Chapter Activities

At a Grand County Council Meeting in May, Group Conservation Chair Deb Walter urged the council not to issue a conditional use permit that would give U.S. Oil Sands the go-ahead to create the infrastructure for tar sands extraction in the county. She said it would negatively impact air, water, and soil quality, and could eventually hurt the county’s tourism industry. Additional comments from both opponents and proponents of the PR Springs tar sands project that straddles the Uintah/Grand County line were taken under advisement by the council.

Mike and Sebastion Brune

In June, the Glen Canyon Group had the honor of hosting Club Executive Director Michael Brune and his family at a two-night campout at Dead Horse Point State Park that kicked off the Club’s new "Our Wild America" campaign. As part of the campaign, the GCG helped organize a forum in Moab that provided information on and celebrated the Club’s Greater Canyonlands National Monument proposal. Mr. Brune was an active participant in the forum, along with our Wilderness Coalition members. A full accounting of the Brune family visit can be found in the Summer 2013 Utah Sierran newsletter.

In late July, the Group submitted a letter to the Utah Division of Wildlife Services (DWR) and the U.S. Forest Service opposing for environmental reasons the state’s plan to introduce non-native Rocky Mountain goats into the La Sal Mountains. Over the objections of the Forest Service and several environmental groups, the state approved the plan and placed 20 goats in the La Sal's Beaver Basin in early September. The Utah Wilderness Coalition, including the Sierra Club, has found a strange bedfellow in Utah Congressman Rob Bishop. Despite his 4% rating from the League of Conservation Voters, he approached the Sierra Club last February, seeking to broker a lands protection deal for Utah’s public lands. Since then, the Utah Chapter and our allies have been meeting with Bishop and his staff, staff from Congressman Jason Chaffetz’s office, and other stakeholders including county and state officials, extractive industry representatives, off-road vehicle organizations, tribal representatives and local ranchers.

In August, many GCG members attended an open house at the Grand Center in Moab on the Bishop "Grand Bargain" public lands bill initiative. At least six Group members spoke to make the case for public lands protection at microphones set up in front of Representatives Bishop and Chaffetz.

The next week, GCG members Dick Walter and Marc Thomas took part in the tours of federal public lands in San Juan and Grand Counties conducted by representatives for both congressmen. They were joined by members Wayne Hoskisson and Rita Rumrill on the Grand County tour. All of them asked great questions and expressed skepticism about the appropriateness of increased oil, gas, & potash extraction near Arches and Canyonlands National Parks.

In late August, the Group had member Bill Rau draft a letter opposing the construction of the Fidelity lateral gas pipeline from Dead Horse Point State Park to the Pinnacle gas plant in Castle Valley.
**Chapter Activities** (cont.)

Point to Blue Hills Rd. The Utah Chapter then adapted and submitted the letter as the Chapter's official response to the BLM's draft environmental assessment of the project.

In early September, several GCG members attended the latest Canyonlands Watershed Council meeting. Of most concern to the council right now is the possible de-watering of Mill Creek in the winter to divert additional irrigation water to Ken's Lake. The council would also like to see the mandate and funding for a comprehensive regional water resources study and water drought management plan. Group member Deb Walter also gave an update on the Utah Chapter's interest in monitoring air quality in Moab and near the two national parks.

In the second half of October, the three San Juan County commissioners conducted hearings in Monticello, Blanding, and Bluff on whether or not to stay partner to the Bishop public lands bill initiative. They are accepting public comments on the process until November 15th. One GCG member from Bluff who attended a couple of the hearings sensed that while the meetings were largely cordial, the side opposed to any further public lands protection would never be open to compromise - and that position might very well carry the day in the county.

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

Balance in Zion’s Bank account, January 1, 2013
$388.17

Donation received from Kay & Dave McLean
$20.00

Disbursement for Fundraiser* $100.00

Balance as of November 1, 2013 $308.17

Donation by Tom Messenger: Payment of P.O. Box Rental

*Stamps, envelopes, name tags, and cash box for fundraiser

We Win One

In October, the U.S. Supreme Court finally settled a nearly 5-year battle over the fate of more than 70 proposed oil and gas drilling leases on BLM lands in eastern Utah’s red rock country. This infamous December 2008 lease sale in the waning days of the Bush Administration included leases in such well known landscapes as Monitor and Merrimac Buttes outside of Moab, other sites near Arches National Park, and thousands of acres on Hatch Point just outside of Canyonlands National Park. It was also the sale that eco-hero Tim Christopher threw a monkey-wrench into by bidding on and winning leases, although it ended up costing him 21 months in jail.

The sale was later voided by Secretary Salazar, but the oil and gas industry, joined by Uintah, Carbon, and Duchesne Counties, has been fighting it out with the Sierra Club and our allies in the courts ever since. However, the Supreme Court refused to hear their last case appeal, so the lands are now protected from dirty energy development.

Delta pool, Monitor and Merrimack

**Green River Nuclear Reactor Water Rights Appeal Fundraiser on October 13, 2013**

The fundraiser was sponsored by the Glen Canyon Group (GCG) to help Uranium Watch pay for expert testimony provided in the case heard by the Utah 7th District Court in Price on September 23-27 that challenged the appropriation of water from the Green River for the proposed Blue Castle Project Nuclear Reactor. Invitees included members of the GCG, donors to HEAL Utah, and other contacts in Grand County. The event was co-hosted by GCG members Jean Binyon, Mary Suarez, and Deb Walters.

Attendance at the fundraiser totaled 55-60. Receipts received "at the door" came to $2,585. Additional checks were received from GCG members and others not attending the fundraiser that bumped the final tally for the Green River Legal Fund to $3,800. An additional $380 was donated directly to Uranium Watch.
Green River Nuclear Reactor Water Rights
Appeal Fundraiser on October 13, 2013 (cont.)

Presentations about the case were made at the event by Sarah Fields of Uranium Watch and John Weisheit of Living Rivers. Several candidates in upcoming county and municipal elections were in attendance - GCG member David Erley, running for re-election to Mayor of Castle Valley; Heila Ershadi, candidate for Moab City Council; and GCG member Bill Love, candidate for the Spanish Valley Water & Sewer Improvement District Board (in November, both Erley and Ershadi won their respective races, while Love was not elected).

Club hike in Arches

Blue Castle Project Nuclear Reactors Water Rights Trial

The last week of September, Judge George Harmond of the Utah 7th District Court heard in Price our appeal of the State Engineer’s appropriation of water from the Green River for the proposed Blue Castle Project nuclear reactors to be built near the city of Green River. In addition to the Sierra Club, plaintiffs included Uranium Watch, Living Rivers, Utah Rivers Council, two river recreation companies, and several individuals.

The San Juan County and Kane County Water Conservancy Districts, Blue Castle Holdings, and the State Engineer presented their testimony in favor of the assigned water rights during the first two days of the hearing. This was followed by testimony from experts and attorneys for the plaintiffs, before closing arguments by both sides took place on September 27th.

This proceeding was the culmination of a 4-year effort to bring some sense to the allocation of Utah waters for ill advised, risky, and speculative energy projects. The plaintiffs’ four experts provided testimony underlining what water rights protesters have been saying all along: “The Blue Castle Project is not economically or physically feasible and would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the Green River ecosystem.” Judge Harmond is expected to deliver a ruling before the end of the year. While awaiting his decision, GCG members held a fundraiser in early October that helped raise, along with other contributions, nearly $4,000 to be used to pay our expert witnesses.