

# Save Our Canyons

Citizens' Committee to Save Our Canyons

www.saveourcanyons.org

Autumn-2, 2008

## Flagstaff Peak Ski Lift Controversy

Flagstaff Peak, shown here in an aerial view looking north, is the subject of gathering controversy. Read about it on pages 3 - 7 in this issue.

*Photo: Alexis Kelner, pilot Larry Swanson. Courtesy of Wasatch Tours Publishing.*

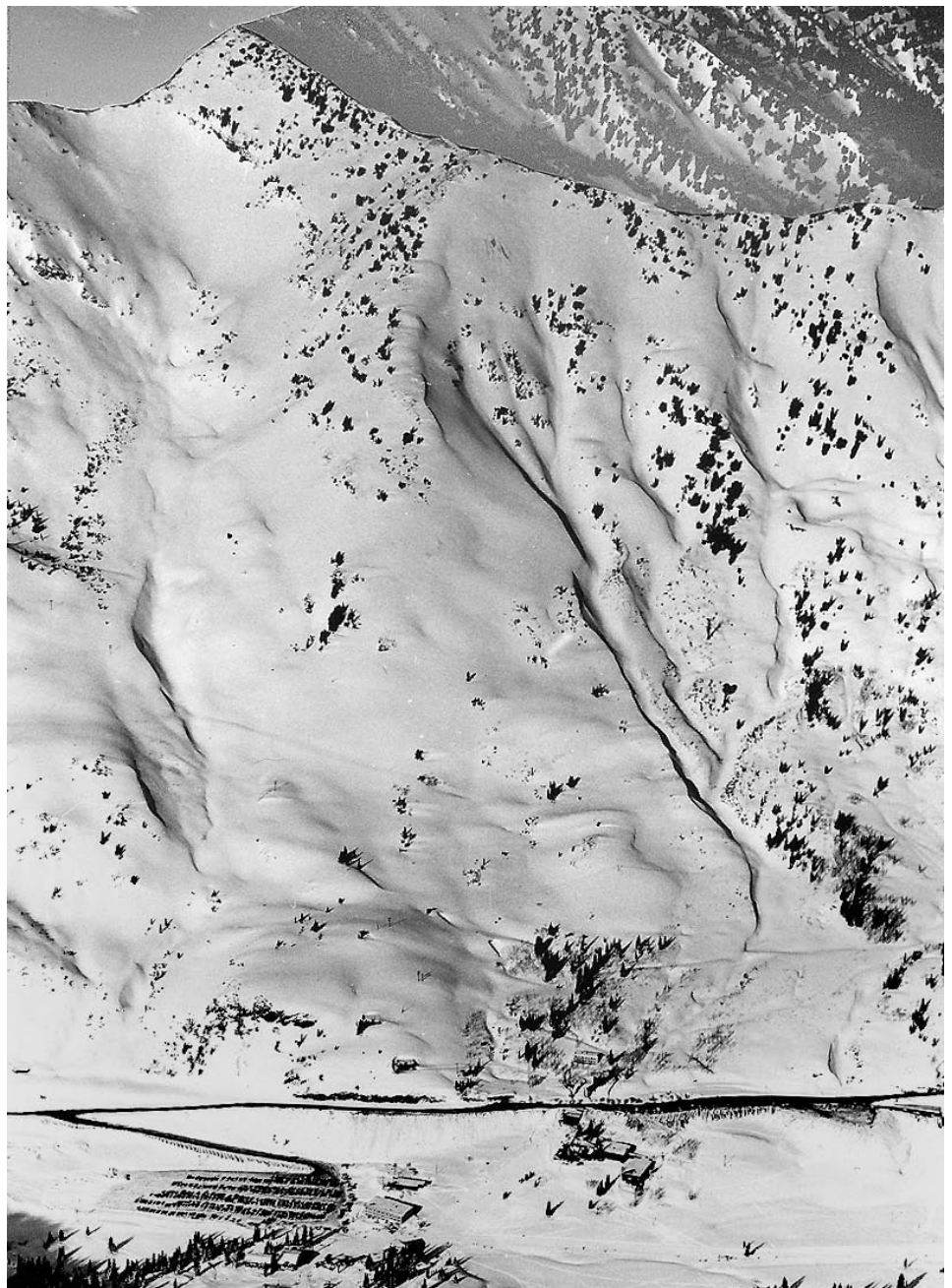
*Save Our Canyons* is the quarterly publication of the Citizens' Committee to Save Our Canyons

### CONTENTS:

President's Message .....	2
Avalanche Control in Upper Little Cotton- wood Canyon .....	3
New Group Organized .....	7
SOC's Jennifer Kecor .....	7
Wasatch Wilderness Update .....	8
IMBA Supports SOC's Wilderness Proposal .....	9
Thanks to Volunteers .....	10
Volunteer Profile .....	11
Good, Bad, Ugly .....	12
Islam and Environment .....	14
Pfeifferhorn Award .....	15

ALEXIS KELNER,  
Perennial Editor

GALE DICK,  
Associate Perennial Editor





## President's Message

# Who Establishes Wilderness Areas?

Well, duh! This newsletter has been hammering away at this topic for years and our readers had better be ready for the pop quiz. The answer, of course, is the Congress of the United States. But just a minute! How come they alone have this power and who gets them to do so?

Therein lies quite a story. Doug Scott, policy director for the Campaign for America's Wilderness, has written a fine book about the history of the 1964 Wilderness Act that established America's Wilderness Preservation System. Get hold of *The Enduring Wilderness – Protecting Our Natural Heritage through the Wilderness Act*. It is a good read and tells the story of how this remarkable piece of legislation was conceived and passed and how it has been used in the last 44 years. John F. Kennedy's Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, told senators that the bill ranked with the Homestead Act of 1862 and National Parks Act of 1916 as a "great landmark conservation decision."

The idea of preserving American wilderness goes back at least to John Muir and the founders of The Wilderness Society, among whom were Aldo Leopold and Bob Marshall. In 1945, ten years after that organization's founding, Howard Zahniser (1906 – 1964) became its Executive director and the tireless author and shepherd of the bill during the long process of its enactment. Once it was introduced, the bill met with great opposition from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and lobbies for loggers, miners and grazers.

The notion of preserving wilderness was initially also opposed by the Forest Service and the National Park Service and the Eisenhower administration. These discouraging facts were gradually overcome by the proponents, who persevered for the 8 years during which Zahniser produced 66 successive drafts of the bill. Michael McCloskey of the Sierra Club emphasized the toughness of the process by pointing out that "18 hearings were held, 6 in Washington D.C. and 12 in the field. Thousands of pages of transcripts were compiled, and congressional mail ran as heavy as on any

natural resource issue in modern times."

There were many compromises and reconsiderations, all worth reading about, but the final form of the bill passed *unanimously* in August of 1964 and was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson on September 3, 1964 – a date to remember. Howard Zahniser had died on May 5 of that year.

A crucial strength of the Wilderness Act was the fact that only Congress could establish or alter statutory Wilderness areas. It thereby overruled the whims of local Forest Service or National Park Supervisors who come and go in ever-shifting political environments. Legislative opponents of the Act saw to it that passing a Wilderness bill would be difficult and this also, and ironically, served to strengthen the process.

The Wilderness Act of 1964 established 9.1 million acres of Wilderness. There are now more than 107 million acres in the Wilderness Preservation System. Every piece of Wilderness legislation since 1964 has passed with bi-partisan support, in keeping with the amazing bi-partisan unanimity of the 1964 Act's passage.

And so back to the question in my first paragraph above: Who got Congress to pass these Wilderness bills? YOU, that's who. At a meeting of wilderness activists that took place in Washington D.C. this last September Doug Scott pointed out that *all* the 98 million acres of Wilderness established after 1964 originated with citizen groups who were able to gather community support for their proposals to set aside federal public lands for wilderness protection. Congress acts in response to this community support.

As a member of Save Our Canyons, you are one of those citizens and you are central to building America's Wilderness Preservation System. There is nothing like it elsewhere in the world. We're proud of it and its history. — Gale Dick

# AVALANCHE CONTROL IN UPPER LITTLE COTTONWOOD CANYON

## Alternatives to the Proposed Flagstaff Lift

By Julia Lester, SOC Trustee

### Background to current avalanche control at Alta Ski Lifts

Little Cottonwood Canyon has four military weapons currently in use above the SR-210 road. They are two howitzers, one 105mm the other 75-mm, plus two 105mm recoilless rifles. Snowbird and Alta Ski Lifts (ASL) each use one of these recoilless rifles.

In addition to the surplus military recoilless rifle, ASL uses a civilian weapon called avalauncher to shoot avalanches. Monty Atwater, who introduced recoilless rifles and howitzers to LCC in the 1960's, sought a substitute to military weapons and pushed for the invention of a two-chambered cannon powered by compressed nitrogen gas. The avalauncher's trajectory varies by altering its firing angle and nitrogen pressure. On the positive side, the civilian-manufactured avalauncher does not require surplus military ordnance. On the other hand, its limitations include: a shorter range when compared with a recoilless rifle or a howitzer, with ranges varying from a little over one mile for the avalauncher vs. more than 5.3 miles for the rifle to just over 8 miles for the howitzer; and poor accuracy in strong winds.

While some ski areas like Mammoth and Alpine Meadows were loaned recent model U.S. Army (Army) howitzers for their avalanche control work, the LCC avalanche control group managed to continue using their older military weapons. Then about four years ago, the Army recalled those howitzers loaned to the California resorts before they had even been placed in service and reassigned them for use by U.S. troops in Iraq.

In May 2007 Alta had its own reckoning with the military. A Pentagon official told Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) and ASL that he was uncomfortable with surplus military munitions being shot over occupied buildings in the Town of Alta (Alta). Then in October 2007 an investigative team sent by the Army verified both the pressing current need for the artillery, at least temporarily, to be used as part of avalanche control and the ongoing need for more time to test the propellant in out-of-production recoilless rifle ammunition. In response to this new twist in the artillery/munitions dilemma, ASL announced in June 2008 its proposal for the construction of a lift

to Flagstaff Ridge. In that announcement ASL stated that this proposed lift would allow ridge transport for avalanche controllers to deliver their explosive hand charges and then later added that lift assisted skiers would be able to provide skier compaction in the interest of enhanced avalanche control.

Many hiking skiers and snowboarders prize unlimited access *via* Flagstaff Ridge to Silver Fork, Days Fork, Toledo Bowl, Holy Toledo, Jaws, Cardiff and Cardiac. They became alarmed that their path to backcountry powder might be blocked if ASL were to build the proposed lift and bar non-ASL-related uphill traffic. In August 2008 when asked if non-ASL uphill traffic would have ready access to the ridge were the proposed lift to be built, ASL's General Manager Onno Wieringa responded, "I don't know."

When asked about avalanches in general, Bruce Tremper of the Utah Avalanche Center said they tend to happen after at least six inches of snow have fallen and in the presence of strong winds, and depend on the snow density and the weakness of the snow's weakest layer. Commonly, more snow means more avalanches, particularly on slopes steeper than 35 degrees.

In regard to avalanches in the Flagstaff area, although the starting, track and runout zones of Flagstaff's shoulder and face all measure 35 degrees or less of steepness, the area is "prime avalanche territory" according to Tremper. Although the frequency of avalanches at Flagstaff may be lower, when they do occur, they tend to be larger.

The proposed Flagstaff lift would give riders immediate access from the ridge into the backcountry. Comparatively little attention has been given to the fact that no avalanche control efforts are at work in the backcountry and that those entering the backcountry might not be prepared for the avalanche risk. Snowbasin's Operations Manager for Safety and Snow Control, Mike Jenkins, stated in a July 2008 interview with the 'Standard Examiner' that, "Our biggest worry is that our lifts go right to the boundary of the backcountry. I believe an open boundary policy is a good thing, but I'm afraid that some people have no business going out there."

Some resort visitors arriving in LCC from sea level might get disoriented by altitude sickness in the backcountry, while other visitors might lack training in avalanche safety. They might trigger avalanches,

endangering themselves and others. Or possibly get lost or in trouble with unmarked hazards, requiring search and rescue assistance.

As of early November 2008, Steve Scheid of the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest's Salt Lake Ranger District said that the Forest Service had not received a proposal for the suggested ski lift's alignment. If the proposed lift's suggested alignment were to be on public land in the Flagstaff area, a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process would be initiated and that NEPA process always includes public comment. Only when a suggested alignment were to be received would the Forest Service then determine which parcels of land in the Flagstaff area are public and which are private.

### **Avalanche Control Alternatives:**

*(2006 Fehr and Peers Canyon Transportation Study)*

The 2006 *Fehr and Peers Canyon Transportation Study* (2006 Study)<sup>1</sup> presented in detail numerous active and passive avalanche control methods. From the study: "Active avalanche control refers to techniques that actively trigger avalanches (as compared to passive strategies such as snow sheds, which do not need to be activated to provide avalanche control benefits). ... The program currently relies on three pieces of artillery (two recoilless rifles and a Howitzer) [Note: a second howitzer joined the three weapons in the summer of 2007, bringing present total to four] for active avalanche control in Little Cottonwood Canyon. At present rates of utilization, there is an eight- to nine-year supply of ammunition for both recoilless rifles. If only the Peruvian Ridge Recoilless Rifle is used, the supply is projected to last 12.5 years. In either event, other avenues of active avalanche control should be explored."

### **Active Methods: Gazex and Avalanche Guard vs. Artillery**

The first two active avalanche control methods discussed in the 2006 study, Gazex and Avalanche Guard, are currently used at European and North American resorts.

Technologie Alpine de Sécurité (TAS) manufactures the gas-powered avalanche control system called Gazex. Gazex systems hold propane and oxygen in tanks, from which they are sent via polyethylene pipes to the risk zone. The gases are mixed at the end of the exploder pipe and produce a loud, explosive bang. The explosion's powerful shock waves compress the air above the snow, triggering an avalanche without leaving residue on the snow. In contrast, artillery rounds leave residue on the snow, which can get into the Salt Lake City watershed system.

1 (<http://www.udot.utah.gov/main/f?p=100:pg:3182979290158243:::V,T,1720>)

Again from the 2006 Study: "Gazex systems are installed near the starting zone of an avalanche path. ... The installations consist of a shelter supported by a wood platform, which houses the gas metering devices and the gas supply. ... Gazex systems are already in place at the Snowbasin and Brighton ski resorts, as well as in several other locations throughout the West.

Avalanche Guard systems are installed near avalanche starting zones using foundations or rock anchors. They contain up to ten explosive charges within a protective cabinet. These charges are launched remotely, and a solar panel provides the electricity necessary for operation. Avalanche Guards can cover an area up to 500 sq. ft., using different propellant charges. Avalanche Guards are used in Europe, and are becoming more common in North America."

The 2006 Study stated that the Snowbird Village section of Little Cottonwood Canyon represented "the second-highest priority for reducing avalanche hazard" using their Avalanche Hazard Index (AHI) analysis. [Note: the mid-LCC area from SNB Entry 1 west to Maybird avalanche path was deemed the highest priority for reducing avalanche hazard in the 2006 study.] The 2006 Study listed Gazex and Avalanche Guard as potential replacements for artillery above Snowbird Village.

According to the 2006 Study, Gazex has a shorter firing time vs. artillery and a similar time compared with Avalanche Guard. Furthermore, the 2006 Study indicated that the large explosive charge, the elimination of dud potential, and the shot capacity of Gazex gave it the advantage over Avalanche Guard in meeting Snowbird Village's needs.

Furthermore, Gazex compares favorably to artillery: offering avalanche controllers efficiently- and strategically-placed explosions as often as needed without being hampered by weather; affecting a larger area with air blast shock waves above the snow compare with artillery's charges into snow leaving no shrapnel or residue behind in the snow; eliminating the risk of duds and munitions landing off-target (as happened several years ago in Utah County); avoiding risks related to ski patrollers accessing remote trigger zones; and canceling the ongoing expenses related to artillery-based avalanche control. Once supplied with more-than-adequate estimated supplies of gases in the season, the Gazex systems are meant to be autonomous for the entire ski season

On the other side of the Gazex equation, these systems cost millions of dollars to install yet those costs might be able to be recouped through savings associated with road- or run-closure times. The exploders can be reconfigured with some time and effort but not with the speed to immediately address new slide paths that might arise from unusual weather patterns that crop up at times. Perhaps not every slide path would be quickly controlled by an exploder but could be addressed after a period of time. The shelters are

permanent and present unspectacular visual additions to the landscape. Nevertheless, their exterior white paint helps shelters blend in with the winter snow and they can be covered with camouflage netting during the summer months. Meanwhile, the exploders can be coated with camouflage-color paint and the small-medium sized exploders can be removed for summer storage. Lastly, proposed construction of additional Gazex systems might face regulatory obstacles.

Following the discussion of Gazex in the 2006 study, a Gazex system with 2 exploders was placed in the Hilton avalanche path above Snowbird Village. From the 2006 Study: "The experiences gained from this project [Gazex system above Snowbird Village] will be able to inform subsequent decisions to implement Gazex, or a similar technology on a larger scale." That deployed Gazex system has been working smoothly after some initial setup difficulties were resolved. ...

According to UDOT's LCC Avalanche Control Coordinator, Liam Fitzgerald, Gazex systems are as effective as artillery in avalanche control work. As envisioned in the 2006 Study, the Gazex exploders have made the upper-LCC avalanche control program more diverse, taking care of two targets, which were previously shot with artillery. Nonetheless, neither Gazex nor artillery can entirely wipe out the possibility of natural or controlled avalanches hitting SR-210.

The funds to purchase the Gazex system for the Hilton slide path came mostly from UDOT with the rest coming from ASL, Alta and Snowbird. With more funding, UDOT would like to expand the use of Gazex systems in upper-LCC. In November 2008, High Angle Construction, the US representative of TAS, quoted the cost of Gazex, including the shelter and installation costs, at \$150,000 per exploder.

When discussing installing Gazex tank farms above Alta, cost is always a consideration. However, the ability to eliminate artillery use, duds, shrapnel and shooting over buildings make it an alternative ready for more careful study.

### **ASL Pick -- Skier Compaction and Lift Construction**

Nowhere in the Active or Passive [Avalanche] Control Option summaries (2006 Study, Chapter 3, page 81) is skier compaction mentioned.

*Only a few paragraphs in the 2006 Study mention skier compaction:* "Compaction of the snow cover by skiing is increasing due to a rise in ski touring on the south facing slopes above Alta. Compaction reduces the likelihood of large deep slab avalanches by mixing and strengthening snow layers. Fewer deep avalanches mean a reduced risk to the highway and to buildings in the Town of Alta." The section of SR-210 that would be affected by the proposed lift would run roughly from the Alta Peruvian Lodge to the driveway of ASL's Albion parking lot.

"Alta Ski Lifts is studying its expansion options,

and one option includes new ski lifts on the south-facing slopes above Alta Village. ... This could cause widespread skier compaction, thereby decreasing the risk of large destructive avalanches at Alta. Ski lifts would also provide access to the avalanche starting zones for control teams, reducing the need for artillery rounds fired from Peruvian Ridge. Shrapnel from artillery would no longer be a factor."

Here one of ASL's expansion options, a proposed lift above south-facing slopes to the Flagstaff Ridge, is presented as enhancing avalanche control through ridge access for patrollers and skiers, helping end artillery munitions being shot over Alta and thereby eliminating their resulting shrapnel waste.

"It should be understood that even with significant skier compaction of the avalanche paths above the Town of Alta, large avalanches will, on occasion, still occur. Although they will be much less frequent than under current conditions, the road between East Hellgate and Grizzly as well as numerous buildings in the Town of Alta, will still be threatened."

This last statement reflects the reality of avalanche control in a steep, deep canyon like LCC - there are no absolute guarantees against natural or controlled avalanches occurring and hitting structures and/or crossing SR-210.

While Skier Compaction receives no mention in the Active or Passive [Avalanche] Control Option summaries, a top active avalanche control option, the Gazex system, could work well above Alta and could be studied further toward that application after its already successful use in the Hilton avalanche path above Snowbird Village.

### **Funding for Alternatives to Artillery over Alta**

A rough estimate of the construction cost for the proposed Flagstaff lift might amount to \$2.5-5 million while Gazex systems for the area from Toledo to Michigan City, calling for 25 exploders and 7 shelters to target 20 slide zones, might cost over \$5 million. If the funding for Gazex above Alta could be secured in part or completely with government grants, this Gazex alternative could replace artillery. The placement of Gazex systems above Alta warrants careful study alongside the skier compaction/lift construction proposal.

Meanwhile, LCC and BCC roads have had state Scenic Byway designation since 1990. Currently they are both under consideration for National Scenic Byway (NSB) designation. Were both to receive such national recognition, it might raise the visibility of their avalanche safety issues and increase the likelihood of securing NSB grants. NSB's do not receive NSB grants to cover any preexisting conditions prior to NSB unless the grant has been earmarked to deal with safety issues arising from increased use resulting from national designation or changes in the types of vehicles using

the NSB.

Another potential source of funding for non-artillery avalanche control in upper-LCC might be in the form of highway safety grants made to UDOT.

**Bus-only Transportation Option.** Finally, in the Transportation Options part of the 2006 study, the "Bus-only Option" was estimated to produce an 83% ROHI risk reduction (road opened with 2006 artillery) and improve air quality by reducing VMT (vehicle miles traveled) by about 85,000 miles per day. That huge estimated reduction of avalanche risk for SR-210 came with approximate cost - a capital expenditure of \$55mm to buy land across Salt Lake valley in order to provide parking places for the vehicles of all those bus riders plus annual operating and maintenance costs of \$2.5mm. Examining ways to reduce these costs in the future might raise the viability of this transportation option.

From the 2006 Study: "Reduced traffic volume and/or improved traffic flow will reduce the avalanche hazard on the road. As traffic volumes increase, so does the likelihood that a vehicle would be hit by an avalanche. The slower the traffic flow, the longer each vehicle is exposed to an avalanche, which might occur. If traffic is stopped for an extended period by an avalanche deposit or by disabled vehicles, the hazard rises further. This is compounded if drivers leave those vehicles to assist others.

Mass transit by bus is one way to reduce the number of vehicles on the road. Assuming that all private auto traffic could be eliminated, the number of vehicles could be reduced from 7,000 to 800. If the current artillery program is continued this reduction in traffic reduces the ROHI 83%. This ROHI reduction is from a high hazard index (104) to a moderate (18) hazard index.

While initially it appears to be a very attractive solution, there are actually several significant concerns.

The main concern is that parking for bus riders would still have to be supplied outside of the canyon. And to be most efficient, this parking should be clustered into as few places as possible. That means that anywhere from 4,000 to 5,000 parking stalls need to be supplied for users in Little Cottonwood Canyon alone. (It is safe to assume that if this strategy were applied to Snowbird and Alta, the same would apply to Brighton and Solitude in Big Cottonwood Canyon.) Finding the land and the money to provide all this parking could easily exceed \$50 million."

Please keep in mind that any time there is increased carpooling and bus travel up and down SR-210, avalanche risk will be reduced and air quality improved by lowering vehicle miles traveled.

## Conclusion

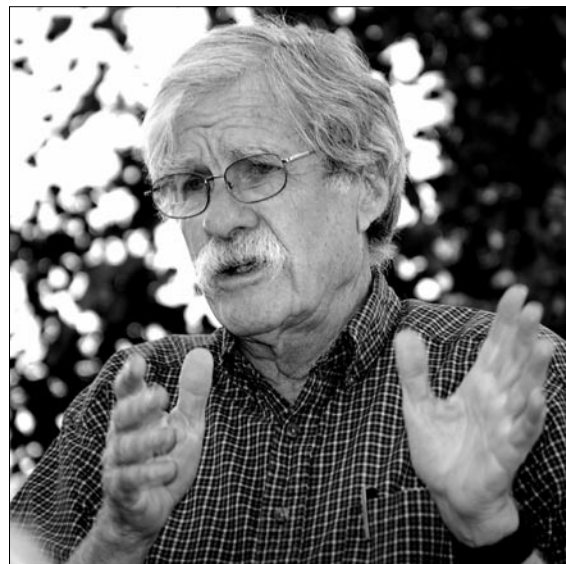
In conclusion, Gazex systems could be studied alongside the proposed lift/skier compaction proposal for eliminating artillery use for avalanche control over Alta. Securing adequate sources of funding for any alternative to artillery will be an ongoing issue.

In the meantime, additional bus ridership and carpooling have an immediate effect on reducing road-open hazard and air quality by reducing the number of vehicles on SR-210.

**In considering and addressing the avalanche control needs of Alta in this article, it must be remembered that the 2006 Study's highest priority for reducing avalanche hazard lay in the section of SR-210 from Snowbird's entry one west to the Maybird avalanche path. Avalanche control issues will face LCC for years to come. □**

## *A new time slot for John Worlock's Wasatch Environmental Update*

**Sundays at 2:00 p.m.  
on  
KRCL 91 on your FM dial**



# New Group Fights Flagstaff Lift Proposal

By George Vyargas, Friends of Flagstaff Mountain and skier and climber in Wasatch for 10+ years

The concept of a mechanized lift on Flagstaff Mountain in upper Little Cottonwood Canyon (LCC) is nothing short of catastrophic. The south ridge of Flagstaff provides unparalleled human-powered access to the premier terrain of Cardiff, Days and Silver Forks. Utah residents and visitors from around the world regularly ski and hike here.

Construction of a lift and access road will forever change the recreational opportunities in upper LCC. Alta Ski lifts (ASL) does not allow uphill travel, and therefore one's ability to access the terrain north of ASL will be severely compromised if not eliminated, unless you purchase a lift ticket. Providing little or no human-powered winter recreation above White Pine is unjust *given the history of land use in the region*. Also, the flow of people into Big Cottonwood Canyon from the top of the lift would produce unprecedented impact on the watershed. The penumbra of impact will certainly spread to Mineral Fork and Mill B.

Circumstances have arisen on the south facing slopes above Alta, which are pushing the change. Avalanches on these slopes have been controlled for years using artillery shells fired from the other side of the

canyon, a practice that will soon no longer be possible. Alternatives to deploying overhead ammunition are being examined by ASL and Utah Department of transportation (UDOT). Skier compaction of snow via a ski lift is viewed as a primary alternative to explosives. Ski area expansion is another likely motive for lift construction.

Alternatives to a lift do exist. They range from Gas-Ex, to mobile munitions deployers, and/or the repositioning of gun towers, among others. Cost and efficiency are potential barriers.

This lift is the single greatest threat to accessing the most reliable snow in the heart of the central Wasatch. Just as in our recent national elections, the opinions, efforts and motivations of those rarely involved in the political process is being encouraged. A group of concerned individuals is forming Friends of Flagstaff Mountain (FOFM). Hopefully, more people will be motivated to enter this process and see the dire circumstances of this erroneous idea. We are encouraging involvement on any level and look forward to working with others to see this issue resolved. □

---

## SOC's Jennifer Kecor is Now Full Time



Save Our Canyons is very pleased to report that Jennifer Kecor, who joined our staff part time in June 2008, is now full time. Our incredibly hard-working staff needs as much help as it can get and Jennifer has moved quickly into a very important role as Issues Coordinator. She has been working with Salt Lake County and community councils as well as owners of critical lands in our canyons but will be involved with other issues and opportunities as well. SOC's aim has always been to encourage appropriate development on private lands and to offer help to those interested in setting up agreements to protect their land from future development. Welcome, Jennifer!

# Wasatch Wilderness Facts and Present Status

By Carl Fisher, SOC Executive Director

The Wasatch Mountains in Northern Utah rise abruptly from the Salt Lake Valley and serve as the interface between the urban environment and wilderness. Many people have come to call the Salt Lake Valley their home, due primarily to the fact that the mountains provide such an asset to the quality of life to over 1 million valley residents. Access to stunning mountain views, fields of wildflowers, quiet mountain lakes and rumbling streams lies within 15 minutes of the urban center of the Salt Lake Valley.

While this area, seen primarily for its recreational opportunities, gives many valley residents a place to find solace from the hustle and bustle of daily life, it also provides one of the quintessential resources that make life in this arid region possible: Water. Currently, over 450,000 residents receive their water from the 200 square-mile Salt Lake City Watershed. As the population in the Salt Lake Valley increases, we need to ensure that we can provide clean water, of comparable quality, to future generations who will surely come to call this spectacular place home.

Save Our Canyons and the Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities (SLCDPU) have crafted a Wilderness Proposal to preserve sensitive ecosystems, protect water quality, and the overall quality of life for the residents in the valley below. This proposal is comprised of five units that establish boundaries relative to the sub-watersheds to ensure for the maximum protection of water resources.

The Mount Aire Wilderness (9,481 acres) is the northern most portion of the Wilderness Proposal and is accessed via Millcreek Canyon in an unincorporated part of Salt Lake County. This canyon sees a variety of intense uses, year round due to its ease of access and proximity to the urban center. The Millcreek Drainage provides the fifth highest yield of water to the Salt Lake City Watershed.

The Mount Olympus Addition (3,525 acres) would protect some of the most remote places in the Wasatch, Gobblers Knob and Alexander Basin. Access by road to this area is limited to only a few summer months in the year, the rest of the year people either ski or bike to the trailhead where many moose graze lazily amongst the columbine. This area would contribute to the protection of both the Big Cottonwood Watershed and the Millcreek Watershed.

The Bear Trap Wilderness (2,634 acres) is one of the most geographically unique areas in the Wasatch. It's low, rolling terrain is blanketed with aspens that change colors throughout the seasons. This is an area where SLCDPU has purchased land in order to preserve it for watershed protection. Bear Trap is adjacent

to 2 ski areas and number of private residences, which constantly place pressure on this area within the Big Cottonwood Watershed.

The Twin Peaks Addition (6,098 acres) contains some of the most highly sought backcountry skiing in all of the Wasatch. It drains into the Big Cottonwood Watershed, which provides the highest yield of water to the Salt Lake Watershed. Days Fork and Silver Fork are next to Solitude Ski Resort, which has hopes at some point to expand it's operations into these areas. Ski area developments highly degrade water quality as they increase the amount of asphalt; alter the landscape and the natural flow of water.

The Lone Peak Addition (6,380 acres) is referred to as the "crown jewel of the Wasatch." This is in reference to White Pine, a drainage located between existing Wilderness and Snowbird Ski Resort. White Pine is in the Little Cottonwood Watershed which provides the second highest water yield to the Salt Lake Watershed. This area is the mecca for backcountry and dispersed recreation and provides the only point of access in Little Cottonwood Canyon, due to the steep terrain further down canyon.

Protection of these areas becomes more and more vital as population and the demand for water increases. Wilderness designation of the aforementioned areas would be a tremendous asset to the people of the Salt Lake Valley. According to a recent Dan Jones survey for Salt Lake County, people were asked what they thought of the urbanization of the Tri-Canyon Area. They answered:

- 3% - Couldn't decide
- 7% - would like to see more urbanization
- 26% - no more urbanization
- 64% - less urbanization than currently exists

Wilderness Designation is the only way to ensure that this area stays wild, for the peace and enjoyment of current and future generations.

Needless to say, when it gets right down to framing legislation, there are many thorny issues to be resolved. SOC has recognized this from the start. At present, under the sponsorship of Salt Lake County Mayor Peter Corroon's office, intense discussions are taking place with important central Wasatch stakeholders. These include Save Our Canyons, the Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities, and Salt Lake City Mayor's Office along with representatives of Alta, Brighton, Snowbird, Solitude Wasatch Powderbird Guides, Salt Lake County Planning and Black Diamond. These dis-

ussions are intended to reach a consensus, which will be necessary in presenting a bill to congress. Discussions with members of congress and their staffs have been ongoing for years and continue. We are hoping

that legislation can be introduced in the next session of congress and that it will have the needed bipartisan and stakeholder support to be enacted into law. □

## IMBA Signs on to Support the Save Our Canyons Wilderness Proposal

Just over a year ago the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) was approached by the folks at Save Our Canyons (SOC), an environmental group dedicated to protecting the wildness and beauty of the Wasatch canyons, mountains and foothills, to review their proposal for increasing and adding additional Wilderness areas in the Central Wasatch. Federal Wilderness Designation for this area would protect water quality needed for a growing population and ensure that the land and biota stay protected in perpetuity.

Currently, 37,000 acres are protected in the Central Wasatch. These lands were designated wilderness in 1978 and 1984. They are home to sensitive species such as the golden eagle, three-toed woodpecker, northern goshawk, Bonneville cutthroat trout, and the Utah shooting-star – a plant exclusive to the Wasatch. 28,118 additional acres would be protected in the Mt. Aire, Mt. Olympus, Bear Trap, Twin Peaks, and Lone Peak Wilderness Areas.

The fear was that some of the trails that would be included in the proposal were heavily used by mountain bikers and by designating these lands as wilderness this would shut out this user group entirely. It was SOC's desire to identify these trails with IMBA and work towards a proposal that IMBA and the biking community at large could support.

The original language of the wilderness laws states that there shall be no "mechanized" travel within a wilderness area. Interpretation of this word at a later date placed cycling in this category. It is IMBA's stance that cycling should be removed from this category and

a re-interpretation should focus on "motorized" travel. But until then, IMBA has focused its attention on working with environmental groups to exclude those trails within their proposals that have been traditionally used by cyclists.

IMBA's review of the proposal with SOC identified 3 trails within their proposed wilderness boundaries in Big Cottonwood Canyon and Mill Creek Canyon that it thought would be devastating to the biking community and an unacceptable loss. The trails included most of the Wasatch Crest Trail, the Mill D trail to Dog Lake and the trail connecting Desolation Lake to Mill D. IMBA expressed these concerns to SOC and informed them that with these trails included in their proposal IMBA could and would not support it.

After some deliberation and further discussions, SOC came back to IMBA with new boundaries that excluded these trails entirely. As such, IMBA has agreed to support this proposal and sees it as a great achievement and a stellar example of the cycling community working with environmental groups to achieve the same goal; protecting our trails for current and future generations.

For information on the wilderness proposal including maps, visit: [saveourcanyons.org](http://saveourcanyons.org)

For information on IMBA, visit: [imba.com](http://imba.com)

You can contact Ryan Miller, the Utah State IMBA representative, at [rmiller@azteca.com](mailto:rmiller@azteca.com)



The Campaign for America's Wilderness has been of immeasurable help in SOC's ongoing work for congressional designation of Wasatch Wilderness. They have contributed advice, technical support and funds. It is a great organization doing great work on behalf of America's Wilderness. We want especially to thank Ken Rait, Doug Scott, Carrie Sandstedt and Marcia Argust for their interest in our project, their experience and sage counsel.

# Thanks To So Many Volunteers Who Helped In 2008!

From its beginning, Save Our Canyons' volunteers have been the creators and essential support of the organization. It has taken the dedicated effort of many people to make this happen. The recruiting, training and guidance of volunteers is as important as the stepping forward of the volunteers themselves. Particular thanks for this volunteer centered work goes to Gayle Parry, Lisa Schmidt, Rachael Mathey, and Havilah Mills.

## Volunteers

David Andrenyak  
Mark Barone  
Dave Bastian  
Jeff Bell  
Patti Bernabe  
Chris Biltoft  
Spencer Bloxham  
Maia Bromley-Dulfano  
Sarah Brummel  
Jim Catano  
Chris Christopherson  
James Comeford  
Annastasia Copeland-  
Rynders  
Gale Dick  
John Diener  
Alan Erdahl

Alana Felt  
Carl Fisher  
Mary Fleming  
Howie Garber  
Steve Glaser  
Lori Grant  
Bill Gray  
Kirsten Halstead  
Clara Hoodess  
Noah Howell  
Phil Istomin  
Esther Janie  
John Johnson  
Alexis Kelner  
Bill King  
Megan Knight  
Asher Koles  
Jim Kucera  
Rhonda Latimer

Julia Lester  
Sara Levitt  
Carter Lile  
Bill Lockhart  
Randy Long  
Thomas Lund  
Rachael Mathey  
John Matro  
Nancy Matro  
Lawrance McClung  
Samantha Mckeachie  
Travis McKee  
Angie Mecham  
Annie Montague  
Ryan Parrish  
Bill Parry  
Gayle Parry  
Dave Parry  
Katherine Pioli

Jose Rueda  
Emma Saarel  
Eric Spreng  
Trisha Springer  
Tom Stephens  
Jim Struve  
Mercadeez Sweat-  
Latimer  
Raquel Tingey  
Camron Tingey  
Sarah Tucker  
Peter Vanderhoof  
Brad Watkins  
Wendy Westerfeld  
David Witherspoon  
John Worlock  
Ron Younger  
Michael Zusi

## Local Businesses and Foundations Support SOC

Along with volunteers, Save Our Canyons has gained essential support from the generosity of many local businesses and foundations. SOC thanks you for your generosity and the example of good citizenship that you show to our whole community.

### Businesses

Amy Asherman Massage  
Backcountry.com  
Black Diamond  
Bluehouse Ski Company  
Boulder Mountain Lodge  
Brewvies Cinema Pub  
Cactus and Tropicals  
Canyon Sports  
Chaco  
Costco  
Cyberflora  
Davis Audio Visual  
Desert Edge Pub  
Eco Moto  
Ken Sanders Rare Books  
Knead A Massage

Koyo Restaurant  
Mazza Middle Eastern Cuisine  
New Balance  
Old Mill Clubhouse  
Patagonia Outlet  
Petzl  
Pier 49 Pizza  
Porcupine Grill  
Redmond Trading Company, L.C.  
REI  
Rico's Mexican Delicatessen and Catering  
Rocky Mountain Pizza  
Salt Lake Acting Company  
Snowbird Ski and Summer Resort

Sundance  
Teva  
The Beer Nut  
The Green Building Center  
The King's English Bookshop  
The Tin Angel: Bistro Café  
Trinity Communications  
Uinta Brewing Co.  
Utah Environmental Congress  
Utah Neighborhoods Association  
Utah Symphony and Opera  
Voilé Equipment Inc.  
Wanderlust Images  
Whole Foods  
Workforce Solutions

### Xmission

### Foundations

Campaign for America's Wilderness  
Henry P. and Agi M. Plenk Fund  
Maki Foundation  
Patagonia  
Richard K. and Shirley S. Hemingway Foundation  
The Handley Foundation

**Save Our Canyons gives special thanks to friends and volunteers who have played especially important roles in 2008. There will be many stars in your crowns.**

Ralph Becker  
Ray Bloxham  
Kerry Case  
Monica Ferreira  
Carolyn Guild  
Justine Jedlicka

Andrea Malouf  
Andy Murphy  
Sonia Rubinfeld  
Dan Schroeder  
Doug Scott  
Tasha Seegert

Susie Sutphin  
Larry Swanson  
The Radio Rhythm Makers  
The Young Democrats  
of Utah

**If you have contributed to SOC as a volunteer or business in the 2008 year and are not listed here, we apologize. Please contact Havilah Mills at 363-7283 and we will be sure to list your name in our next newsletter!**

---

## Volunteer Profile —Alana Felt

*By Havilah Mills, SOC staff*

Alana Felt was raised in the foothills of Mount Olympus where she spent all of her free time (where she says all kids should spend their free time) outdoors. Her obsession for the outdoors grew from childhood play in her backyard to outdoors recreation in the Wasatch. During high school, she and her friends were out on adventures any chance they got: mountain biking, rock-climbing, snowboarding and relaxing around mid-night campfires. Since high school, Alana has enjoyed cycling, backpacking and backcountry touring in Salt Lake's majestic mountains. She spent the summer of 2006 working at a local wilderness therapy program for troubled teens. Being out under the stars every night changed and intensified her love for nature.

After graduating from the University of Utah in May of 2008 with a degree in Consumer and Community Studies, she became interested in working for a local non-profit organization that would incorporate her love of wilderness. She

contacted Save Our Canyons with interest in volunteering to gain real world experience in the non-profit sector. Her commitment to Save Our Canyons is outstanding! Alana spends approximately 10 hours in the office each week helping with a variety of tasks from events help, filing, data entry, research and more!

Alana says that Save Our Canyons was the perfect fit and that she's excited to be working towards preserving and protecting the land that she feels so deeply tied to. Her future goals include continued work with non-profits whether it be coaching troubled youth through experiences in the wild or writing proposals to encourage local land preservation. When Alana isn't outside getting twigs stuck in her hair, she loves to cook, travel and work in her garden. She is an absolutely fantastic volunteer and deserves to be recognized for all of her

hard work and her dedication to the mission of Save Our Canyons - *Thank you Alana!*





*Illegal ATV abuse of public lands has been deplored by chief foresters, Utah's governor, and many other users of America's public lands. Here are two ugly examples of such depredations: Factory Butte, at left, and a pond in the Ogden Ranger District.*

## The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

**GOOD.** Utah's developer-stuffed 2008 legislature passed SB53, a law barring voters from launching initiatives dealing with land-use ordinances. It went into effect in May, thus blocking efforts by Sevier County citizens from voting on a proposed coal-fired power plant near Sigurd and Beaver County citizens from weighing in on the embattled Mount Holy ski-golf resort. On October 17, 2008 the Utah Supreme Court unanimously found the law unconstitutional. The court upheld citizens' power to initiate legislation on any subject, including land use. SB53 was just one of a number of recent legislative proposals aimed at getting citizens out of land-use decisions. We hope the courts "bug out"-message to the legislature will be heeded. On November 4, enfranchised by the Supreme Court decision Sevier County voters, by a majority of 58%, approved a ballot proposition that requires a public vote on coal-fired power plants. Democracy restored!

**GOOD.** Utah Governor Jon Huntsman recently took a field trip along ATV routes in southern Utah with SUWA financier David Bonderman and emerged saying that illegal ATV activities are "an abomination, an embarrassment." He said that he will direct the state Department of Natural Resources to do more to prevent the damage and step up enforcement. As a recent *Salt Lake Tribune* editorial put it, this is a welcome about-face for Huntsman who "appointed former San Juan County Commissioner Lynn Stevens as public lands director, putting the fox in charge of the henhouse ..." Thanks, Mr. Governor, for denouncing the UGLY. **Note the photos above.**

**BAD THWARTED.** In mid-September Kennecott an-

nounced that it would pursue mining claims in Rose Canyon Ranch and nearby Yellow Fork Canyon. Salt Lake County's Mayor Peter Corroon responded quickly pointing out that "Salt Lake County purchased the property as open space for our citizens to use for hiking, biking and riding horses. Really, how could I say to Kennecott, 'Yes, go ahead and explore this property for mining purposes.'" The county has refused Kennecott further access without BLM approval and threatened the mining company with trespassing if it tried to land helicopters on the property. Challenges are flying in both directions and public land open space is challenged. **GOOD** may triumph, thanks to Mayor Corroon's intervention. Thank you Mr. Mayor and congratulations on winning a second term in office.

**GOOD.** Indefatigable booster of Utah's ski industry and long-time thorn in the side for some-time critics of the industry's demands, reporter Ray Grass of the *Deseret News* has retired after 47 years with the newspaper. We wish him a fruitful retirement and mellowing view of land use controversy in the coming years.



**GOOD. (WE HOPE).** The pesky non-native tamarisk tree has become a scourge to stream beds of the American southwest. Tamarisk can drive out native vegetation and make soils saltier. It



*Typical streamside tamarisc invasion in southern Utah.*



*The famous Spiral Jetty of Robert Smithson in the norther end of Great Salt Lake.*

also uses a lot more water than other, native species, and poses a fire hazard. To the apparent rescue comes the tamarisk beetle, which can defoliate a tamarisk tree in a week, eventually killing the plant. This all sounds



promising but, apparently, the long term effects are not well understood. What will happen when stream banks are not held in place by the tamarisks? What else is on the beetle's menu? There are lots of stories

out there like the one about rabbits in Australia. Shall we just hope for the best or do a little more research?

**GOOD SO FAR.** The public outcry was international and passionate when plans for oil drilling at the north end of Great Salt Lake near Robert Smith-

son's Spiral Jetty. On August 7, 2008 the Utah Department of Natural Resources notified Pearl Mountain Montana Exploration, LTD that their application for drilling lacked adequate information of (among others) spill prevention & emergency response, access to the needed harbor, specific location of facilities and equipment, information concerning historic and cultural resources. Keep after them UDNR!

**BAD.** The Bush administration has repeatedly put policy dogma above science. A recent rule change in the enforcement of the 35-year-old Endangered Species Act would eliminate the necessity for the Bureau of Reclamation or the Transportation Department to consult with scientists at the Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service. This dismissal of science is downright medieval. Hold your breath during the next weeks of presidential transition as cabinet posts in Interior, Agriculture and Energy are filled. The Obama administration must recognize science as a resource not as an impediment.

**BAD.** Can you believe it? Plans recently (and sneakily) announced by the Bush administration to sell oil- and gas-drilling leases on parcels near Utah's Arches National Park could place drilling operations within a 45-minute hike from Delicate Arch, the state's most famous landmark. Many past administrations have left the American public National Monuments as thank-you gifts. This administration leaves us with a poke in the eye with a sharp stick.



# Islam and the Environment

By Tarek Nosseir

President of the Islamic Society of Greater Salt Lake

As in Judaism and Christianity, Islam clearly entrusts humans with the stewardship of the Earth and all its inhabitants. For Muslims the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him (pbuh), is considered to be a pioneer in the field of environmental preservation, and protection. As a matter of fact, any student of the life of the Prophet will detect that he was a pioneer in the domain of conservation, sustainable development and resource management. He constantly preached the importance of maintaining a harmonious balance between humans and nature. In addition, the cultivation of land, proper treatment of animals, birds, vegetation, and water purity and conservation were of vital importance in his daily life practices and teachings. Furthermore, the Prophet considered all of God's creations to be equal in the sight of God and believed that animals, land, forests and watercourses should have rights. Thus, in Islam the abuse of one of His creations, whether it is a living being or a natural resource, is definitely a sin.

The Quran (the Holy Book) and the Hadith (the quotes, parables and examples from the life of the Prophet) - both teach that kindness to animals is an article of faith for Muslims. Islam goes beyond that and describes in Chapter 6 verse 38 of the Quran: "There is not an animal in the earth, or a creature flying on two wings, but they are nations like you". The Prophet, pbuh, has said that he who is kind and merciful towards animals, God will be kind and merciful towards him.... We must deal with animals with the utmost compassion and strive to ensure the preservation of the different species." It is also important to note that it is forbidden in Islam to kill an animal for mere play. This is clearly exemplified in a Hadith, where the Prophet, pbuh, tells of a woman who had locked a cat away until it died of hunger; as a direct result the woman was put in Hell and tortured. While he did not practice vegetarianism, the authenticated Hadiths clearly show that the Prophet was extremely sensitive to the suffering of animals, almost as though he literally shared their pain. As such, he exhibited and ordered his followers to be gentle and sensitive in the slaughter of animals. Consequently, he recommended the use of sharp knives so that the animal would die quickly and with as little pain as possible. He also warned against slaughtering an animal in the presence of other animals, or letting the animal witness the sharpening of blades and to hide the blade by covering the animal's eyes: to him that was equal to "slaughtering the animal twice" and he emphatically condemned such practices as "abominable".

Islam does endorse the transformation of wilderness into agricultural lands and pastures. The prophet, pbuh, said: "When doomsday comes, if someone has a palm shoot in their hand, they should plant it". This truly illustrates the responsibility of humans towards the sustainability and growth of nature even with the eventuality of one's immediate death. In general, Islam not only encourages the sustainable use of fertile lands, the transformation of unused land into productive parcels by planting trees, sowing seeds of fruits and vegetables, and irrigating dry land but also regards these as perpetual charitable deeds. So, it is safe to say that it is incumbent on every Muslim to contribute his or her share in improving greenery. The Holy Book proclaims that it is God who "sends down water from the sky, and therewith we bring forth buds of every kind". So, we as humans must direct our water resources towards plots of land to improve its use. That's exactly why devout Muslims take an active role in growing more trees and vegetation for the benefit of all people.

With the following words the Prophet emphasizes the sacred nature of the earth's soil as a pure entity and as a purifying agent: "The earth has been created for me as a place of worship and as a means of purification." As such, and in order to protect land, forests and wildlife, the Prophet created inviolable zones known as hima and haram, in which resources were to be left untouched. In many Muslim countries both are still in use today: haram areas are often drawn up around wells and water sources to protect the groundwater table from over-pumping. Even when water was abundant, he advocated thriftiness; therefore, saving water and safeguarding its purity were two important issues for the Prophet. On the other hand, hima applies particularly to wildlife and forestry and usually designates an area of land where grazing and woodcutting are restricted, or where certain animal species are protected; these have become modern wildlife reserves. It is worthy to note here, that out of the twelve months of the Islamic calendar, during four of those months it is completely forbidden for a Muslim to hunt wildlife throughout them to allow the various species to reproduce and nurture its young.

In conclusion, citing the Quran (17:27): "Lo! The squanderers were forever siblings of the devils and the devil was forever ingrate to his Lord." Therefore, devout Muslims do their best to keep the order of the world the way God intended it to be used by doing

their best to preserve wildlife, water and its sources, and increase green spaces for the benefit of all humans. I pray that all humans agree to preserve the environment and increase greenery on Earth so that we, and

future generations, may continue to enjoy this world the way God intended.

Peace.

## Dan Schroeder Receives 2008 Pfeifferhorn Award

By Carl Fisher and Havilah Mills, SOC staff

*Dan Schroeder, left, and Carl Fisher.*



Save Our Canyons, the Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club, The Wasatch Mountain Club, Wild Utah Project, Great Salt Lake Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy presented Dan Schroeder with the 2008 Pfeifferhorn Award this past Thursday, November 13<sup>th</sup> at Oasis Café in Salt Lake City.

The Pfeifferhorn Award, now in its thirteenth year, is awarded to individuals who should be recognized for serving the public interest by helping to preserve and protect some aspect of the natural environment of the State of Utah. Past recipients of the award have been George Hansen, Diane Lehman Smith, Jim Bradley, Leroy Hooten, Ellie Ienatsch, Bob Adler, Loren Kroenke, Gale Dick and Peter Corroon

Dan is an active member of the Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Dan has held numerous positions with the Sierra Club and Ogden Group, including secretary, chair, treasurer, conservation chair, and webmaster. His work in Northern Utah is what earned him the award. He implemented Ogden Group's Adopt-a-Roadless-Area program to keep tabs on threats to roadless areas primarily in the

Ogden District of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest, monitored ATV and ORV use across the Ogden Ranger District, worked to oppose the proposal to run cable cars through Ogden up to a proposed resort on the west flanks of Mount Ogden, and

helped defeat a proposal that would have sold off public lands and parks at the foot of Mount Ogden to make a luxury enclave of gated houses and resort amenities.

Dan stated during his award acceptance speech that he was appreciative, but also embarrassed. While he said he would accept the award, it was on the condition that he accepted on behalf of all those he works with. Dan, who is a Professor of Physics at Weber State University, has worked as a volunteer to protect the wild places and public lands in and around the Ogden area.

Amy Wicks of the Ogden City Council stated that, "Dan is an exemplary watchdog and protector; and because of the countless hours and passion he puts into so many different issues - Utah is truly a better place."

Read more tributes to Dan at <http://wcforum.blogspot.com/2008/11/local-citizen-activist-receives.html>. □

Citizens' Committee to Save Our Canyons  
P.O. Box 112017  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84147

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
SALT LAKE CITY, UT  
PERMIT NO. 7271

*Return Service Requested*



## **Want to Learn More About “Capital W” Wilderness with Friends?**

**Save Our Canyons can show you pictures, tell you about Wilderness Facts and Myths,  
give you maps of and information about  
our current Wasatch Wilderness proposal.**

**We are happy to talk with a gathering in your home or to your club, discussion group, or  
other group.**