A Sierran Explores Unconventional Fuels
by Sandy Bassett

The Institute for Clean and Secure Energy based at the University of Utah asked if Sierra Club might be able to furnish a speaker to address their May 17, 2011, Unconventional Fuels Conference. “An Energy-Environment Compromise?” was the suggested topic. A lengthy search located a well-qualified

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8
Tracking Down the Vegetable Terrorists

by Mark Clemens

As we went to press with this issue of the Utah Sierran, the international media was providing hourly updates about the vegetable guilty of sickening thousands of Germans and lapping out in wider waves of food-borne illness through the European Union. Is the photosynthesizing terrorist a Spanish cucumber, tomato or German soybean sprouts?

Is the photosynthesizing terrorist a Spanish cucumber, tomato or German soybean sprouts?

We will perhaps not have the full details for months, but as usual, the media are providing rapid, useless information. E. coli, the bug at the center of the storm, does not originate in vegetables, a point seldom if ever made in news coverage. Vegetables can only act as a conduit for dangerous strains of e coli when they’ve been contaminated with cow feces.

The first wave of deadly e coli was in the 1980s when the 0157:H7 strain was isolated. We’ve had several waves of food poisoning from e coli since then. The public reaction, fed by media misinformation, has usually been to avoid for a few months the hapless vegetable that became the ride e coli took into our kitchens. Where does the problem really lie if not with vegetables?

CONSEQUENCES OF GRAIN FEEDING

Cattle possess a large, unusual stomach called a rumen that allows them to transform the relatively low-grade nutrition of grass into protein and fat. Michael Pollen calls them solar-powered ruminants because of this transformative power.

Since the 1960s, the agro-alimentary industry has taken advantage of all US cattle, and many around the world as well, out of pastures and herded them into overcrowded barns and feedlots where they seldom eat grass and instead eat corn and other grains as well as a range of less wholesome things.

The richer grain diet makes most cows sick and many of them desperately sick. Two of the most common problems from this rich diet are bloat and acidosis. Rather than acknowledge one of the fundamental flaws of industrial agriculture, the industry doubled down by adding antibiotics extensively to animal feed. The antibiotics are used both therapeutically to try to keep cows suffering from a bad diet alive long enough to fatten them and get them to the slaughterhouse and non-therapeutically because it appears they thin the intestinal walls and allow cattle to put on weight more quickly.

By trying to make technology outsmart a well-evolved natural system, the industrial cattle market has created an unstable incubator of changing bacterial DNA. Some of these changes are dangerous for the ultimate consumer of beef: human beings. The corn-centered diet, mentioned earlier, makes cows’ naturally neutral stomach chemistry acidic, and continual exposure to antibiotics selects for antibiotic-resistant bacteria strains. The result is the selection of e coli strains that resist gastric acid, the first-line human defense against any food-borne pathogen, and that also resist antibiotics, the back-up human defense.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Industrial, that is corn-fed, cattle raising is inhumane and incredibly destructive of the environment, but sufficient proof of its danger to human health exists for any reasonable person to know it’s time to make the switch to grass-fed beef exclusively.

We should carefully follow the directions of public health authorities about vegetable consumption, but the notion that dangerous mutations of e coli fostered by industrial cattle raising can be contained by after-the-fact controls on vegetables is like imagining one can avert a flash flood by trying to catch the raindrops in a bucket.

Readers of this article who eat beef should realize that they have the power to restore a safer and more humane style of stock raising by eating only grass-fed beef.
OurAir

Why We Can Breathe Easier

by Mark Clemens

In 2013, the Clean Air Act (CAA) will celebrate its golden anniversary. Its provisions were strengthened with major amendments in 1970 and 1990. The act has benefited all Americans, even those who don't live in areas with air pollution problems, by improving health and productivity in areas that do.

And for the millions of Americans who live in areas with air pollution, the act has truly been a life saver. Based on peer-reviewed data the Environmental Protection Agency reported recently in its most recent section 812 report, the Clean Air Act (CAA) provisions dating from 1970 to 1990 yielded $10 in health benefits for every $1 in costs, and the post-1990 CAA provisions yielded $4 in health benefits for every $1 in costs.

For many years EPA has submitted proposals new rules to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) for review before the rules can be implemented. OIRA is a part of the Office of Management & Budget and vets new rules to make sure they produce the smallest possible impact on jobs and the economy while enforcing the law. Private enterprise is able to provide comments during this process.

President Obama issued an executive order on 18 January 2011, to extend and strengthen this process of evaluation of regulatory efficiency across the government. The president's objective is to fine tune regulations, pare back obsolete regulation, eliminate paperwork and prevent redundant or contradictory regulation. The order, available online at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/18/improving-regulation-and-regulatory-review-executive-order, directs every agency to submit a plan within 120 days to OIRA establishing a program for retrospective regulatory review.

Subjecting regulation to this kind of thoughtful periodic review is a good idea. It should be done in a neutral atmosphere by people who understand the process and know the law and the public to be served.

Unfortunately while the Obama Administration has been working to make regulation work better, congressional opponents of the environment have launched several attacks on the landmarks of environmental progress, including the Clean Air Act.

Two of these bills are sponsored by members of the Utah congressional delegation. HR 1795, sponsored by Rep John Sullivan (R-OK) and co-sponsored by our own Rep Jim Matheson, creates an elaborate and unnecessary committee to examine the cumulative cost of EPA regulation on energy and manufacturing. The bill targets a list of specific recent regulations that are crucial to clean up ozone, fine particulates and other pollutants such as mercury that are causing serious health impacts in Matheson's own district.

It's likely Matheson knows the benefits of CAA regulation and regrettable for him to be putting a weapon in the hands of its opponents.

Rep Rob Bishop introduced HR 1287 which would largely exempt oil and gas exploration and production from environmental disclosure or regulation.

Wildflower Protection Restored

EACH VICTORY FOR THE NATURAL WORLD COUNTS

U.S. District Court Judge Walker D. Miller sided with conservation groups on Thursday, June 9, and ordered the US Interior Department to reconsider a decision denying Endangered Species Act (ESA) protection to a wildflower found only in parts of Utah and Colorado. The wildflower, Graham's penstemon, is threatened by oil and gas drilling, oil shale mining, off-road vehicles, and grazing. Conservationists had earlier sought ESA protection but were turned down by the Bush administration.

The court ruled that the Bush administration decision not to list Graham's penstemon as threatened was "arbitrary and capricious."

The court reinstated the 2006 proposed rule to add Graham's penstemon to the endangered species list and ordered the agency to make a new, final decision on the flower's protection. “The court's decision makes it clear that FWS cannot set aside science and avoid full consideration of the multiple threats that incrementally push a species closer to extinction,” said Meg Parish, attorney for the conservation groups.

Graham's penstemon is a strikingly beautiful wildflower in the snapdragon family that only occurs on oil shale outcrops in the Uintah Basin of northeastern Utah and northwestern Colorado. The penstemon was first considered for Endangered Species Act protection in 1975, when the Smithsonian Institution drafted the first list of plants to be protected under the Act. After nearly thirty years without action, and with drilling threats mounting, conservation groups finally petitioned the service to protect the penstemon in 2002. “This is great news for Graham's penstemon. There's widespread habitat destruction going on throughout Utah and Colorado's Uintah Basin, the only area on earth this beautiful wildflower can be found. The Fish and Wildlife Service failed to consider the best available science showing the threat posed by oil and gas development, livestock grazing, and off-road vehicles.

"Proper multiple use management of public lands requires a balanced approach. In Utah's Uinta Basin, that balance has been tremendously skewed. The American people must demand that its government officials act with honesty and integrity, and that they solely use the best available science in making natural resource decisions without undue influence by other policies, agendas or interests. Yesterday's decision is a step in that direction," said Tony Frates, Conservation Co-chair of the Utah Native Plant Society.

This article was adapted from a press release issued on June 10th by the plaintiffs.
Greater Canyonlands
A Wealth of Life
by Dr Marion Klaus

Greater Canyonlands consists of 2.4 million acres of stunning red rock canyons and cliffs through which the Colorado, Green, San Rafael, and Dirty Devil Rivers meander. Canyonlands National Park forms an island of about 338,000 acres of protected habitat at the heart of Greater Canyonlands; much of the remaining acreage is open to a variety of exploitive uses. Greater Canyonlands is a large core area of critical habitat for plants and animals that warrants maximum protection as part of the Sierra Club's Resilient Habitat campaign.

Large core habitats like Greater Canyonlands will help species survive the predicted effects of climate change. They provide protected space in which plants and animals have the flexibility to find the set of characteristics that meets their needs for survival.

The 280 miles of river systems within Greater Canyonlands function as important migration corridors for large species like deer, mountain lions, desert bighorn, and bears. The ability to move freely from one habitat patch to another is important for maintaining genetic diversity within populations and to minimize the risk of extinction. As such, corridors are important considerations in the Resilient Habitat campaign. For example, corridors permit young bears or mountain lions to find a place to live. Deer have seasonal migrations that require corridors for them to access their summer or winter ranges. As the climate changes, species may need to move northward or to higher elevations in order to survive, and corridors facilitate these movements as well.

The unique geological formations of Greater Canyonlands result in highly variable geography, geology and soil types.

Large core habitats like Greater Canyonlands will help species survive the predicted effects of climate change. They provide protected space in which plants and animals have the flexibility to find the set of characteristics that meets their needs for survival.

Climate change is the largest threat our natural heritage has ever faced. The effects of climate disruption are already being felt even on our most pristine landscapes. Setting aside areas where development is restricted is no longer enough—we must now actively work to create resilient habitats where plants, animals, and people are able to survive and thrive on a warmer planet.

The Resilient Habitat Campaign works to ensure that ecosystems retain their basic function and structure while absorbing the stresses associated with climate change. This includes protecting very large areas of habitat known as core areas, connecting them with corridors through which living things can move from one habitat patch to another, and reducing non-climate stressors that work in synergy with climate change to threaten species with extinction.

The rivers within Greater Canyonlands provide either temporary or permanent connections to pockets of wetlands. These provide alternative nurseries for a variety of invertebrates, amphibians, and larval and immature life stages of native fish. Riparian systems like these function as refuges and stopover points for migrating birds, too.

In Greater Canyonlands, there are nearly 300 perennial springs where some of the rarest species in Utah are found. The springs and seeps that dot the region include hanging gardens that provide crucial habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, especially amphibians, who use these areas to forage for food and in which to breed and raise their young. Because these communities are often one-of-a-kind and difficult or impossible to replace, they merit the strongest possible protection.
The unique geological formations of Greater Canyonlands result in highly variable geography, geology and soil types. Elevations in Greater Canyonlands range widely from 3,790 ft. to 10,360 ft. Where the physical environment is as diverse as this, the living things found there are diverse, too. For this reason, there is a high diversity of ecosystem types found in this region.

Greater Canyonlands has ecosystems that range from salt desert shrub, to bush grasslands, to alpine conifer forests. The Canyonlands Floristic Province, which refers to the high degree of unique species that characterize the area, has more plant diversity than almost any other floristic region in Utah. Amazingly, 960 different species of plants are found in Greater Canyonlands. This represents more than half of all the plants known to exist on the Colorado Plateau.

The high number of unique plant species, known as endemics, as well as the diverse types of plant communities present in Greater Canyonlands, provide habitat for the many hundreds of species of birds, mammals, fish and reptiles found there including twenty-seven species of animals on the Utah State Sensitivity List and seven species on the Federal Threatened, Endangered, or Candidate species list. Many of these species, such as the Utah Basin Hookless cactus or the Wright Fishhook cactus, are so rare they could easily be destroyed by human activities such as ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of non-native species, which often follows in the tracks of ORV use or the introduction of

Utah's Wildlife Action Plan for sensitive species recognizes the outstanding wildlife habitat found in Greater Canyonlands. Ten separate Wildlife Focal Areas were designated within this region. For example, the Abajo Mountains Focus Area has 100% of the Yavapai mountain snail known to exist in Utah as well as healthy populations of northern goshawk. The Elk Ridge Focus Area has critical habitat for spotted owls, three-toed woodpeckers, and four species of state-listed bats. The Hanksville Desert Focus area has a substantial amount of intact grasslands and significant habitat for Flannelmouth Suckers, a Conservation Agreement species; this species is the subject of a formal agreement between the US Fish and Wildlife Service and other parties to prevent it from becoming listed as threatened or endangered.

While we often think of protecting the spectacular scenery and view-sheds of Greater Canyonlands, there is considerable biological wealth within the region that needs protection too. There are many threats that affect the plants and animals of Greater Canyonlands such as excessive ORV use or habitat destruction by extractive industries like oil and gas development, oil shale and tar sands that further stress species already suffering from the effects of climate change. Reducing those stressors will help the species survive here. This, too, is part of the Resilient Habitat campaign. Thanks to Allison Jones at Wild Utah Project for data about habitat and species.
What You Say Does Matter
by Tim Wagner

H yperbole mixed with an equal part of hot air have always had their place in politics. But it wouldn’t be a stretch to say that Utah Representative Rob Bishop routinely pushes the truth meter into the red zone. In fact, he has a long history with slips of the tongue, specifically pertaining to issues that many of us care about related to public lands, wetlands and wildlife protections, and energy development.

Fortunately it appears as though more and more people are watching him and responding to some of his outlandish remarks.

Take for instance Bishop’s recent statements where he defended the outrageously huge federal tax breaks enjoyed by the oil and gas industry by claiming of all things that the industry receives no special tax breaks. This comes at a time when oil companies are enjoying record profits, but the U.S. Treasury is in dire need of revenue to stay afloat under the weight of record deficits, or when consumers - who are already laboring under a very tough economy - are paying nearly record gas prices. See for yourself at: http://www.youtube.com/user/BishopsBlunders#p/a/u/0/oh-VxdBfrRI

Want another example of Bishop’s less-than-professional behavior? Witness this finger pointing, fact-less rant towards federal land managers over one of his favorite soapboxes, the issue of border control and protection of public lands. He clearly demonstrates how scoring political points with the extreme element of his party is far more important to him than actually having a reasonable discussion based on facts. Watch it at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZxqYgePBP4

Or consider Rep. Bishop’s statements after he was loudly criticized by Utah duck hunters groups, wetlands advocates, and other constituents for proposing to cut $47 million from wetlands conservation programs, resulting in the program becoming nearly non-existent.

“The federal government does not have to preserve everything. The state and private sectors do a wonderful job,” said Bishop.

He’s partially correct but more wrong than right. Contrary to the way the Bishop is trying to spin it, no one expects or is saying that the federal government should “preserve everything.”

Secondly, yes there are some very commendable efforts by numerous entities, including both state and private, to protect wetlands. However, most of such efforts are funded first by federal grants that require matching grants from other sources before the federal dollars are even released. In other words, it’s often the leveraging of federal dollars that precipitates significant conservation measures around the state of Utah, resulting in the protection of many special places that are enjoyed by thousands of residents. To characterize such efforts as something that cash-strapped states or private interests can simply take over is a gross inaccuracy.

The bottom line is that Representative Rob Bishop simply refuses to get it when it comes to the real economic and tangible values that Utahns have for the state’s remarkable wild places. Bishop also makes it quite clear that he places a higher priority on the financial health of the fossil fuels and extractive industries than he does for financially struggling, mainstream, middle class Utahns. Why else would he defend giving billions of dollars in tax breaks to an industry that needs it the least?

The Sierra Club strongly believes that all public officials should be held accountable for what they say and do. Representative Bishop is no different. We highly encourage those who live in his district to attend his town hall meetings and watch media stories where Representative Bishop is quoted or interviewed. Be sure to call his office or write him letters when you witness inappropriate statements. Be sure to let us know as well.

You can send an email to me at tim.wagner@sierraclub.org, or call our office at 801/467-9294.

Hopefully, some folks may remember me from when I directed the Chapter’s Smart Energy Campaign, a position I left in late 2008. Well, I’m back working for the Chapter where I’ve taken over as organizing director for the Utah Leadership Accountability Campaign. I’m thrilled to be working for the Utah Chapter again and welcome you to stop by or call anytime. I want to thank Steve Thiese who helped launch this effort and has been doing a remarkable job. Steve recently left to take a full time position with the Veterans Administration but I know that he plans on being continually involved.

Remember, as a member of the Sierra Club you are part of the most effective environmental organization in the U.S. But we’re only as effective as you are willing to be engaged. Don’t hesitate to get involved. You won’t regret it!
Inside the Chapter
by Marion Klaus

MISSION STATEMENT
The Utah Chapter Executive Committee developed a mission statement at the May 7 meeting that we would like to share with all of you.

The Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club is a grassroots volunteer organization dedicated to:
Protect and promote Utah’s outdoors and natural landscapes;
Educate and advocate for the responsible preservation of clean air, water and habitats; &
Support the development of sustainable renewable energy;
For the benefit of present and future generations.

POTLUCK SOCIAL
Join the ExCom for a Social Hour and potluck dinner July 9 at Wasatch Mountain Club Lodge in Big Cottonwood Canyon.

July 8-10 the ExCom will be having a planning retreat to work on membership and conservation campaigns. It will be at the Wasatch Mountain Club lodge in Big Cottonwood Canyon. On Saturday, July 9, Salt Lake Group Outings Chair, Rebecca Wallace, is planning a hike that leaves from the lodge. Please look for it in the Outings Section and attend if you can! We will be having a BYOB social hour when the hikers return at 3:30pm at the WMC lodge. There will be a potluck dinner at 5:30pm followed by another short hike and stargazing at 9:30pm. Please join us if you can and meet your elected ExCom members from around the state!

CHAPTER VOLUNTEERS TEST WATER QUALITY
Work has begun at the Alton coal mine. Noisy trucks are now rumbling frequently through Paunsaugunt and since the trucks are uncovered, coal dust is beginning to coat the town. Alton is exploring an expanded permit on BLM land that would extend its operation up to Bryce National Park. The BLM lands east of the current operation cut across the Kaibab-Paunsaugunt wildlife corridor at the base of the Paunsaugunt Plateau, a major mule deer migration route.

The Alton mining operations could significantly impact water quality in the area. Sierra Club’s Water Sentinels bought water testing equipment for the Utah Chapter, and Tim Guilfoile will be coming from Kentucky to train us on the use of this equipment July 16 and 17 at the Alton site. The data collected will serve a wide variety of uses in the chapter’s conservation plans. If you are interested in learning how to use this equipment, which will belong to the UT Chapter and can be used for other projects when the Alton project is completed, please contact Marion Klaus at marionklaus@comcast.net

JOIN THE NEW SALT LAKE GROUP BOOK CLUB
Many thanks to Akiko Kamimura and others involved in organizing the new Salt Lake Group Book Club that will start this fall. The purpose of the book club is to discuss books about environmental issues or nature. It will be bi-monthly first and may become monthly later. The first meeting will be at 6:30 pm on Thursday, September 22. The location will be the Barnes & Noble in Sugarhouse (1104 East 2100 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84106, 801/463-2610). Our books for this fall are:

- September 22 (Thursday) 6:30 p.m.
  Barnes & Noble Sugarhouse
  Yellow Dirt: An American Story of a Poisoned Land and a People Betrayed, by Judy Pasternak

- November (date TBA) 6:30 p.m.
  Barnes & Noble Sugarhouse
  The Natural Navigator: A Watchful Explorer’s Guide to a Nearly Forgotten Skill, by Tristan Goodey

Please contact Akiko at kamimura@umich.edu if you have any questions.

UTAH WILDERNESS COALITION PROTECTS GREATER CANYONLANDS
The Utah Wilderness Coalition, of which the chapter is a founding member, met June 15-16 at the Canyonlands Field Institute in Professor Valley outside of Moab to plan for the protection of Greater Canyonlands. You can help. Write a letter to President Obama asking him and members of his administration to protect the wild lands in this area. Tell him why these lands are important to you, and if you’ve visited them, describe your experience. Send your letter to:
Ms. Nancy Sutley, Chair
White House Council on Environmental Quality
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
Email: chair@ceq.eop.gov

Please contact Akiko at kamimura@umich.edu if you have any questions.

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Sierra Club and Ogden Settle Gondola Records Lawsuit
by Dan Schroeder

On June 3, 2011, the Sierra Club and Ogden City settled a legal dispute over access to government records dating from 2007.

The disputed records pertain to the gondola and resort development that was proposed in 2005 by Mayor Matthew Goodyear and Chris Peterson, owner of the Malan’s Basin property in the mountains above Ogden.

The Sierra Club requested access to a variety of records in mid-2007, and the city released many of the requested records at that time. However, the city also withheld a few dozen records—mostly emails—citing several statutory exemptions under Utah’s Governmental Records Access Management Act (GRAMA). After the city’s Records Review Board upheld the decision to withhold these records, the Sierra Club filed suit in Utah’s Second District Court.

Under the terms of the recent settlement, Ogden has now released 43 of the 46 withheld records, even while continuing to maintain that three records were legally withheld. The Sierra Club disagrees with Ogden’s opinion on these 43 records but has agreed that the remaining three records were legally withheld under GRAMA. To complete the settlement, Ogden has reimbursed the Sierra Club for $10,000 in attorney’s fees.

The Sierra Club considers this settlement a full victory while taking into account the substantial investment of volunteer time and the long delay before the vast majority of the records were publicly released. The Sierra Club’s attorneys, Joel Ban and Patrick Shea, were allowed to examine the three remaining records under a confidentiality agreement and determined that those three records were legitimate attorney-client communications that could be withheld under GRAMA.

As the lawsuit progressed over the last three years, the Sierra Club and Ogden became engaged in several procedural disputes. Chief among these was whether Ogden was required to provide a detailed list of the records being withheld.

Initially, the city refused to list the withheld records or even to disclose the number of records being withheld. When this question came before the court, however, Second District Judge W. Brent West ruled that the city had to provide an index of the withheld records that was sufficiently detailed to allow the opposing party to assess the applicability of each GRAMA exemption that was being claimed. The Sierra Club believes this ruling will help set a state-wide precedent.

The Sierra Club hopes this ruling will help set a state-wide precedent.

The city administration assembled a detailed $600,000 budget for gondola-related studies and attempted to fund nearly half of this amount through a variety of federal grant funds with the Utah Transit Authority; bypassing the Ogden City Council. Peterson and Godfrey managed the public relations campaign through a “steering team” consisting of Michael Joseph, Edgar Allen, Dave Hardman, Dan Musgrave, Larry Hansen, Bob Geiger, Kent Petersen, and Jennifer Jones.

• The Ogden-Weber Chamber of Commerce paid at least $15,000 to Pinnacle Marketing for the public relations effort, and was reimbursed for at least $10,000 by Peterson.

Second, the newly released records document the city’s overly broad interpretations of several GRAMA exemptions. For example:

• A contract and invoice for an already-completed consultants’ study were withheld under the GRAMA exemption for “drafts.”

• A price quote from an engineering firm was withheld under the GRAMA exemption for records whose disclosure would impair government procurement, even though no competitive bids were ever sought.

• An email suggesting that Peterson close off the hiking trails on his property was withheld under the GRAMA exemption for records of negotiations over business interests.

• An email consisting solely of the sentence “Thanks for following up on this” was withheld under the GRAMA exemption for attorney-client communications.

These classifications highlight the city administration’s troubling preoccupation with secrecy, even in instances when the withheld records contained no information worth protecting. Equally troubling is the fact that the city’s Records Review Board, a supposedly independent body, upheld every one of these classifications during its administrative appeal hearings.

Copies of all of the released records are posted on the Sierra Club’s web site, http://utah.sierraciol.org/ogden/.

Dan Schroeder is the conservation chair of the Ogden Group.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

candidate who was not from the Utah Chapter. The conference organizers deemed him unacceptable because of his having previously called into question the practicality of unconventional fuel development.

Thrus began my quest for more information regarding these unconventional fuels or tar sands and oil shale. According to the Utah Natural Resources Department’s analysis, there are substantial reserves of oil locked up within the oil shale and tar sands located in eastern Utah. Their survey suggests there may be 77 billion barrels of oil-in-shale that is covered by less than 3,000 feet of overburden, is more than five feet thick, is not in conflict with oil and gas development and is not on restricted lands. Utah’s tar or oil sands add another 12 billion barrels of oil for a potential of 89 billion barrels locked up in these fuel sources. At present U.S. annual consumption, this equates to 12.2 years of supply. Colorado has a larger and richer oil shale reserve.

Both oil shale and oil sands contain bitumen—a black, oily viscous byproduct of decomposed organic materials. One might think of it as unfinished oil not unlike lignite being unfinished coal. Given hundreds or thousands more years of pressure and aging these low-grade hydrocarbons might become crude oil. As might be expected, both are found in areas of conventional oil and gas production. Production of oil from these minerals involves a process to extract the bitumen from the shale or sand and synthesize it to produce synthetic crude oil that is then further refined in much the same manner as natural crude oil.

Since interest in the subject was triggered by the institute’s speaker request what better way to come better educated than attending the conference? It provided an excellent overview of the forces moving development of these resources forward and to some extent the opposition. It opened with remarks from Utah state officials involved with matters affecting development of these and other state mineral resources.

It should come as no surprise that economic factors are the driving force behind resource development. John Baza, Director of the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining, pointed out that so-called first sale revenues of Utah’s extracted minerals contributed $8.5 billion to the gross state product in 2010. Obviously first sale revenue potential of oil produced from oil shale and sands would further augment Utah’s gross state product as production from these sources finally comes on stream.

Spencer Eccles, executive director, Utah Governor’s Office of Economic Development spoke on “Balancing Economic Development in the Energy Sector and Quality of Life.” Of interest was the emphasis placed on the need for streamlining the regulatory and permitting process so development can move forward more rapidly. Speeding that process was suggested as best accomplished by shifting its control from the federal to the state level. Our long experience with the state’s executive and legislative branches suggests that removing regulatory authority to the state really means reducing or eliminating it.

Bryce Bird, branch manager, Utah Division of Air Quality discussed an anomaly in the wintertime Uintah Basin air quality. Despite bright blue skies, low temperatures and snow cover very high levels of ozone are being experienced. Since high ozone levels are generally associated with warm weather and photosynthesis of combustion products these ozone levels in the basin are worrisome since the chemistry is not yet understood. Development of oil shale and sands, largely located in the Uintah Basin, may be hampered by these atmospheric conditions despite the region’s low population density.

The conference then moved on to presentations by companies planning to develop oil shale and oil sands. The processes described ranged from straight-forward mining and heating of crushed shale in a retort to in-situ processes including deep subsurface drilling and heating of the earth. Only one active tar sands program was described and a solvent extraction technology is planned since Utah tar sands, unlike those in Canada, are not amenable to water extraction. Utah oil sands are more consolidated, i.e., more rock like, and the bitumen is wettet with oil rendering its extraction with hot water impractical. Each company stressed the low environmental impact of the production process they planned to use. The next article will describe these processes, their potential environmental impact and the wisdom (or lack thereof) of their being permitted to develop these resources.

Sendy is chair of the Salt Lake Group.
OnCoal

Alton Coal Mine Update

by Tom Carter

The mine site has already been extensively altered since mining began in the first quarter of 2011.

Time is of the essence, permitting processes through BLM can slip past the unattentive public.

On April 27, 2011, three of us activists from Kanab drove to the Alton mine site. Soon the gravel road detoured off the original route onto a new well-engineered road with huge cuts that crossed the headwaters area of Kanab Creek and various drainages that were running due to the wet weather this winter. Our road detoured around to the south-south east where in less than a mile we stopped and climbed up a slope that afforded a view of the mine operation, in the process we spooked a herd of about seven elk and observed a large group of various trucks, earth movers, earth shovels and other heavy equipment working, scraping and excavating the area known as Sink Valley just southeast of Alton. The sound emanating was very loud even from our half-mile distance.

The mine appears as a large area scraped clean. From a pit at the site trucks were carrying coal to a sorting area while huge earth moving trucks carried overburden to a location hard against slopes topped by the characteristic pink cliffs of Bryce Canyon. We drove to a better viewing location where not only did we flush a herd of eight deer but also two sage grouse. Walking toward the mine fence we noticed we were in an archeological site evidenced by scattered pottery shards and lithics. There was loud noise emanating from the site, and the wildlife we observed seemed to be trying to access habitat that was now torn apart and may have been part of their seasonal migration pattern at this time of year.

We also noted that large areas on the south side of the road near Alton were scraped or demurred as if in preparation for enlarging the mine to BLM land where the mining company wants to expand its operation. It’s clear the expansion would impact Kanab Creek, the source of much of our culinary water in Kanab. The wildlife and evidence of archeological sites as well as early pioneer habitation in this otherwise pristine valley pointed to other negative impacts. The mine has only just started to exploit this area, but coal reserves underlie much of this region. Why would the mining interests stop short of the present site if BLM allows their application to expand beyond this privately owned acreage?

Readers can help by driving US 89, a Heritage Highway, and patronizing the businesses that support the tourist economy there. Visit the mine site as well. It’s just off the main route and be eyes and ears to the impacts. Time is of the essence, permitting processes through BLM can slip past the unattentive public.

After speaking with Bobbi Bryant in Panguitch about her effort to organize against the coal strip mine so close to Bryce Canyon National Park and having enjoyed the drive north of Kanab on Highway 89 afterward due to its legacy quality, I was appalled at the vision of huge coal trucks impacting and endangering motorists on this superb driving experience.

The impacts of the Alton Coal Mine could echo throughout Kane County. On my mind also was the fact that there is a scheme to burn some of that strip-mined coal in Kanab, if permitted by the Kanab City Planning Board, which has authorized a zone change to allow a coal gasification project within our city limits. Check out KanabCares Facebook page in our fight to stop a coal gasification plant in Kanab, our Little Hollywood.

Tom Carter lives in Kanab, Utah.

The Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club extends a very special thanks to the

GEORGE B. AND OMA E. WILCOX
AND GIBBS M. AND CATHERINE W. SMITH CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

for its continuing generous support of the Chapter’s programs.

The Foundation challenges you to increase your support for the Utah Chapter in 2011.
SLG, Tues, 7/5 Silver Lake/Lake Solitude Loop. This pleasant loop hike takes you from Silver Lake at the top of Big Cottonwood Canyon to Lake Solitude and back again, a perfect day hike.

SLG, Sat, 7/9 Jardine Juniper. This alpine hike takes you up to the pristine lake treasures and scenic views, on the way to the lake.

SLG, Sat, 7/9 Dayhike to Catherine’s Pass. This classic alpine hike in Big Cottonwood Canyon takes you past Lakes, Mary, Martha and Catherine, then up to the pass. It is about 4.5 miles round trip, duration, the hike of about 4 hours at a relaxed pace. Turquoise lakes in white granite glacial cirques ringed with willows, wildflowers and the occasional moose are your rewards. Meet at 9:30 at the Big Cottonwood Canyon Park and Ride lot at the mouth of the canyon. Optional socializing and potluck after the hike. Contact Richard Passoth for more information.

SLG, Sun, 7/10 Thaynes Canyon. This picnic alpine hike takes you up to the lovely Thaynes Canyon trail which is an easy way to experience the alpine ambiance of the Wasatch.

SLG, Sun, 7/11 Timpanogos Trail. This hike takes you up the slopes of Mount Timpanogos in the Provo River drainage from Big Cottonwood Canyon. This is a 9.6 mile round trip to the lake, with 3,491 feet elevation gain, considered difficult, but highly rewarding especially when taken at a relaxed pace.

GCG, Sat, 7/16 Lewis Peak. This is the Lewis Peak Trail is intensified by spectacular ridge along the Big Cottonwood/Millcreek Canyon trailhead. This is 9.6 mile round trip to the lake.

SLG, Sun, 7/17 Balsam Ridge. This hike leads you up the slopes of Mount Timpanogos in the Provo River drainage from Big Cottonwood Canyon. This is a 9.6 mile round trip to the lake.

SLG, Sun, 7/17 Thaynes Canyon. This pleasant loop hike takes you from Silver Lake at the top of Big Cottonwood Canyon to Lake Solitude and back again, a perfect day hike.
The Sierra Club does not have insurance for carpooling arrangements and assumes no liability for them. Carpooling, ride-sharing or anything similar is strictly a private arrangement among the participants. Participants assume the risks associated with this travel. If you choose to participate in the trip, you must assume all risks only fair for charges used by the US Forest Service to be shared by all participants. Test of the outings liability waiver may be found at http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/ugwmmajsp.PDF.

Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute the sale of travel for licensing purposes. 

**September**

OG, Sat, 9/03, Bakers Pass in Mill Creek Canyon. 8 miles, 5 hours 3100 feet of elevation gain. This hike is strenuous. We will hike the Bowman Trail past Baker Spring and mining sites and on to the pass where we can view Mt. Raymond and Gobblers Knob. Call Larry at 801-737-3701 for details.

SLG, Sat 9/3 to 9/5, Labor Day Weekend Vernal area/Steinaker State Park/Jones Hole camp. Jones Hole is on the Green River flowing through Dinosaur National Monument. The scenery is magnificent. The trail passes a cool, well-watered wilderness with pictographs. The Jones Hole hike is about 8 miles roundtrip and 540 feet elevation loss/gain. We will camp near Vernal at Steinaker State Park Friday and Saturday. Sunday and Monday evening there are multiple other hikes and excursions that can be made in this area, making it a wonderful place to enjoy a 3-day weekend. Contact Richard Passoth at 801-364-3387 or epaissogmail.com for more information.

SLG, Tue, 9/6 Tuesday Night Hike at the Living Room. This hike in the Red Buttress foothills is a poten- tial favorite for great views of the Salt Lake Valley from your rocky reclining in the living room chair. Plan on an hour or 2 to hike and 1 hour to walk back. Contact Rebecca Wallace at rebecca.callas32@gmail.com or call 801-557-5261 for more information.

SLG, Fri-Sun, 9/26 to 9/28 Uintas Back- pack. We plan to backpack to wild and beautiful destinations in the Uintas. The Uintas are a beautiful area. We will drive up on Friday night, and spend two nights. This is a great op- portunity for first time backpackers to learn the how-tos and the basics of wilderness navigation. Contact Rebecca Wallace at rebecca.callas32@gmail.com or call 801-557-5261 or Chris Plummer at chrisp347@gmail.com or 919-720-8125 for more info. Participation is subject to leader approval due to the strenuous nature of backpacking. The trip will be limited to 12 participants with a $10.00 deposit.

GGG, Sat, 8/27 Upper Kane Springs Can- yon. We hike the upper end of Kane Creek Canyon, which begins at Kane Springs park and out and up to the valley floor. We hike in a slickrock from Mulehoe and Kane Creek Canyons, and hike both on a jeep road and through Kane Creek, near/in Kane Creek. Lunch or snack and the water, by back and early afternoon, River sandals and bathing suit (for a surprise) recom- mended. Meet at the Moab Information Center, Main and Center, at 8 a.m.

SLG, Tue, 8/30 Lamb's Canyon Trail from Parleys Canyon. This hike is close to SLC through old growth forests of fir, and quaking aspens which may have seen fires in the 1940’s. This steep trail verdant trail leads to the pass be- tween Parleys and Millcreek Canyon. Meet at 6 p.m. at the east side of the former K-Mart parking lot off Parleys Way (2705 Parleys Way), west of the Bombay House Restaurant. Contact Larry Paul at 801-380-9799 for more details.
OUT & ABOUT

Becky Peak Service Outing
by Vicky Hoover

Who has visited the Becky Peaks Wilderness (pictured above) in northeast Nevada, a little north of Great Basin National Park? Not me! Yet, in July of this year—yes. You are invited to join us. The outing, sponsored by the Sierra Club CA/NV Wilderness Committee, will run Friday, 15 July through Monday, 18 July.

This new and relatively little-known wilderness (designated by the White Pine County Public Lands bill in 2006) is managed by the BLM from the Ely District office. We have worked for two summers in a row on wilderness service projects at Mt. Grafton with Ely BLM’s John Miller, and this year Ranger John’s proposal for us is farther north, at Becky Peak. The project “involves digging a bunch of post holes and installing post and rail fence at about three locations and permanent boundary markers at about three locations.” John estimates two full days of work.

Becky Peak is an hour (about 50 miles) north of Ely at the north end of the Schell Creek Range. Elevations within the wilderness range from 6,500 to about 9,800. Cool enough for July days. More information is available on the BLM website, http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/nv/gis/maps.Par.26514.File.dat/becky_peak_combined.pdf.

Central commissary will offer three dinners and three breakfasts—for one Andrew Jackson, or equivalent. That’s twenty dollars for those of you who only use credit cards. Friday and Monday are likely to be mostly travel days; the trip will start officially with Friday’s dinner. Saturday and Sunday will be work days. If time permits, a Monday morning hike will be considered. There will be a nice flowing stream nearby.


For questions or to sign up, contact Vicky Hoover, vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org or 415/977-5527.

USE AN IPHONE TO BURN LESS GAS

High gas prices are a strong incentive to use less gas—and iPhones and other smartphones can help you save money by doing exactly that. For starters, if you’re looking to replace car trips, your phone can help you figure out the best way to get from point A to point B by using transit, ride-sharing, or a bicycle.

But even if you have to drive, your phone can help you drive smarter. A free iPhone app called The Green Gas Saver, for instance, not only helps you monitor your fuel efficiency but also uses your iPhone’s accelerometer to warn you if you are prone to jackrabbit starts, turning too hard, and other gas-guzzling behaviors. In other words, it increases the fuel-efficiency of the driver as well as the car.

-Michael Stuy, Utah Sierra Club's blog, May 24, 2011

GALLERY

UTAH'S SPECTACULAR WILDERNESS PLACES, THROUGH THE EYES OF OUR READERS

Volunteer Corner

If you value the Chapter’s work, why not get involved and be a part of the action? Our success would not be possible without a strong core of volunteers who are passionate about our great state and its wild places. There are currently several ways to become more active in the Chapter, including:

INNER CITY OUTINGS VOLUNTEERS

The Inner City Outings (ICO) program helps disadvantaged and at-risk kids experience the wonder of the outdoors—some of them for the first time. Through these outings, ICO promotes interpersonal skills and self-esteem by involving participants in teamwork, teaching them self-reliance outside an urban setting, and encouraging them to take an active role in protecting the environment. As its participants discover the beauty of wild lands, ICO also helps the club build support for environmental protection in urban communities across the country.

Some of the challenges include organizing safe transportation, finding gear for children, raising funds, etc.

We need self-starter volunteers, preferably with some experience leading outings or working with youth, to help us get the program started in Utah. More information about the Inner City Outings program can be found at http://www.sierraclub.org/ico/. If you’re interested in volunteering contact Marion at marionklaus@comcast.net.

LEGISLATIVE CHAIR

The Utah Legislature makes a wide range of important environmental decisions every year that affects everything from state parks to air quality to wildlife. Too often these decisions are badly informed and badly made.

The Utah Chapter takes positions on legislation and supports an active lobbying program. Join our legislative committee to help make this project work for better air quality, protected landscapes, more public transportation and a greener energy future.

We need help organizing our Volunteer Lobbyist Day in February, tracking and making blog posts on bills, and reaching out to chapter members to encourage them to call and e-mail their legislators.

If you're interested in joining the team, e-mail mark.clemens@sierraclub.org or call Mark at 801/467-9297.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE, VOLUNTEER TODAY!