Save Our Canyons

Citizens' Committee to Save Our Canyons www.saveourcanyons.org March, 2014

Is Skiing on Dirt Utah's Future?

Read about climate change on page 6

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

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

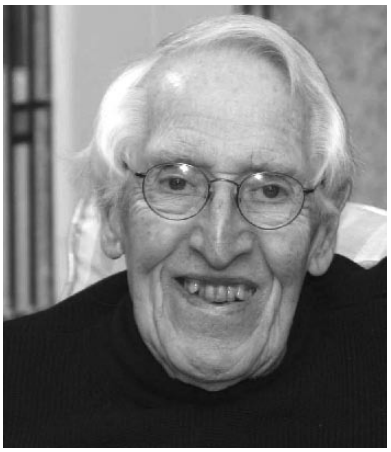
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President's Message

The Next Century of SOC

The famous Danish physicist Niels Bohr said that prediction is very difficult, especially if it's about the future. Setting out to imagine the future is doubtless a fool's errand, but it's hard to resist asking what role Save Our Canyons will play in protecting the beauty and wildness of the Wasatch canyons, mountains and foothills over the next 100 years.

I am confident that the organization will continue to be a vitally important one for a long time to come. SOC, as we have learned from the recent Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow process, represents the overwhelming majority of residents who want to control and limit urbanization of our mountain watershed. The community has made it clear that SOC's voice is needed and worth heeding. This is the basis for my confidence, and I don't think it will change in the future.

Comparing this situation to the climate of opinion when Save Our Canyons started in 1972, suggests that a major cultural change has occurred in Utah over the last 42 years. This tectonic shift is part of a national awakening in which noteworthy landmarks have been the Wilderness Act of 1964, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as well as several acts dealing with management of federal public lands. These congressional mandates appear to be firmly in place and will continue to shape public opinion and action over the next century despite perennial enemies in Congress.

Nevertheless, we must remind ourselves that future challenges to prudent planning are to be expected. Forty-two years ago who could have anticipated the huge expansion of snowmobile use or the explosive popularity of mountain bikes? ORVs had then not yet gained the passionate popularity that we see today. Climate change wasn't much of a general concern at the time. What new inventions will appear and threaten wild places in the future? Drones are being used for a variety of non-military purposes. What roles will they play in avalanche control? Will they one day deliver backpacks to hikers filling the mountains with an unholy racket? What new insults to foot travel will pollute and defile our mountains?

There are, on the other hand, certain trends that are unlikely to abate. The ski industry will continue to push for expansion onto Forest Service lands and encroachment on our watershed. Predicted population growth in Utah will surely bring major problems making it imperative that we develop a fair and equitable way of sharing the recreational resource that Wasatch front residents enjoy.

SOC will need to continue to work as closely as it can with the decision makers: the U.S. Forest Service, Salt Lake City and County along with other municipalities and counties, UTA and UDOT, Utah's state government, our sister environmental organizations, local businesses and the ski industry. How are we going to provide but also control access to our watershed? Transportation problems bedevil our mountains and canyons. Would a transportation "solution" that resulted in more people on fragile ecosystems in the mountains be a true advance in stewardship?

What would we like to see in the future? First of all, it's essential to pass the Wasatch Wilderness and Watershed Protection bill currently in congress. That alone will solve a host of problems where developers' dreams threaten the Wasatch. We want to preserve the un-commercialized and un-mechanized backcountry that remains in the Wasatch. Many would welcome an era in which the existing ski resorts are viewed as complete in their current extent. This has for a long time been enshrined in Forest Service Management Plans that have not countenanced resort expansion beyond present boundaries, but resorts keep hatching schemes to evade this limitation. Eternal vigilance by citizen watchdog groups will remain a necessity. We must all remain alert to the trend to make resort skiing so expensive as to limit participation to those who, alone, can afford it. This wasn't so when I began skiing; it has gradually become so.

It is better to anticipate trouble than to attempt to repair it. We have to think about the long term. I remember reading a story in the *Whole Earth Catalog* that was popular about forty years ago written, I think, by the influential 20th century anthropologist

Gregory Bateson:

> "Founded in 1379, New College, Oxford is one of the oldest Oxford colleges. It has, like other colleges, a great dining hall with huge oak beams across the top, as large as two feet square, and forty-five feet long each.
>
> A century ago, some busy entomologist went up into the roof of the dining hall with a penknife and poked at the beams and found that they were full of beetles. This was reported to the College Council, which met the news with some dismay; beams this large were now very hard, if not impossible to come by. 'Where would they get beams of that caliber?' they worried.
>
> One of the Junior Fellows stuck his neck out and suggested that there might be some worthy oaks on the College lands. These colleges are endowed with pieces of land scattered across the country, which are run by a college Forester. They called in the College Forester, who of course had not been near the college itself for some years, and asked him if there were any oaks for possible use.
>
> He pulled his forelock and said, "Well sirs, we was wonderin' when you'd be askin'."
>
> Upon further inquiry it was discovered that when the College was founded, a grove of oaks had been planted to replace the beams in the dining hall when they became beetly, because oak beams always become beetly in the end. This plan had been passed down from one Forester to the next for over five hundred years saying 'You don't cut them oaks. 'Them's for the College Hall.'"

Ultimately, while the story is perhaps apocryphal, the idea of replacing and managing resources for the future, and the lesson in long-term thinking is not. Our Forester should say, "You don't' trash them mountains. Them's for the generations to come."

While SOC is often forced to react to almost daily threats to the Wasatch, it will remain crucial to keep the distant future in mind. Our work is not for us but for those who come after. ❑

Creation of a New Persecuted Minority in Utah: Snowboarders!

Wasatch Environmental Update for January 19, 2014, By John Worlock.

We recall a popular song from our youth. It was called *"Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered."* The protagonist in that song was perplexed by the feelings stirred in his heart and mind by falling in love, unexpectedly.

Well, we're not exactly falling in love, but we are suddenly perplexed, and, might we add, *bemused*, by the emergence of a snowboarders' organization called Wasatch Equality, created for the purpose of mounting a lawsuit challenging Alta Ski Resort's long-time policy of *snowboard-free skiing.* Defendants in the lawsuit are Alta, along with the US Forest Service, and the local Forest Supervisor, who have allowed Alta to discriminate against snowboarders.

Three, *only three*, ski resorts in the USA, disallow snowboarding, and Alta is one of them. It also happens to be the only one of the three that operates on Forest Service Land. We have been long-time admirers of Alta for their policy, as they have presumably foregone a bit of extra profit in order to perpetuate their image as a quiet, family-friendly ski resort, albeit with the best snow in Utah, which as we know is blessed with the "World's Best Snow."

Several of the principals in the group calling itself Wasatch Equality were recently rejected by Alta when they attempted to do their snowboard thing on Alta's snow. That kind of civil disobedience is an historical part of the campaigns for racial equality, as well as gender equality, and more recently LGBT equality. We note that the new organization's name resonates nicely with those other campaigns for equality.

Not only does the name Wasatch Equality suggest the presence of inequality, but the actual lawsuit is sprinkled with allusions to earlier campaigns for the liberation of suppressed categories of our nation's population.

We think you will be bemused, and perhaps amused, to read their suit, which can be found on their website: Wasatchequality dot org. Click on The Lawsuit, and then read the full complaint. It asserts repeatedly that Alta is prejudiced against an innocent minority, and that their policy tends to perpetuate the stigma and stereotype of snowboarders as immature and irresponsible.

Wasatch Equality has thus created a new disadvantaged minority, worthy, as they say, of federal protection. **Right here in Utah!**

A Necessary but Challenging "Mountain Accord"

By Carl Fisher, Executive Director

Earlier this month after nearly 2 years of convening a diverse group of stakeholders and at least three name changes, the Mountain Accord went public. In its infancy, Mountain Accord was known as "Becker's Grand Plan." Then on Nov. 3, 2012, a meeting was convened by the Governor's Office and Wasatch Solutions was born. That group continued to meet, accumulating a coalition of interests. Shortly thereafter, Wasatch Summit was convened and the coalition organized into boards and committees. Regardless of the name we rally around, the significance of the effort is what deserves our attention. It takes true leadership to convene such a robust crew–in a time when ideological and political differences have shut down our government. The leadership of our Governor, legislators, mayors, forest supervisors, transportation bosses, business leaders all operating under a consensus-based decision-making created the framework now called Mountain Accord. They have even invited the likes of Save Our Canyons (environment and recreation), Ski Utah (ski areas), the Outdoor Industry Association (recreation and economics) and the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce (economic) to join as ex officio members of the group and participate in decision-making.

Process Matters

The difference between the Mountain Accord and projects like Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow or land use master plans is that Mountain Accord is a decision-making framework not a study. Not an advisory document. Mountain Accord has hired a very capable Project Manager, Laynee Jones, to publicly represent and ensure the process is driving forward. Also there is an equally capable and talented consulting team filled with experts to inform and shepherd the stakeholders towards a plan of action. The Project Manager and consulting team will also make sure that we meet all the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which is the framework under which the "preferred alternative" will not only be created, but also evaluated in Phase II (projected Spring 2015).

Many of Save Our Canyons members and readers are familiar with NEPA processes. Generally, plans are developed, proposed to the respective federal agency, and once accepted, run through NEPA to analyze the environmental impacts and develop alternatives that generally include a "No Action" alternative and an "Environmentally Preferred" alternative. Other alternatives might also be developed. For the most part, this is how the Mountain Accord will operate, most of which will be in Phase II. What is unique is that the developed plan is going to be developed with the federal agencies (US Forest Service and Federal Transit Administration currently) and the all-encompassing group of stakeholders inclusive of the public.

Systems

Over the course of the next 12 months (the remainder of Phase I), members of Mountain Accord will participate in four different system groups. The systems: Economy, Environment, Recreation, and Transportation. Each system group will have a chair that will report on the progress of each system group. There will be about seven decision-making milestones in the process and about 2/3rds of the way through the process each system group will have produced a map or plan of what project or projects achieve the highest potential for their respective system. We then spend the last bit of the project reconciling the various maps to come up with a concept or concepts to run through NEPA.

Challenges

Does this group agree on everything? Certainly not. But we agree that we need to work together towards implementation of a plan that protects the Wasatch Mountains.

The challenges as we work over the course of the next year are going to be significant. One of the most concerning challenges from my perspective is that, while we are participating proactively in the Mountain Accord, we will be forced to simultaneously stand our ground and fend off the many projects that threaten the wildness and beauty of the Wasatch. For instance, in the coming weeks/months we are bound face a new proposal for a ski interconnect to connect all seven Wasatch ski areas. Also, UDOT is studying opening roads that are traditionally closed in the wintertime (i.e. Guardsman Pass, Big Mountain Pass, and 6 others) and providing irreplaceable winter recreation opportunities. Opening the roads would certainly promote additional and unwanted development in the Wasatch. These are just a few of the things that we will need to respond to while the Mountain Accord is plugging along.

Another challenge is that as we were participating in the data gathering element of the Mountain Accord, we were reminded that the this area has no information that helps land managers and other decision makers understand how many people are recreating in the study area. Accordingly, Save Our Canyons is spearheading an effort in partnership with the US Forest Service and Salt Lake City to collect this data over the next year. As we plan for our future we need to make certain that all data is provided to the Mountain Accord because, for example, if we don't know whom we need to serve and where they are going it will be hard to develop transportation plans. More info about our Recreation Survey on page 14 of this newsletter.

Your Role

As we work on behalf of our community in the Mountain Accord, we hope that you too will participate. The public scoping open houses had a great turn out and generated a good number of

comments. Thanks to those who were able to make it. If you weren't able to attend, you can still make comments to the Mountain Accord on the website (http://mountainaccord.com/Get_Involved.php). You can view a virtual presentation of the open houses (http://mountainaccord.com/onLineMeeting.php) with maps and informative slides.

Be part of the decisions that will certainly shape our future. Feel free to give us a call at the office if you have questions or to float ideas as to how best we can secure an environmentally sound future for our forests, watersheds, alpine peaks and millions of annual visits. If you are part of another group or have a class that you think would be interested in this project, please get in touch with us. We would be happy to give a presentation and invite some of the other interests to join.

For years, decades really, Save Our Canyons has been advocating for a plan to protect our Wasatch Range. We've gotten what we asked for, now we need to make certain that we do all we can to engage our community in proactive participation and sharing ideas. Thousands said during the SkiLink campaign that they wanted their voice heard on the future of the Wasatch, so we went on a mission to make that happen. Here it is - don't let this opportunity pass you by! ❑

The "Mountain Accord" promises to provide some long-term solutions to the developement/conservation/public use dilemma in the nearby Wasatch. Several canyon studies over the past two decades, however, have led nowhere. Hopefully the present effort will look seriously at rapidly growing backcountry recreation.

Photo: Backcountry ski tourers pause on the summit of Mt. Raymond. *A. Kelner photo.*



Ski Resorts on the Hot Seat

Wasatch Front and ski resorts throughout the nation fight climate change

By Gayle Parry, SOC Trustee

Don't expect to find many climate change deniers at Wasatch Front ski resorts. Ski resort managers, employees, skiers, and other visitors to the resorts are experiencing climate change up close and personal. Where did all that dependable fluffy snow go? Well, it isn't really gone, but the storms seem to be fewer and the snow pack thinner than the old days. Welcome to climate change and the angst that those passionate winter sports enthusiasts and the businesses that depend on the snow for their livelihoods feel.

The Bad News.

The problem of ski resorts and climate change is not a local problem but is national and international in scope. In the past thirty years global climate change has been responsible for a 10% reduction in snowfall. Winter temperatures are expected to keep rising. Looking to the future, resorts in Utah and all over the nation will be dealing with shorter seasons, rain falling on lower slopes rather than snow, as well as warmer nights that would make snow making impossible. The forecast for the northeast U.S. is that one hundred and three ski resorts will not be able to maintain a hundred day season by 2039. The New York Times reports that in the Rocky Mountains temperatures are expected to rise seven to ten degrees by the turn of the century. Jean Healy, a contributing reporter to the N.Y. Times from Denver, says that Park City Mountain Resort would lose all of its snow pack by then. Statements such as these make a snow-loving person crazy, especially as we note that every consecutive year is listed as the hottest year on record.

Ski Resorts Not Giving Up.

Ski resorts have definitely gone pro-active in combating climate change. . A series of interviews with the CEOs of some of the Wasatch Front's popular ski areas highlight a concern about climate change as it affects our area.

Onno Wieringa - General Manager, Alta Ski Area.

Even with climate change, Alta can still claim the greatest snow on earth. As a result, Onno Wieringa has a rather unique view when asked about our warming winters: "Climate Change? Climate changes every year. I don't see climate change at my resort. We are at 8600 feet. Our snow for the last fifteen years has been going up or is level. It used to be 500 inches. Now it is sometimes 550 inches."

Alta Ski Area also ranks near the top for being green. Onno gives good business practices as his reason, not climate change. Alta Environmental Center takes projects through triple bottom line analysis as well as over seeing all of their sustainability projects. Triple bottom line looks at people, environment and the economics to sustain the project. This analysis determines what is practical so the ski area can proceed.

Onno says that going green is just the right thing to do. It seems that going green pays dividends for Alta Ski Area. Wind energy will not work for Alta, but Alta's Master Development Plan will request solar panels on every building as they can be afforded. The resort also wants to explore microhydro energy from snow making. Microhydro energy is the combination of water flow (commonly called "head") and vertical drop. Vertical drop creates pressure, and the continuous flow of water in a hydro-system gives an ongoing source of pressurized liquid energy. Alta would also like to test the water in the old mine tunnels hoping for some geothermal water that is hot enough for energy production.

"There are two components to be considered," Onno says, "Reduce the carbon footprint and advocacy." Alta is a member of BICEP (Business for Innovative Climate & Energy Policy) and two years ago, was a charter member of the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) Environmental Committee for The Climate Challenge The Climate Challenge is a voluntary program dedicated to helping participating ski areas reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reap other benefits in their operations. Resorts who take the Challenge are required to complete a climate inventory on their resort operations, set a target for greenhouse gas reduction, and implement a new program or project annually to meet the reduction goal. The resort belongs to POW (Protect Our Winters) that encourages activism as well.

Besides adhering to the rules of the Climate Challenge, Alta's sustainability efforts are to educate the public and resort guests about the dependence of winter sports on natural ecosystems and the potential impacts of climate change on the winter recreation experience; educate guests on how they can help reduce green house gases (GHG) emissions; raise policy maker awareness of the dependence of winter sports on natural ecosystems and the potential impacts of climate change on the winter recreation experience, and advocate the national reduction of GHG emissions through legislative, regulatory or voluntary measures.

Alta is studying warming and so far sees a trend towards higher night time lows.

Bob Bonar, Manager, Snowbird Resort and Dave Fields, Vice-President of Resort Operations:

Bob and Dave have noticed a gradual warming over several years at the Snowbird Resort and count themselves as climate change believers. They feel that they have been ahead of the game by always being environmentally friendly in the running of their resort and by being good community players.

Transportation problems in the busy Cottonwood Canyons have always been a focus. During the week Snowbird has eleven Canyon Transportation vans and on weekends they have sixteen per day dedicated to carrying employees up and down the canyon. They have increased from three UTA RideShare vans per day last year to nine per day this year. None of these numbers include the UTA bus ridership, which doesn't report monthly ridership.

Snowbird pays for every employee and season passholder to ride the ski bus and encourages this practice. Not only do Snowbird employees ride free but so do those with season passes to Alta, Solitude and Brighton as well as the Ski Salt Lake Super Pass. Based on ridership of Canyon Transportation vans and UTA rideshare vans for December and January, these are their winter projections for December through April. These projections are based on just over 11,000 rides in December and January: 24,792 one-way employee trips or 12,400 round trips in the canyon. Snowbird has also reserved the Pond Lot (prime parking near the pond in front of the Center) for guest carpooling. They are creating incentives for employees who have to drive to carpool by giving them better parking as well. Parking lot volumes show that the incentives are working. The end result is good for all groups - employees like getting a free ride to and from work, there's ample parking for our guests and it cuts down on vehicle traffic in the canyon, which is good for the air and road safety.

Snowbird belongs to POW (Protect Our Winters), a group that actively seeks the help of congress to combat climate change. It is also engaged with the Wasatch Legacy Project, a public private partnership, that brings together government, nongovernmental organizations and ski resorts to conserve critical resources and ecosystems including good watershed management. They have been involved in a zinc remediation project to purify the water. This partnership brings together Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, the Forest Service, and the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation. They have done trail restoration, fought invasions of noxious weeds, and constructed better trails for climbers.

In conjunction with the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation, Alta, Brighton, Solitude, Salt Lake City, the Forest Service, and REI, Snowbird is in its eleventh year leading guests, tourists and school children on hikes to explain the importance of a healthy environment and the affects of climate change on the mountains such as the conifers that have been attacked by the bark beetles. They also sponsor the Ski With A Ranger program.

Bob Bonar leaves the advice that if everyone would reduce their carbon footprint by 20%, we would begin to see progress in decreasing climate change.

The above reports of interviews of ski resort officials have been read and approved by them.

Future newsletters will continue to feature our local resorts in their fight to keep you skiing and boarding the white stuff. ❑

Winter Recreation Trails Plowed Unexpectedly by UDOT

By John Worlock, *Wasatch Environmental Update* for January 5, 2014,

A lot of winter recreation in the local mountains makes use of the roads and highways that are closed to automobile traffic and allowed to accumulate Utah's famous snow, said to be the World's Best. So it comes as a shock to learn that UDOT, the Utah Department of Transportation, is studying the possibility of obliterating many of those playgrounds, bringing in the snowplows, and keeping open some segments of state highways that have traditionally been closed as the snow accumulates at the higher elevations.

That snow, of course, has invited Nordic skiers and snowshoers, along with their motorized cousins, the snowmobilers, to venture into the countryside.

Some of these winter playgrounds are easily accessible from the Salt Lake Valley. One, in particular, the five-mile stretch of State Route 65 along East Canyon from Mountain Dell in Parley's Canyon to Morgan County, has become an inviting route for Nordic skiers since. The Utah Nordic Alliance, known as TUNA, has undertaken to set and maintain ski tracks on that unplowed highway. Another popular winter route whose snow might be removed is State Route 150 or the Mirror Lake Highway, stretching into the western slope of the Uintah Range from just east of Kamas. This route is a big favorite of snowmobile riders, so we can expect an outcry from that community if UDOT begins keeping it snow-free in the winter.

Yet another route in our neighborhood that might be cleared for winter automotive traffic is State Route 190, the Guardsman Pass, stretching from Brighton in Big Cottonwood Canyon over the ridge into Bonanza Flat and Park City in Summit County.

Our immediate concern with making this road into a 12-month highway would be the predictable commercial development in the pristine Bonanza Flat. Much of that territory is owned by the Talisker Corporation, the aggressive real-estate operation that owns the ski resort known as the Canyons as well as much of the land on which the Park City Ski Resort lies.

Pardon us for our suspicion that the push to clear the snow from Utah's elevated highways comes from commercial interests.

Both the Utah Nordic Alliance and Save Our Canyons will be happy to help you express your concerns to the Utah Department of Transportation.

NOTE: after this piece aired, we learned that UDOT had left a group of overnight snowmobilers high and dry by plowing out their return path to civilization over Wasatch County's Wolf Creek Pass, which had been groomed for snowmobilers by the Utah State Parks.

Subsequent snowfalls appear to have quieted UDOT's high-mountain snowplows. ❑



BAD and UGLY:

Smog blankets Salt Lake Valley on what otherwise would be a beautiful and sunny winter day.



The Great, the Goo

GOOD. In April 2013 Utah Governor Gary Herbert announced that he would not sign an agreement allowing water under Utah's Snake Valley to be pumped to Las Vegas. His decision garnered praise from the Utah Rivers Council and Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment as well as from Steve Erickson of the Great Basin Water Network. Another nail was driven into the coffin of the water grab scheme in December of last year when Nevada District Judge Robert Estes struck down the plan as it was put forward by the Nevada state Engineer Jason King. Congratulations to the governor and the environmental groups whose work led up to these decisions. (Deep Creeks photo on p. 10)

GOOD. The LDS Church has launched a web page on its newsroom site, laying out the church's views on "stewardship and conservation." Here is an excerpt:

> "The earth and all things on it should be used responsibly to sustain the human family. However, all are stewards — not owners — over this earth and its bounty and will be accountable before God for what they do with His creations.
>
> Approaches to the environment must be prudent, realistic, balanced and consistent with the needs of the earth and of current and future generations, rather than pursuing the immediate vindication of personal desires or avowed rights. The earth and all life upon it are much more than items to be

GREAT:

Nearly 5,000 clean air proponents, including many members of Save Our Canyons, gathered at the State Capitol to voice their concerns over the State's lack of committment to clean air for Utah's residents. It was the largest assembly of environmental activists in Utah's history. *A.Kelner photo.*



the Bad, and the Ugly

consumed or conserved. God intends His creations to be aesthetically pleasing to enliven the mind and spirit, and some portions are to be preserved. Making the earth ugly offends Him."

BYU professor George Handley, whom many may recall for his participation in a panel discussion put on by Save Our Canyons discussing the position of the LDS church on environmental issues, found this official posting to be "really exciting." Many Utah activists will share his excitement.

GOOD. At the recent Outdoor Retailer Winter Market held in Salt Lake City Interior Secretary Sally Jewell proposed a new Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) akin to the one formed in 1933 in the midst of the great depression. That program was funded by the federal government and hired some 250,000 young men to plant billions of trees, construct 13,000 miles of trails and also campgrounds. But the program Jewell envisioned would differ in a significant way from its forebear of 80 years ago. It would be funded not by the federal government but by the private sector, notably the growing outdoor industry. The need for such a program is well known. In National Parks there is a widely publicized backlog of delayed maintenance of deteriorating infrastructure. Secretary Jewell emphasized the importance of working with local and state officials as well as user groups and conservation

organizations. It's certainly worth a try and the need is great. It would develop a whole group of people who, by spending time working in America's wild lands come to love and value them.

GOOD. For years planning for the future of the central Wasatch has been hampered by the absence of reliable data on recreational use in the Tri-Canyon Area of the range: Big and Little Cottonwood and Mill Creek canyons. This is about to be remedied by a "visitor intercept survey" conducted by Utah State University's Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism. The survey will be conducted by volunteers and will provide detailed information about what activities are prevalent, how many people are using the trails and back country, what visitors hope to find in their recreation there, what issues concern them as well as information about who these people are. The results will provide essential information to the Mountain Accord (formerly Wasatch Summit) collaboration, which you can read about on page 14 of this newsletter. Save Our Canyons is deeply involved in this process and cheers for the comprehensive nature of this undertaking. It's time for the end of piecemeal approaches undertaken with little overall vision of our desired outcome.

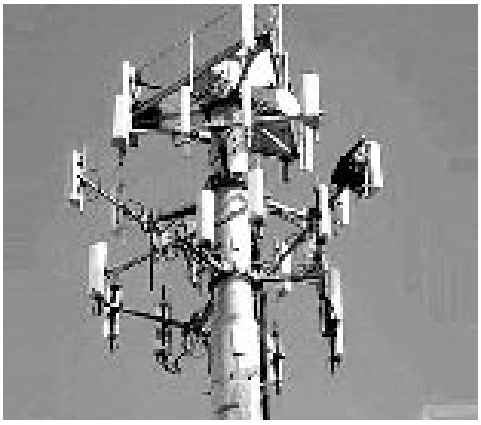
GOOD OR BAD? That's the question many are asking since Vail Resorts became the new operator of Canyons Resort last May. Big changes engender big worries. What does this sudden shift mean for the lawsuit between Canyons and the Park City Mountain Resort? What does this mean for the momentarily dormant effort to build SkiLink? How will Vail's presence play into the already expansionist mindset of the existing Wasatch Ski Resorts? It is crucially important that the Mountain Access process, constituted as it is by Utah stakeholders, formulate plans that are focused on a future that benefits a growing Utah population, while protecting the Wasatch watershed and the "wildness and beauty of the Wasatch Mountains, canyons and foothills."

BAD. Word has it that there is plan to put cell phone towers up and down Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons. Some of the towers in BCC would be right by the creek and in areas frequented by moose. Cell phone towers can be very big and ugly. Why and how did this plan get Salt Lake County approval? Yet another example of creeping urbanization in our canyons. Stay alert to dastardly plots to cheapen the scenic beauty of our canyons.

BAD. For decades, Kevin Tolton, has been fighting the Town of Alta to develop lots he owns in Albion Basin. Recently, Brian Maffly of the Salt Lake Tribune, has reported a new twist in this skirmish. State Engineer Kent Jones has issued a decision that would transfer downstream water rights to developers in Little Cottonwood Canyon that would promote residential development there. This action has prompted two lawsuits one by Salt Lake City and the other by Friends of Alta challenging the state engineer's decision. We certainly hope that any further building of homes in Albion Basin will not take place. This is an example of the sort of action that should be embargoed until there is a comprehensive policy adopted for the watershed of the central Wasatch. Such a policy is the goal of the Mountain Accord coalition, which is up and running. (*See p. 15 for an unusual view of Devils Castle*).

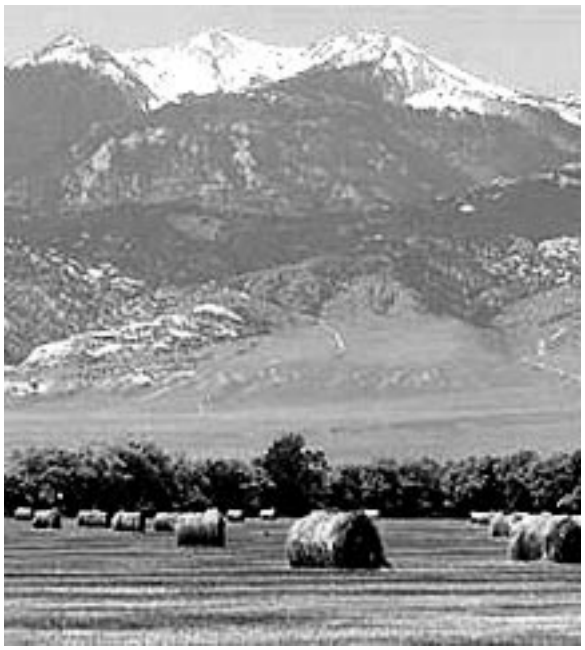


Sally Jewell proposes a new style Civilian Conservation Corps for upgrading federal lands infrastructure.



Cell phone towers proposed for Big and Little Cottonwood canyons.

The Deep Creek mountain range.



Save Our Canyons Kids

By Kelsey Oliver

My name is Kelsey Oliver and I'm a junior at Rowland Hall High School. Throughout my high school career, I've become involved in different events, sports, and organizations across the Salt Lake valley, including volunteer work at The Guadalupe School, The American Red Cross, Charity: water, and Youthlinc, a non-profit organization that promotes kids to volunteer in their own community and internationally. However, the skills I learned from each of these organizations are completely different from the impression I've experienced with helping Save Our Canyons.

For the past couple years, the crisis of SkiLink leaked into my home, as well as into the homes of many other Salt Lake locals. Before I knew the details of SkiLink and Save Our Canyons, I only heard my parents' side of the story, the side that explained to me why SkiLink was bad: the plan was a threat to the natural environment and it wouldn't allow for my dad to ski backcountry.

As many of you know, when a spoiled Utah native doesn't get to ski, all hell breaks loose in that household. Not only was I determined to prevent this turmoil, I was curious to find out what SkiLink really was and who was behind the making of the red stop-signs that stated "STOP SKILINK" in bold letters. This eagerness ultimately led to my involvement in Save Our Canyons over the past summer and to the creation of S.O.C.K. (Save Our Canyons Kids)

The mission statement of S.O.C.K. declares:

> "Save Our Canyons Kids is a team of passionate teenagers working along side Save Our Canyons to educate youth in our community about the significance of preserving wilderness, while also participating in outdoor activities that expose the beauty of the Wasatch Mountains. Our group believes that developing an appreciation and understanding of nature is essential to protecting wildlife around us, and this connection to the environment will further prepare youth activists to ultimately become the future stewards of the Wasatch."

The purpose of S.O.C.K. is not only to engage kids in our outdoor playground the Wasatch Mountains provides us, but also to educate teens on the threats our wilderness faces and how we can better protect the backcountry throughout the valley. Numerous factors such as road building, mining and any other development will continue to pose a huge risk to the loss of wildlife. As the new generation emerges, it's crucial for us to remember the importance of keeping our environment rich and unharmed.

S.O.C.K. is a way for kids to stay motivated in protecting wildlife while also absorbing the beauty the Wasatch Mountains have to offer.

S.O.C.K. plans to participate in many events around the Salt Lake area, including ski swaps, Farmer's Markets, concerts, and trail restorations. However, we need more committed, passionate, and motivated teens to make these functions possible! Establishing a core group of kids from around the entire valley is essential for S.O.C.K. to continue making a dent in our community. The youth in Salt Lake has a significant influence on the entire city; all we need to do is take action.

If you would like to join S.O.C.K. or help the group in any way, here are the leaders' emails:

Ally Askew:
alexandraaskew@rowlandhall.org

Dani Calhoon:
danicalhoon@yahoo.com

Kelsey Oliver:
mailto:kk.oliver59@gmail.com

Also, go to our *Facebook* page and ask to join! We post all our news on there, so it's a great way to find out what S.O.C.K. is doing:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/496687583742945/

SOC Website:
http://saveourcanyons.org/

Wasatch Wilderness Website:
http://wasatchwilderness.org/



Rowland Hall High School junior Kelsey Oliver.

Recreation Ambassador Program

By Clay Northrop, SOC Trustee

As part of a strategic planning process in 2013, SOC hosted a number of focus groups, and asked our community to take an online survey. Among the clear messages coming from that process were these: that Save Our Canyons members enjoy the Wasatch Mountains and canyons through a wide variety of activities, and that, whatever those activities might be, members are deeply committed to preserving our water quality and the magnificence of our collective Wasatch Back Yard

With this in mind, Save Our Canyons was inspired to launch its Recreation Ambassador program. The goals are to:

- Learn from the conservation-minded user community of the Wasatch
- Inform and get feedback from various user communities on issues that confront the Wasatch Mountains
- Convene a forum for respectful conversation amongst the various users of the Wasatch mountains

Save Our Canyons put out a call for individuals who are leaders in their respective recreation communities, and who share SOC's mission, values and vision. Our members responded! In no particular order, our remarkable panel of Recreation Ambassadors is made up of:

Dave Smith – Member of the Wasatch Mountain Club since 1966, and the club's Mountaineering Director in the 70s; author, in 1977, of Wasatch Granite: A Rock Climbing Guide. Dave built a career centered on his outdoor pursuits, among them mountaineering, hiking, and resort and backcountry skiing. Current outdoor recreation centered on hiking and resort skiing. From Dave's application to the Recreation Ambassador program:

> "For most of my life, the Wasatch Mountains have served as my schoolroom and playground. The availability and proximity of local climbing, hiking and skiing have been major factors in shaping both my interests and skills. The existence of such a resource so close to a major metropolitan area makes Salt Lake a most attractive place to live! However, as you are well aware, preserving the Wasatch for such backcountry activities as I have enjoyed is an ongoing effort and challenge."

Kelsey Oliver – A Junior at Rowland Hall High School; passionate, competitive multi-sport athlete; academic standout; tireless volunteer for SOC and numerous other conservation and humanitarian charities. Kelsey spends time with her family in the Wasatch and throughout the Mountain West as a skier, hiker, biker, photographer, camper, and backpacker. A key link to her generation - the future decision makers and protectors of the Wasatch. From Kelsey's application to the Recreation Ambassador program:

> "I would be willing to learn more about Save Our Canyons by representing SOC with enthusiasm, flexibility, diligence, and a passion to engage other youths in the importance of protecting the Wasatch Wilderness. Preserving our canyons for generations to come is critical to recognize and act upon, and I believe I can offer leadership to Save Our Canyons by becoming an ambassador…"

Richard Hodges – President of The Utah Nordic Alliance (TUNA) for over 10 years with a long-standing working relationship with Salt Lake City, the Salt Lake City Watershed, and the US Forest Service; career in public transportation, including 18 years at the Utah Transit Authority; Nordic/touring skier, hiker, trail-runner, cyclist, resort skier. From Richard's application to the Recreation Ambassador program:

> "There is no high-quality backcountry, side country, dispersed or resort recreation experience without a large conservation component to protect and buffer the natural systems that support and enrich the lives of everyone."

Noah Howell – producer of ski films through Powderwhore Productions; dedicated extreme backcountry skier, with first descents all over the globe from the Wasatch to Antarctica; contributor to founding of the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance. Noah's life and career revolve around the backcountry, and he's committed to promoting conservation of the Wasatch Range through the influence that his films and blog provide. From Noah's application to the Recreation Ambassador program:

> "The fragile balance that exists here is worth protecting and I would like to be part of the solution. For the past 15 years I've been enjoying this amazing place and sharing it with people through still and video images and on my blog. By using these connections with Powderwhore and the backcountry community I'd like to help spread the conservancy message."

Lise Sorensen Brunhart – Molecular Biology Lab Specialist, University of Utah; Long-term SOC supporter; trail runner, backcountry skier. From Lise's application to the Recreation Ambassador program:

> "Time to put my sentiments into action"

Allen Sanderson – Research Scientist at University of Utah Scientific Computing and Imaging Institute; Founding Board member of the Access Fund; member of Salt Lake Climber's Alliance Policy Committee; climber, skier, biker, canyoneer, mountaineer. He has been active for the past 24 years in Wasatch conservation issues.

Brad Lewis – Professional nature/volcano photographer, with photos on the covers of and within the pages of an endless list of national and international publications (including National Geographic, Life, Fortune, Time, Newsweek…); avid skier, mountain biker, hiker. Brad travels the world in pursuit of his profession, but retains a home here, his love for the Wasatch Mountains, and a commitment to their preservation.

> "Having grown up at the base of Millcreek Canyon, I have a deep seated love for the Wasatch Mountains. I have traveled the world, being involved with conservation issues in many places, seeing firsthand what a powerful role photography has in bringing awareness to important issues. I hope I can help you out, and further support your worthy cause."

> "As the years pass by I appreciate increasingly the need for wilderness protection. I've seen big changes in our canyons and feel an urgency to put some safeguards into place."

Polly Hart – Jeweler; Board member of Millcreek FIDOS (Friends Interested in Dogs and Open Space); backcountry skier, climber, cyclist, dog walker; Served on the Blue Ribbon FCOZ (Foothills and Canyons Overlay Zone) Commission; served on SLC Mayor's Bicycle Advisory Committee.

Burke Swindlehurst – 20+ years as a professional road and mountain bike racer; served on Tour of Utah Board of Directors 2005 – 2011, creator of Crusher in the Tushar endurance cycling event; Road and Mountain Biker, Fly-fisherman, photographer. From Burke's application to the Recreation Ambassador program:

> "There is nothing that is more important to me than the conservation and protection of nature for the enjoyment of EVERYONE."

John Weis – Professor of Pathology at the University of Utah Medical School; active in Utah Stream Access Coalition, along with numerous other conservation-minded organizations; Long term SOC supporter; flyfisherman, skier, hiker, road and mountain biker. John and his wife raised two girls in Salt Lake, who call the mountains their homes.

Zach and Cindi Grant–Backcountry splitboarders, working with Noah Howell and Powderwhore productions on backcountry ski/board films; sponsored athletes, active in multiple social media outlets. From their application to the Recreation Ambassador program:

> "We would love to include SOC in the conservation we are already promoting in our films and social media."

Bunny Sterin – Wilderness and Conservation Lands Program Lead for BLM Utah; Alpine skier, cyclist, hiker, photographer. From Bunny's application to the Recreation Ambassador program:

> "Public lands are a trust that we must manage for current and future generations. "

Bill Dunn – Professional architect and artist; hiker, backcountry skier, climber, mountain biker. Bill grew up with the Wasatch Mountains as his 'back yard', has lived other places but has always returned. His experiences elsewhere have buttressed his passion for preservation of the Wasatch. From Bill's application to the Recreation Ambassador program:

NOTE: we did not have an applicant who identified with the hunting community. Any SOC members who are connected with hunters in the Wasatch are invited to contact SOC to become involved in the Recreation Ambassadors program. ❑



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CELEBRATE THE PAST | SUPPORT THE FUTURE

Save Our Canyons'

12th Annual Lone Peak Celebration

Saturday, April 26th at 6:00pm

Save Our Canyons Spearheading Recreation Survey in the Central Wasatch

By Alex Schmidt, Campaigns Coordinator

Save Our Canyons, in partnership with the U. S Forest Service and Professor Steven W. Burr of Utah State University, is undertaking a study of dispersed recreation in the Central Wasatch Mountains. Dispersed recreation is defined as "outdoor recreation in which visitors are diffused over relatively large areas. Where facilities or developments are provided, they are primarily for access and protection of the environment rather than comfort or convenience of the user."

As you are well aware, non motorized dispersed recreation, including but not limited to backcountry skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, sledding, wildlife viewing, photography, hiking, mountain biking and fishing, is a vital addition to our economy and lifestyle here along the Wasatch Range. This on-site survey on the Salt Lake Ranger District of the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest will focus on the Tri-Canyons area (LCC, BCC and Mill Creek Canyons) Parley's Canyon and the Park City-Wasatch Back.

SOC recognizes the gap in available information about those who visit the Central Wasatch Mountains for year round recreation, outside of designated resort boundaries. In an effort to represent you better and to enhance our protection of these valued lands and our watershed, we will be undertaking this one-year, four season survey. Understanding user needs, frequency of use and the areas of highest use will help the Forest Service better manage the forest. Additionally, we expect that our findings will be useful for the Mountain Accord study that began in late 2013. www.mountainaccord.com.

Building on the Forest Service's work, along with Professor Burr's expertise, we will be able to show the direct impacts, outcomes, needs and benefits in the Central Wasatch from dispersed recreation use. Further, we have collaborated with other user groups to create GIS data with specific areas and trailheads that are in high demand by each individual user group as well as many others which are utilized by nearly all user groups recreating in the Wasatch Range.

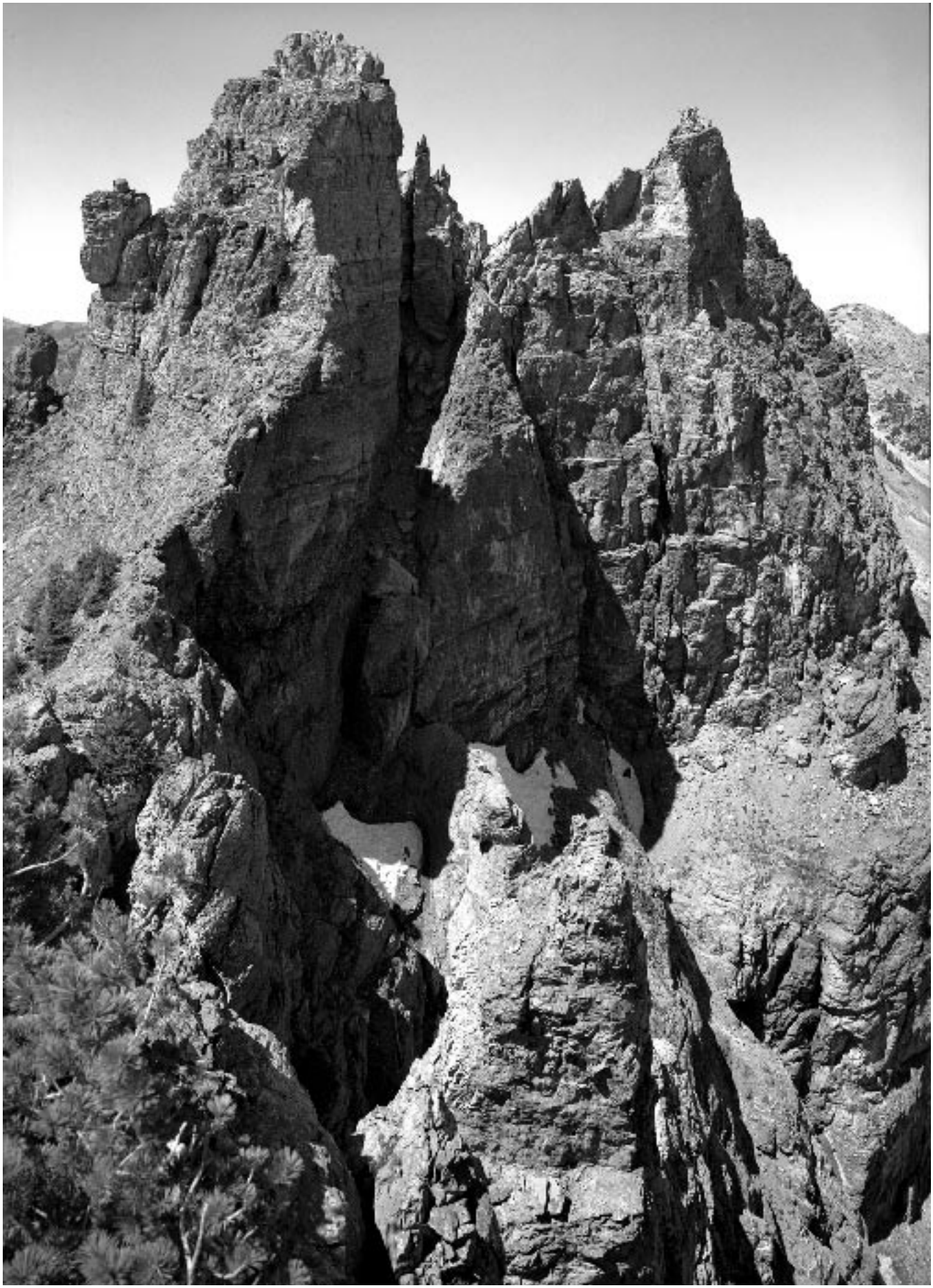
For example, we will be surveying and talking with users at areas such as the Mill D/Reynolds Flats Trailhead in Big Cottonwood Canyon. This area has been identified as a recreational hotspot year round for backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, fly fishing, hiking, and wildlife viewing. Stationing volunteer surveyors at this area will be of great importance, and this where your help will be important. Professor Burr has identified 208 survey days over the course of the project span. This means we need all the help we can to staff these trail heads with volunteers to talk with visitors about their experiences, frequency of use and over all impression of the forest's health, use and access. Volunteers will be trained and managed by a Project Manager from the USU Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism.

To volunteer for this project please email (volunteer@saveourcanyons.org**) or call (801-363-7283) the Save Our Canyons office. Volunteerism is the backbone of this project!**



Opposite page: Devils Castle ***above Alta. Note the group of Wasatch Mountain Club hikers assembled on the right summit of the peak. The above photo is an enlargement of the group.***

Photo by A. Kelner



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