

# Save Our Canyons

Citizens' Committee to Save Our Canyons

www.saveourcanyons.org

February, 2,010

## Silver Fork Controversy Looming

Aerial view of Silver Fork, a side canyon to Big Cottonwood which Solitude Ski Resort wishes to annex. See p. 5.

Photo by Alexis Kelner and Larry Swanson,  
courtesy of *Wasatch Tours*.

*Save Our Canyons is an organization of citizen activists "dedicated, since 1972, to the preservation of Wasatch canyons, mountains, and foothills."*

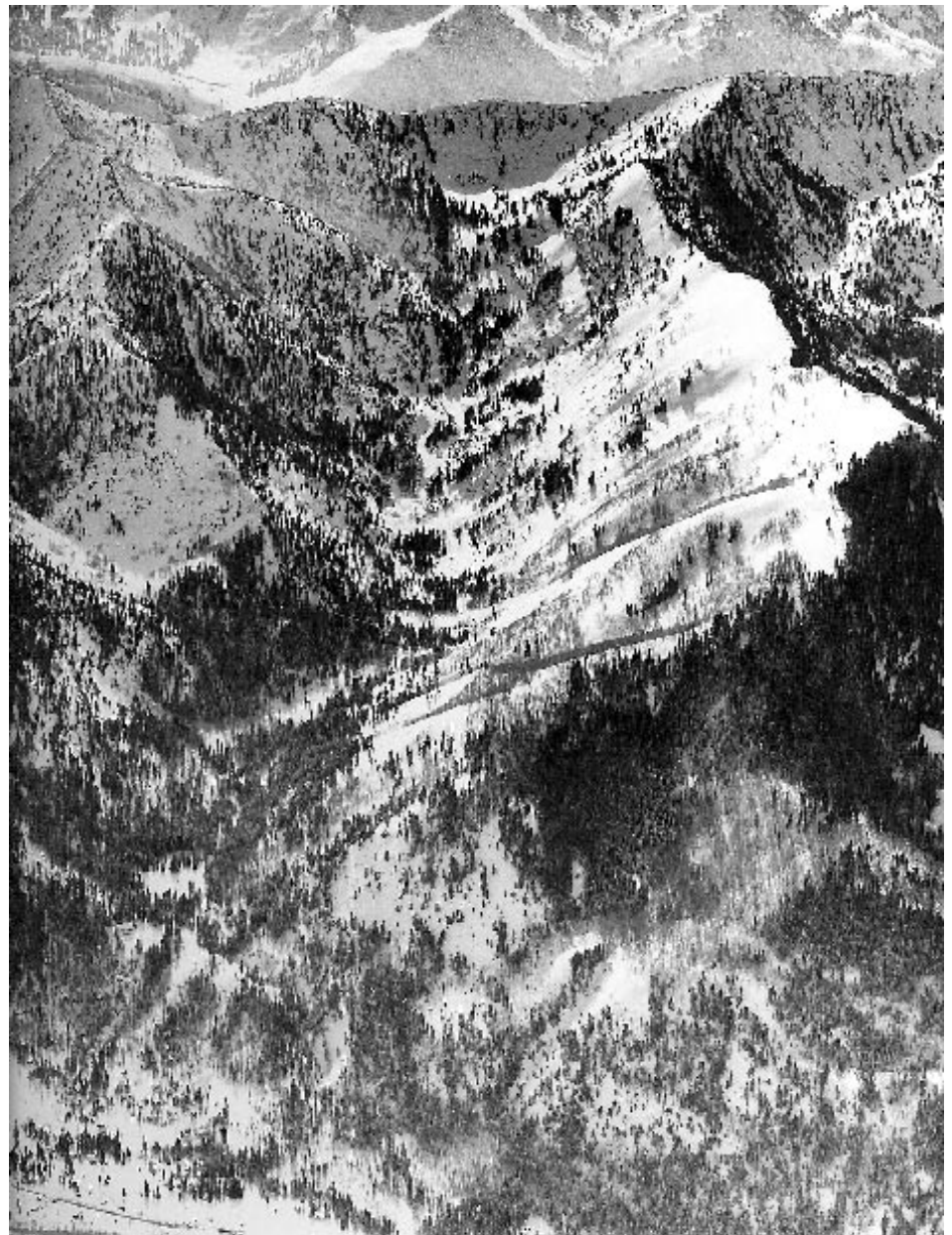
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ALEXIS KELNER,  
Perennial Editor

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## President's Message

# Is Science Just Another Opinion?

**W**hy do so many Americans mistrust science? The evidence that human activities have brought on climate change has essentially the unanimous support of the world's meteorologists. Most Americans don't believe it. Various polls find that some 25% of us don't believe that men walked on the moon. Most Americans don't believe in evolution. Hawkers of perpetual motion machines still find their dupes some 170 years after the discovery of the conservation of energy. About one in five U.S. citizens believe that the sun rotates once a day around the earth.

These quirks of Americans are all the more puzzling when one considers the scientific leadership that the USA has shown over the last century. Scientific understanding of nature and the way it is pursued are arguably the only program yet devised that can weed out mere opinion and win informed agreement.

Science is often viewed as body of explanations, unchanging once discovered. Nothing could be further from the truth. Every scientific theory, as opposed to fact, that has ever existed has been or will eventually be abandoned or greatly modified, although the new typically retains well-tested parts of the old. It is a fact that planets move around the sun in certain regular ways. Newton's theories of gravitation and laws of motion "explain" these facts in a simple and coherent way. Einstein replaced these theories with new ones in order to better explain the facts. Science is a process that involves a lot of arguing and checking the validity of other peoples' work. It has taught us that our intuition is often faulty. Yet many prefer myth and magic. Myth can explain anything without needing evidence, without fearing inconsistency. I once taught a course "From Magic to Einstein".

It was a history of science course for non-scientists. I was surprised at the number of students who were disappointed that magical beliefs have had to give way to the scientific understanding that

began in the European renaissance. They clearly preferred magic, not science.

There have been many opinions about why so many don't "believe" in science.

Is it a flaw in our education? Sheer laziness? Is it fear? Terrible things happen; we want to know why, but science often doesn't offer any answers. Is it distrust of academic scientists who can come across as arrogant and elite – just another manifestation of class warfare? Is it because people, in spite of abundant evidence to the contrary, believe that science and religion are enemies? Is it connected with a general cultural aversion to mathematics? Science often attacks dearly held beliefs. Students in my physics classes sometimes bridled at the well-established fact that nothing can go faster than the speed of light. Doesn't that run in the face of American gumption and "can do" spirit?

These quirks are not only baffling, they are dangerous in that they rob us of the power that knowledge can give us in controlling our environment and our prosperity. If we cannot accept science, what is there to guide public policy decisions? Do we really want the threat of human-caused climate change to be decided by ideology, political clout, the market place or by majority opinion?

And, as to the question of why people choose not to "believe" in science, I incline to another explanation. It is far more comfortable to be able to ignore what science has to tell us. Knowledge imposes responsibility. If you know something, you have an obligation to act. If knowledge is power, then knowledge imposes the obligation to use that power.

Stating that efforts to moderate human-caused climate change are "bad for the economy" and expecting this to end debate is absurd and irresponsible. — *Gale Dick*



## How I Got Involved in Environmental Issues

By Bill Lockhart, SOC Trustee

“Holy \_\_\_! What is THAT?!” This was my disbelieving reaction to seeing, for the first time, much longer ago than I really prefer to think about, a backcountry skier doing telemark turns down a real slope midway up Silver Fork. This was on my first outing on my most recent selection of ski gear that I thought might work for backcountry exploration better than the pasta boots and candy-bar-width waxless skis that dominated the era. It was a gangly Silvretta set up that held an uncertain grip on my leather mountaineering boots and allowed the heel to be locked down, more or less, which I presumed was necessary for any noticeable downhill control. It was also a set up that I recognized was ultimately doomed to suffer catastrophic failure of some part of the system, most likely my ankles.

Within a week or two of my Silver Fork vision, I had my Epoke 1100 skis and Galibier Corrençons boots. Within another month, I had a pretty bomber telemark turn—and I’ve been a voracious consumer of Wasatch adventure ever since (despite, or perhaps contributed to by the fact that I haven’t done a telemark turn in over 20 years; but enough discussion of visions and other matters of religion).

I was lucky to enjoy a great era in the Wasatch backcountry. Particularly in the post-Epoke epoch, the

equipment became good enough you could pretty well go anywhere, although doing so was more awkward, painful, and dangerous than need be today. There were few enough other backcountry folks that it wasn’t uncommon to break week-old snow in Maybird on a Sunday. And you always engaged with the skiers you did encounter in the backcountry because you shared something unusual and important with them. I like to think, at least, that it wasn’t just because iPods hadn’t been invented yet.

These experiences are, of course, a huge factor in how I became involved with SOC. I think it’s safe to say that everyone who has gotten involved with SOC has done so because of a confluence of an attachment to the Wasatch Mountains derived from such physical engagement with them, together with a broader moral sense that wild places aren’t just for man to use up somehow.

1. It’s pretty clear to me where I got that environmental sense of right and wrong. From as early as I can remember, in my family we talked about public policy around the dinner table. We were encouraged to think critically about culture, institutions, and government and whether they did right by the politically powerless and helped create a civilization worth living in. In other words, in Utah terms, we were “liberal



*Multiple exposure of Bill Lockhart ski touring at Lake Blanche.  
All the individuals pictured are Bill Lockhart.*

elitists," perhaps to some even "intellectuals," who lacked complacent, self-serving ignorance ("common sense"). It was clear to us all that the environment and wild places were powerless to protect themselves and were essential for a healthy civilization, so our government's laws had to include protections for these natural systems and places. In other words, we were "environmental extremists." (Note: "Liberal" and "environmentalist" generally do not appear on their own in Utah English. For similar instances in Standard English, see, e.g., "lo (and behold)," "(kit and) caboodle," "(dis)combobulate.") And my father walked the walk, being a legal warrior against such disastrously stupid ideas as a nuclear waste dump immediately at the edge of Canyonlands National Park (complete with train and extremely good lighting), the roving strategic MX missile in the West Desert (more nukes and trains), and a coal mine in Alton, visible from the Bryce Canyon rim (sadly, a recently revived shortsighted idea). You have to ignore the fact that, years before these battles, my father used to take me in his jeep up Neff's Canyon and to White Pine Reservoir. It was a very different time.

I suspect that, for most of us, our experience in the Wasatch and our views of man's proper relationship to the environment inexorably led to circumstances that triggered our involvement in SOC. For me, it was the Forest Service's 2005 Wasatch Powderbird Guides decision. This decision represented a continuing favoritism to WPG that SOC's political and public relations efforts were failing to overcome. When I was asked to participate in a discussion about how to respond to this decision, I had to agree. By that time, WPG had been

diminishing my experience in the backcountry for 25 years. (I never minded sharing the terrain with the guides and clients, and, by and large, they seemed like good folks. It's just that damned helicopter they insist on bringing with them.) Eventually, this led to my representing SOC in a lawsuit against the Forest Service, despite the very lopsided odds against us. (Litigation is politics by other means, to co-opt a phrase.) Since the Utah Federal District Court judges rather faithfully reflect the politics of Utah, we figured from the outset that we were especially unlikely to prevail here, where the case first had to be heard. So when we did lose here, we doubled down and took the case to the Court of Appeals in Denver—where things worked out just as well. Shortly after the litigation was complete, having witnessed my appetite for long odds and good causes, the SOC board asked me to join them as a board member. I accepted,



# Solitude Resort's Silver Fork Expansion Request

By Julia Lester, SOC Trustee

In fall 2009 Solitude Resort made a request to the USDA/Forest Service to expand its boundaries northward into Silver Fork basin. That particular basin sits between Solitude and Brighton Resorts and is prized for its role in Salt Lake City's watershed and its allure to backcountry users.

The request, if realized, would increase Solitude resort's footprint by over 50%, adding 741 acres in Silver Fork basin to the resort's current 1,418 acres. Regarding this request, SOC's executive director Carl Fisher wrote, "Solitude Mountain Resort has requested an expansion of 'approximately 741 acres', of which they say 462 acres would be located on Forest Service land. The map titled 'Silver Fork Map' included by Solitude shows the area located on Forest Service land to be much larger; 695 acres. Solitude does own approximately 22 acres in Silver Fork Canyon (near the Alta Drain Tunnel), but the loss to the public is far greater than what is demonstrated in the September 14, 2009 letter from Solitude Mountain Resort."

In asking the Forest Service to amend the Big Cottonwood Canyon resort's special-use permit, Solitude Resort's General Manager and owner David DeSeelhorst asserted expansion into Silver Fork would help the resort move forward to meet the future recreational needs of an ever-increasing Wasatch Front population. He believes those needs would include lift-served access to steeper, higher-elevation terrain like that found within the boundaries of other local resorts.

Mr. DeSeelhorst stated in his application that the quality of Salt Lake culinary water would not be compromised by Solitude's resort expansion. Jeff Niermeyer, director of the Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities, which is responsible for protecting the city's mountain water supplies, stated in an 11/25/09 article in *The Salt Lake Tribune* (SLT) that, "The expansion of a ski resort is an incremental degradation of the watershed and watershed protection," calling Silver Fork a "major" sub-drainage of Big Cottonwood Creek, which supplies 24 percent of the city's water.

"If the Forest Service accepts this proposal, we would insist it needs to go under the detailed review of NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] to understand the impacts," Niermeyer added. The NEPA process, which includes public participation, could take years to complete.

With the existing special-use permit still in place, the Forest Service's Salt Lake ranger district is not obligated to accept the application. However, the application has

been reviewed by the Salt Lake Ranger District office, along with input from interested entities like the Salt Lake City Public Utilities and citizens sending in their comments.

Just as backcountry enthusiasts value Silver Fork's glacially-carved upper bowl and steep Meadow Chutes for their winter and summer recreation, Mr. DeSeelhorst desires Silver Fork's bowl and chutes to make Solitude more competitive among western resorts.

From a 1/21/10 *Deseret News* article: "Solitude general manager Dave DeSeelhorst said while there are no specific plans for construction, expansion in the area likely would include several new ski lifts. Under Forest Service rules, new lifts would be allowed, but permanent structures such as homes would not be permitted.

If the resort expands, no uphill traffic would be allowed in Silver Fork during the winter, but access during the summer would remain open to the public, according to Forest Service spokeswoman Lorraine Januzelli."

From the 11/25/09 SLT article: "Will McCarvill, a Wasatch Mountain Club official who skis and hikes year-round in Silver Fork, is appalled that Solitude is asking for all of Silver Fork, ridge to ridge. The Meadows chutes and the upper bowl are heavily used by backcountry skiers and snowshoers. ...It's a beautiful place, out of sight and sound of the mechanized world, in winter and summer."

He also is irritated that the ski industry is participating in Envision Utah's meetings to assess the future of the central Wasatch, while at the same time, Alta and Solitude are looking at expansions that would greatly advance interconnections among the four Cottonwood Canyon resorts. Alta is investigating putting a lift up Flagstaff Mountain, off Silver Fork's backside.

DeSeelhorst's letter said the proposed expansion was driven by efforts of public utilities officials, the conservation group Save Our Canyons and others to increase designated wilderness areas in the central Wasatch to protect water supplies.

SOC's executive director Carl Fisher said, "People have recognized there is a need to protect the municipal watershed. Wilderness is one of the best ways to do that."

In his role as SOC executive director, Carl Fisher recently wrote the following: "In the mid-1980's, Salt Lake County started work on the Wasatch Canyons Master Plan. In this document it is stated that Silver

Fork Canyon remain open to the public because of its popularity for backcountry enthusiasts. Currently this plan is in the process of being updated, and it has been found that the public still wants to maintain access to what little high altitude, north-facing, accessible terrain that remains in the Wasatch.

Also through this process, much information about the ski areas has been obtained. One interesting fact is that the average skier density of the Wasatch resorts is about 255 skiers per acre. Many other resorts in the west have skier density of more than 400, demonstrating that there is much more room at the resorts to accommodate additional skiers without expanding resorts' boundaries.

Skier numbers are also being limited because the highways, which serve these areas, are currently at or above their capacity and have been for over 20 years. Expansion of a ski area's permit boundaries at this time would not increase the number of skiers at the resorts until transportation issues in the canyons have been remedied (Save Our Canyons supports the Forest Service position not to allow additional parking spaces in the canyons as this is the best control we have to reduce pollutants from automobile traffic and also to manage carrying capacity of the area).

The 2003 Forest Plan clearly states that there should be no expansion of ski area boundaries onto public land. Surrounding areas of the resorts are in management prescription 3.1w, Watershed Emphasis: Timber harvest, road construction and new recreation facility development not allowed. Similarly, the 2003 Record of Decision states:

"The Revised Plan allows no expansion of current ski area permit boundaries into adjacent highly valued undeveloped areas, but continues to manage within existing permit boundaries for world-class skiing opportunities in winter; and in summer for nature-based recreation opportunities complementary to resort facilities."

Save Our Canyons whole-heartedly supports this

portion of the decision as opportunities for dispersed recreational opportunities and for man to interact with the natural environment are severely being diminished due to expansion of the ski resorts onto public lands. Enforcement of this decision would also protect the watershed, as ski areas and their associated infrastructure alter the natural flow of streams and increase erosion of surrounding land, in addition to the increase of turbidity in Big Cottonwood Creek. This creek is the largest contributor to the Salt Lake Valley's water supply and any expansion or development of its tributaries would significantly jeopardize the quality of this water source.

These are just a few of the reasons we feel any expansion into Silver Fork by Solitude Mountain Resort would be a detriment to the local environment and watershed. It is our hope that the Forest Service takes these concerns into consideration while entertaining this proposed expansion. Silver Fork Canyon is a precious resource both because of its critical watershed role and its outstanding recreational qualities for all seasons of the year. Save Our Canyons urges you to deny this request from Solitude so that this area can remain open to the public for generations to come."

Please direct your comments about this situation, if you haven't already, to:

**Brian Ferebee, Forest Supervisor**

125 South State Street  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84138

email: [bferebee@fs.fed.us](mailto:bferebee@fs.fed.us)

**Cathy Kahlow, District Ranger**

Salt Lake Ranger District  
6944 South 3000 East  
Cottonwood Heights, Utah 84121

email: [ckahlow@fs.fed.us](mailto:ckahlow@fs.fed.us)

**SAVE THE DATE!**  
*Save Our Canyons  
8th Annual Lone Peak Celebration!*

*Appetizers, Drinks, Live Music,  
Auctions, and more!*

*All proceeds benefit Save Our Canyons!  
You won't want to miss it!*

*Friday, April 23rd 2010  
The Jewish Community Center  
Event details at [www.saveourcanyons.org](http://www.saveourcanyons.org)*





*Site of developer Terry Diehl's controversial, and still unbuilt, Tavaci Resort near the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon.*

## **Cottonwood Heights Canyon Resort Residential Zone –A Precedent Setting Ordinance for the Wasatch Foothills–**

Jennifer Kecor, SOC Issues Coordinator

**F**rom the beginning the Canyon Resort Residential Zone (CRR) was under wraps. The public was in the dark, while Cottonwood Heights was quietly drafting a high-density mixed-use foothill zone, claiming it was a “city-initiated” process. After becoming aware of the issue sometime in September, Save Our Canyons filed a GRAMA, and obtained the records request in November.

Our records request revealed more than a little insight into the process, with emails going as far back as February 2009, clearly pointing out a lack of transparency and evident impropriety on Cottonwood Heights’ part.

As Mayor Kelvyn Cullimore stated in an email dated September 2, “It is regrettable that this process was initiated the way it was. If it was to be a city initiated petition, it should have come from the city, not the developer.” Once the media got the scoop on the backroom dealings, the planning process was exposed and city misconduct revealed.

It became clear that Terry Diehl, owner of the Tavaci site had played a role in this process, with Diehl providing the city planning staff with an initial draft ordinance. It appeared as though Cottonwood Heights were tailoring an ordinance to fit Diehl’s new

design concept for the Tavaci site - a site which is currently zoned for single family residential. The CRR ordinance could provide Diehl with a chance to rezone his property to accommodate high-end luxury condos with building heights of up to 50ft, a total of some 200 units perched up on the foothills for all to see.

The issue is controversial and has been an unpopular idea within the community. With all the attention this issue generated, it is no wonder the city council voted November 24<sup>th</sup>, to cancel a public hearing scheduled for December 8<sup>th</sup>, and postpone any vote for approval of the ordinance until further notice.

Now the city is seeking to establish and ensure public trust on the issue. A public process is underway with a city-appointed Citizens Advisory Committee meeting to discuss and review the CRR Zone, to provide feedback and recommendations to the City Council. With a recommendation yet to come out of the process, we are not out of the woods on this issue.

The zone as it was proposed to the City Council as of late 2009 had the potential to become a precedent-setting ordinance for Wasatch foothill development. Save Our Canyons’ primary objective with this process is to prevent the adoption and implementation of the CRR zone. It is within our mission to protect the foothills of the Wasatch and the proposed ordinance

as it was presented before the the City Council poses a direct threat to foothills across the Wasatch Front.

At this time the zone would apply strictly to Terry Diehl's Tavaci site. However, there are several other foothill property owners who are eager if not ready to jump at the opportunity to develop their properties, waiting for the right precedent. Instead of imposing limits to sensitive foothill development, Cottonwood Heights is proposing an absurd ordinance, which would accommodate higher densities and impact views, not to mention, further blur the distinction between a natural and urban interface.

No matter which way you look at this proposal, this development "will stick out like a middle finger giving the rest of the city the bird," as stated by Michael Black Planning Director for Cottonwood Heights in an email

written to Bruce Jones, former City Councilman on April 28th.

Cottonwood Heights has within its city limits the stretch of foothills between Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons, gateways to the Wasatch. With the CRR ordinance, Cottonwood Heights is planning for the future of these foothills with an apparent lack of foresight to the sensitive and unique nature of the Wasatch. They are opening up the opportunity for more development to flank the foothills.

It is unclear at the moment, what the final outcome of the Canyon Resort Residential Ordinance will be. Save Our Canyons hopes Cottonwood Heights will consider the future of the Wasatch along with limiting urban development to were it is appropriate. Not along the treasured backdrop that is the Wasatch Range. □

*This editorial is reprinted with permission of Salt Lake Tribune where it appeared on 12/31/09*

The quote was exaggeration. "In a lot of ways, Bill Levitt is Alta." But it also held a lot of truth.

It comes from a profile of the long-time owner of the Alta Lodge that *The Tribune* published in 2005, shortly after he announced he would not seek a 10th term as the skiing hamlet's only mayor in modern times. When that was written, Levitt was 88 and had been the town's highest elected leader for 34 years. He decided it was time to hang up his political cap.

Nevertheless, when he died this week at 92, we suspect many Utahns thought of him as the political personification of Alta.

The reasons stem not just from his longevity. He is widely credited with keeping a lid on residential development at the resort, thus preserving much of its charm and, more importantly, its open spaces. Bill Levitt is one of the reasons why Alta never became Snowbird or Deer Valley. It has remained a modest place that has catered primarily to local skiers in winter and wildflower worshippers, picnickers and hikers in summer. Though much of its land is privately owned, it is very much a public playground.

That's important for several reasons.

For one, the Albion Basin at the top of Little Cottonwood Canyon is a small place. When a new house



**BILL LEVITT  
(1917 – 2009)**

or lodge is built, that subtracts from the natural resource.

For another, it is a critical source of Salt Lake City's drinking water. The big city's water officials, who have worked aggressively for generations to limit development at Alta to protect the water quality, credited Levitt with helping them do that job.

Of course, people who own private real estate and have been prevented from building houses on it resent Levitt. They argue that Levitt had his lodge and his home and didn't want business competition or to share his town. His policies spawned lawsuits from frustrated property owners.

But we throw in with the folks who credit Levitt with helping to keep Alta from being spoiled.

His influence ranged far beyond the Albion Basin because of his long service on councils of government that brought local leaders together from elsewhere in Salt Lake County and beyond. Because of his experience and insight, his voice carried weight far beyond the few hundred voters he represented.

Bill Levitt came to Alta from New York in 1955 to ski. He bought the lodge and brought his family here a few years later. His love for his adopted home made it a better place.

That's about as American a story as there is.





*Kessler Peak, near the sites of recently donated land.*

## Save Our Canyons Receives Three Land Donations to Close 2009

By John O. Johnson, Advisory Board and Carl Fisher, Executive Director

In-kind donations of land are not something necessarily new to Save Our Canyons, but they are certainly rare. These donations are not only an important step in preserving the remaining wildlands of the Wasatch, but they can also be very strategic in preventing the expansions of ski areas and other pesky uses that plague our treasured public lands.

Bryan and Bea O'Meara donated two lots they owned in Big Cottonwood Canyon to Save Our Canyons. Bryan and Bea both have a deep appreciation for preserving the beauty of the land and practicing environmental stewardship. Bryan was born on a farm in Wisconsin where he grew to love the land and developed the need to preserve the environment. He is an owner of the Dodo and Porcupine restaurants which regularly donate to environmental causes (Please thank and patronize the Porcupine and Dodo restaurants for their dedication to our community and environment). Bea's love of the environment motivated her to get a degree in biology. Over the past 6 years they have been renovating their home in Big Cottonwood Canyon which is an extension of their dedication to sustainability, recycling, preservation, and environmental consciousness.

Jim and Susan Ogilvie donated nine acres in Silver Fork Canyon up Big Cottonwood Canyon. Jim and Susan moved to Utah in 2003, after Jim retired from the University of Minnesota to start a genetics research lab and to do work at the Shriners Hospital. When asked why he wanted to contribute to SOC, Jim said, "I want my children and grandchildren, and yours, to see nature's magnificence as I have seen it. Preservation of these canyons is critical for their natural beauty and habitat value. The threat of over-development, off road

vehicles, pollution, skyline housing, etc. are examples of loving the canyons to death. Visit Summit County, Colorado and see what can happen if there are no limits to exploitation. The efforts of Save Our Canyons in bringing a balanced perspective on development is essential to the Wasatch. The close proximity to a large population and the Wasatch's grandeur means that SOC has a never ending vigil. Thanks for letting us be a part of it."

The enormous generosity of the O'Mearas and the Ogilvies is a big step toward helping SOC accomplish our mission and their wish to help preserve the Wasatch. If you would send a quick note to SOC thanking the O'Mearas and Ogilvies we will pass your letter on to them.

Save Our Canyons could use your help in finding land owners in the Wasatch who might consider donating their land to SOC. As you already know, the mission of SOC is to preserve from development as much of the Wasatch as possible.

There are two types of land owners who probably would consider donating their land to SOC. People who bought the lots to keep them from being developed, and people who own lots that are either too steep or have no water share and therefore probably cannot be developed. In addition to not having to pay property taxes in the future they could get a significant income tax deduction for the donation. The tax deduction is based on the appraised value of the land. It also reduces the size of their estate for estate tax purposes.

If you know anyone who owns property or a cabin in the Wasatch, SOC would like to talk to them. They may know of some neighbor who might be interested in donating their land. Please help us! □

# Wilderness Update

By Carl Fisher and Gayle Parry



## Wilderness Update

By Carl Fisher and Gayle Parry

Negotiations are on-going as Wasatch Wilderness continues to dominate Save Our Canyons' agenda for the foreseeable future. The process seems frustratingly slow as new threats to the Central Wasatch constantly appear, and wilderness expansion becomes more and more urgent. Two threats that have recently appeared on the horizon include Solitude's application to the Forest Service to expand into Silver Fork (more info in this newsletter) and a proposal by Cardiff Fork Properties LLC, the principals being K. Tolton, Wayne Crawford and J. Garside, for water rights on their property that would lead to the construction of a man-made lake near the Cardiff Mine to be called Cardiff Lake. The uses for the lake appear to be unclear but look to be both consumptive and non-consumptive.

Representative Matheson and his staff, in conjunction with Save Our Canyons', continue to move ahead toward a wilderness bill to be introduced to congress. The progress is slower than we would like as a result of the many entities and negotiations that are involved that will determine the actual boundaries. Meetings are still being held with ski resort personnel and other interested parties to make decisions concerning land trades and concessions that are necessary to make extended wilderness possible. We must wait until all negotiations with all interested parties cease before we can determine exactly where the new wilderness boundaries will be. Save Our Canyons' original future wilderness map included 28,000 acres of new wilderness within the Central Wasatch tri-canyon area that would include extensions to Mount Olympus,

Twin Peaks, and Lone Peak Wildernesses as well as the establishment of the Mount Aire and Bear Trap Wildernesses.

Next, we will meet with Salt Lake City Public Utilities to make sure that our goals are in line with their water plans for the canyons and then we will meet with Congressman Matheson to express our concerns over the recent commercial requests from Solitude and Cardiff Fork Properties in an effort to help expedite progress on the congressional bill. Our message will be that we need new wilderness NOW.

Over the years many public surveys have consistently shown that the public does not want further ski resort expansion. Numerous Dan Jones surveys, the 1989 Master Plan questions and other questionnaires have proved this to be the case. Recently, the wonderful turnout for the Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow Open Houses also gave the public the chance to add their input as to what they would like for the canyons, and once again the results were overwhelmingly against further expansion of ski resorts. Of the people who took the survey, the loudest voice most certainly urged protection of the watershed and the natural environment. The majority of the public is also asking that we not allow resorts to expand outside their existing permit areas, feeling that some improvements within existing boundaries to be acceptable.

The general feeling of people who use and love our mountains is: Let's keep what is left wild! The time for new wilderness designation has come, the longer we wait, the more we're bound to lose. Wilderness is the surest path to preservation of our spectacular mountains and their water resources. Feel free to contact Congressman Matheson and encourage him to protect these spectacular places and our watershed!

For info on our Wilderness Campaign go to:

# Peter Metcalf Receives 2009 Pfeifferhorn Conservation Leadership Award

By Carl Fisher, SOC Executive Director

On December 8, 2009, six local environmental groups recognized Peter Metcalf, CEO and President of Black Diamond, for his efforts to protect the wild places of Utah. Representatives from the Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, the Wasatch Mountain Club, Great Salt Lake Audubon, Wild Utah Project and Save Our Canyons, applauded the efforts. Metcalf has been not only one of the most supportive, but also most outspoken figures on issues concerning the environment and public lands. Under Metcalf's leadership, Black Diamond supports more than 25 organizations across the United States—both financially and by encouraging activism and providing on-the-ground support. Additionally, Metcalf has made presentations in both houses of the US Congress in the past year, urging them to protect Utah's wild places. More recently, Metcalf met with the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands during the first hearing held on America's Redrock Wilderness Act.

It is wonderful to have someone like Peter out there, echoing the efforts of so many groups doing work to protect the wonderful places in Utah. Some may remember when, a few years ago, Peter and the Outdoor Industry Association threatened to relocate their twice-a-year Outdoor Retailer's Show, because of the Utah's archaic and narrowly focused view of our

treasured landscapes. The reason this show comes here is because of our vast diversity of recreational opportunities, not to mention ease of access to a number of different environments. "Peter Metcalf has repeatedly used his influence to improve public lands policy and to protect wilderness in the State of Utah," said Wayne Hoskisson, Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club chair, "Metcalf has made the case better than anyone else that wilderness and intact ecosystems are important to Utah's economy and tourism industry."

Over the course of the past year Peter has been critical and very outspoken in discussions with the Ski Industry, Salt Lake County, and Salt Lake City Public Utilities concerning the expansion of Wasatch Wilderness, an issue near and dear to the hearts of SOC members. We look forward to working with Peter and Black Diamond into the future. They are a model company with a good ethic and have been more than deserving of this award for quite some time. The Pfeifferhorn Award is presented each year to the citizen, official or volunteer who has done the most to protect the environment in Utah, and particularly along the Wasatch Front. It's named for a prominent peak on the south side of Little Cottonwood Canyon that dominates the head of Maybird Gulch. Past recipients include Peter Corroon, Gale Dick, George Hansen, LeRoy Hooten, Dan Schroeder and Dianna Lehmann Smith. □





*Thanks to work by the Utah Dept. of Transportation the possibilities of moose/human collisions will be reduced in Parleys Canyon.  
Photo by P. Cramer, UDOT.*

## The Good, the Bad, the Ugly —and the Worrisome—

**GOOD** - Wildlife Connectivity Advances in Wasatch. Three highway underpasses were constructed specifically for wildlife on Hwy 6 in 2009, with another under construction, and 3.5 miles of fencing was installed in Parley's Canyon along I-80 to direct wildlife to two existing bridged underpasses. Kudos to UDOT for prioritizing these actions aimed at reducing animal vehicle collisions, which result in 10-20,000 animals, and 3-5 humans on average killed each year on Utah highways.



**GOOD** – A wide coalition of interests—including conservationists, tribal leaders, land regulators and a natural-gas developer—has reached an agreement that could curtail the fight over damage to rock art in Nine Mile Canyon. An agreement, signed on January 5, outlines how the U.S. Bureau of Land Management proposes to protect pictographs and petroglyphs created by

Puebloan ancestors who lived throughout the Southwest more than 700 years ago. Attempts to protect the canyon date back decades, but heated up when Denver-based Bill Barrett Corp. in 2004 proposed full-field development of West Tavaputs by drilling 800 more wells on top of the 100 or so already in production.

**GOOD** - SOC's executive director has been asked to serve on Governor Gary Herbert's newly formed "Governor's Balanced Resource Council", chaired by Ted Wilson, ex-mayor of Salt Lake City, past director of the U of U's Hinckley Institute of Politics and former executive director of the Utah Rivers Council. Other members of the council include Pat Shea, Rep. Mike Noel of Kanab and San Juan County's Lynn Stephens. It would be very interesting to listen in on some of the meetings of the council – from a safe distance, of course.

**GOOD** - Plans to build 10 upscale homes at the gateway to Alta's Albion Basin have halted - for now. Last November, the Alta Town Council unanimously denied an application to create a 10-lot subdivision on Patsey Marley Hill. At a September 2009 public hearing, environmental groups and others protested the proposal, arguing it would obliterate open space at the gateway to Little Cottonwood Canyon's flowery Albion Basin, one of the Wasatch Front's most popular hiking des-

tinations. The council denied the application, Mayor Tom Pollard said, because it failed to meet the requirements outlined by Alta's ordinances. A review by the Alta Planning Commission found the plans fell short for water and sewer service, emergency-vehicle access, winter parking and setbacks from natural waterways

**GOOD** – Last December the Utah Supreme court threw new obstacles in front of the Sevier Power Co. by requiring a substantial updating of its air-pollution permit for a 270-megawatt, \$600 million electric generator in Sigurd. The extra work, basically requiring the company to ensure the cleanest possible technology is used, could cost millions and take months, if not years. Justices unanimously backed arguments made by the Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club and two Sevier County retirees, firefighter Jim Kennon and boat-designer Dick Cumiskey, who have led local opposition to the proposed plant and argued their case directly before the justices last year. Joro Walker, an attorney for the Sierra Club and long-time comrade-in-arms with Save Our Canyons, said the decision is precedent-setting because coal-plant proposals around the country hinge on whether they must use coal-gasification technology or at least consider using it.

"What this decision says is that the Clean Air Act matters," she said. "The requirements of the law are there for a reason, to protect public health, and the court said you can't shortchange the law with a miscellaneous Post-It note."

Congratulations to the activists in Sevier County and to Joro Walker.

**GOOD** - Last October Congress gave the Department of Interior and the Forest Service a 17% funding increase. Utah will reap millions from this long-overdue boost to these budgets. The increase will include funding for fighting wildfires without having to "borrow" from other Forest Service programs. In Utah, projects that the federal funds will assist, at the behest of the state's congressional delegation, include:

- ❑ \$1.5 million to acquire private land that lies within the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest
- ❑ \$1.6 million for the Timpanogos Cave National Monument visitor's center
- ❑ \$1.3 million to buy land for the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge

**WORRISOME** – 80 scientific societies worldwide have concluded that global warming is man-caused; none of the world's scientific societies disagree with this conclusion. Utah's governor Gary Herbert feels the jury is still out. Herbert's reluctance to acknowledge that greenhouse gases contribute to global warming quietly frustrates Utah ski resorts that depend on state marketing money, but it openly infuriates ski industry of-

ficials elsewhere who liken it to having a debate about whether the world is flat.

"That's just kind of raging ignorance," said Auden Schendler, executive director of sustainability for Aspen (Colo.) Skiing Co. "We're not environmentalists, we're business people. We have studied the hell out of the climate science. To have a neighboring governor not believe it ... It's absurd." A climate study by the Aspen Global Change Institute is forecasting that if global emissions continue to rise, Aspen will warm 14 degrees by the end of this century, giving it a similar climate to that of Amarillo, Texas.

Utah cannot be an exception to this predicted trend, although harm to the skiing industry will be the least of our worries.

**BAD** - Wasatch Front air quality ranks as worst in the US. Humans may not be responsible for Wasatch Front valleys filling with fog in the winter, but common sense shows that residents and industry are to blame for the toxins and fine particulates we force ourselves to breathe during winter inversions. The debate needs to begin on how we collectively solve this problem. One solution being promoted by a local ski resort is an exodus to the slopes. Unfortunately, their "red air quality discount tickets" do not require carpooling or riding mass transit, a move that if implemented, would allow us all to breathe easier.

**UGLY** – A group called "Canyon Chasers Motorcycle Sport Touring" has put out a T-shirt that says "Pave Our Canyons" across the chest. If imitation is, indeed, the highest form of flattery then SOC is enjoying quite a lot of it. We also can boast of the "Save Us From Save Our Canyons" bumper stickers.



# 2009 Ullr Ball Was a Huge Success!

Winter enthusiasts of all kinds gathered together on the night of November 12, 2009 at The Woodshed to usher in the new snow season in style - at the annual Ullr Ball, hosted by Save Our Canyons! The event honored Ullr, the mythical Norse God of Snow, and helped raise funds for Save Our Canyons. The event featured live music by Kate LeDeuce and The Soul Terminators, plus Ox and The Big Mirror.

Thanks to the many businesses that supported

the event by donating product, Save Our Canyons was able to raise money that went directly to helping protect the Wasatch. Special thanks also go to all of the volunteers that helped put on the event! It was a great party with good music, good people, and an overall good time.

**Thank you to the many business donors that contributed to our 2009 Ullr Ball; we couldn't have done it without you!**

**Alpine Sports**

**Alta**

**Brewvies Cinema Pub**

**Dance Scene/Margene Anderson**

**Flemings Steakhouse**

**Momentum Climbing Gym**

**Odeus Apparel**

**Off-Piste Magazine**

**Patagonia**

**Recreation Outlet**

**SkateOne**

**Teva**

**The Canyons Resort**

**The Woodshed**

**Voile**

**2009 Ullr Ball Volunteers - you were the ones that made this event such a success, thank you!**

**Alana Felt**

**Alex Schmidt**

**Asher Koles**

**Meaghan McKasy**

**Nick Catmur**

**Rachael Mathey**

**Patrick Patno**



*Above: Happy crowd at the annual Ullr Ball held at the Woodshed.*



*Live music warms the Ullr crowd.*

*SOC's Havilah Martak auctions off a donated Snowboard.*



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## *SAVE THE DATE!*

*Save Our Canyons  
8th Annual Lone Peak Celebration!*

*Appetizers, Drinks, Live Music,  
Auctions, and more!*

*All proceeds benefit Save Our Canyons!  
You won't want to miss it!*

*Friday, April 23rd 2010  
The Jewish Community Center  
Event details at [www.saveourcanyons.org](http://www.saveourcanyons.org)*



**LONE PEAK**  
**CELEBRATION**