Energy Storage Innovation, Research, and Grant Program by Sen. Lincoln Fillmore. Requested $5 million in one-time funding to create a grant program for people, companies, research organizations, or other entities who will advance the development and deployment of energy storage, facilitate the transition of energy storage into the marketplace, improve resiliency, or enhance job creation in the energy sector.

BAD BILLS THAT DIDN’T MAKE IT

SB41 Sales and Use Tax Modifications by Sen. Ronald Winterton ended in the Senate Revenue and Taxation Committee without experiencing a committee hearing! This bill would have exempted the oil and gas industry and electrical corporations from sales and tax use. This bill could have facilitated an uptick in oil and gas extraction in the Uinta Basin. We sounded the alarm on this bill early, and happy to say that it failed!

SB250 Needs Assessment Amendments by Sen. Jake Anderegg would have erased the path for permitting of the Promontory Point landfill to receive solid and hazardous wastes, and was tabled in committee in a big win for Great Salt Lake advocates.

HB415 Construction Code Amendments introduced by Rep. Val Potter. An egregious attempt to make polluting easier, this bill would have amended current nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions limit for natural gas-fired water heaters by permitting the use of water heaters that exceed the limits.

HB261 Eminent Domain Revisions by Rep Phil Lyman. Would have excluded certain uses for which the eminent domain right may be exercised, making way for dangerous exceptions threatening environmental and public health.

SB106 Agricultural Amendments by Sen. Scott Sandall. Would have restricted local authorities’ ability to enact, establish, or enforce ordinances, regulations, or policy on agricultural operations. This was a pre-emption bill restricting local authority from making its own decisions.

It was an eventful year, but the work doesn’t end with the legislative session. We invite you to join us throughout the year at the various interim sessions and public engagements to protect Utah’s life outside.

Finally, no one achieves anything alone. So, I want to thank our community partners and friends who worked tirelessly to ensure the conservation and social issues did not go untested. Together, we will continue the work to protect the planet and each other to ensure a brighter future for everyone!

With perpetual optimism and in solidarity,

Carly Ferro | Director, Utah Sierra Club