



Ride with Respect
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Sometimes even when you're in the middle of nowhere, the world has a way of finding you.

For Ride with Respect, 2016 marked several new trail projects, plus engaging in the national debate that has found its way to the canyon country of eastern Utah. Despite rising challenges, RWR is still effectively advocating responsible recreation and pragmatic conservation.

If you have yet to contribute this year, and want to help balance our books, please send a tax-deductible donation to Ride with Respect at 395 McGill Avenue, Moab, UT 84532. We are still supported by government grants like Utah State Parks and Grand County, as well as non-government grants like the Colorado Trails Preservation Alliance and the Yamaha Outdoor Access Initiative, but they need to be matched by individual residents and visitors of Moab.

RwR's staff, volunteers, and trail patrollers maintained the trail systems at Dubinky (White Wash), Upper Two Mile (La Sal Mountains), and Behind The Rocks (see first photo). Additionally, let us highlight half a dozen other projects of interest.

Westwater (Utah Rims)

The trails west of Rabbit Valley get a lot of use, but they're a long way from Moab. Fortunately, the Motorcycle Trail Riders Association and Bookcliff Rattlers Motorcycle Club joined BLM staff to implement and refine the travel plan for this area, which includes (a) blocking off closed routes like the Middle Link of Mel's Loop, (b) delineating open routes like the east end of Thompson Trail and the Bitter Trail (see second photo), and (c) improving connectivity by adding previously-overlooked routes like the North Link and South Link of Mel's Loop. Despite the area's remote reach, when the Grand Junction clubs and BLM meet in the middle both literally and figuratively, we can improve trail access and the surrounding natural resources.

Fallen Peace Officer Trail

The Utah Peace Officers Association had run an annual ride for three years, but the loop was a bit short and a bit too rocky. By rerouting it up out of Young Canyon, RwR added a couple miles and bypassed a lot of loose rocks as well as bypassing wildlife habitat. We applied the same approach to a riparian stretch of Klondike Wash, and used highway-size signs to clearly indicate where to enter and exit the wash. In both cases, the new 4WD routes were laid out for flow and scenic viewpoints along the way (see third photo). The viewpoints have become the mile markers each year to honor a different officer who died in the line of duty.

Sovereign Trail

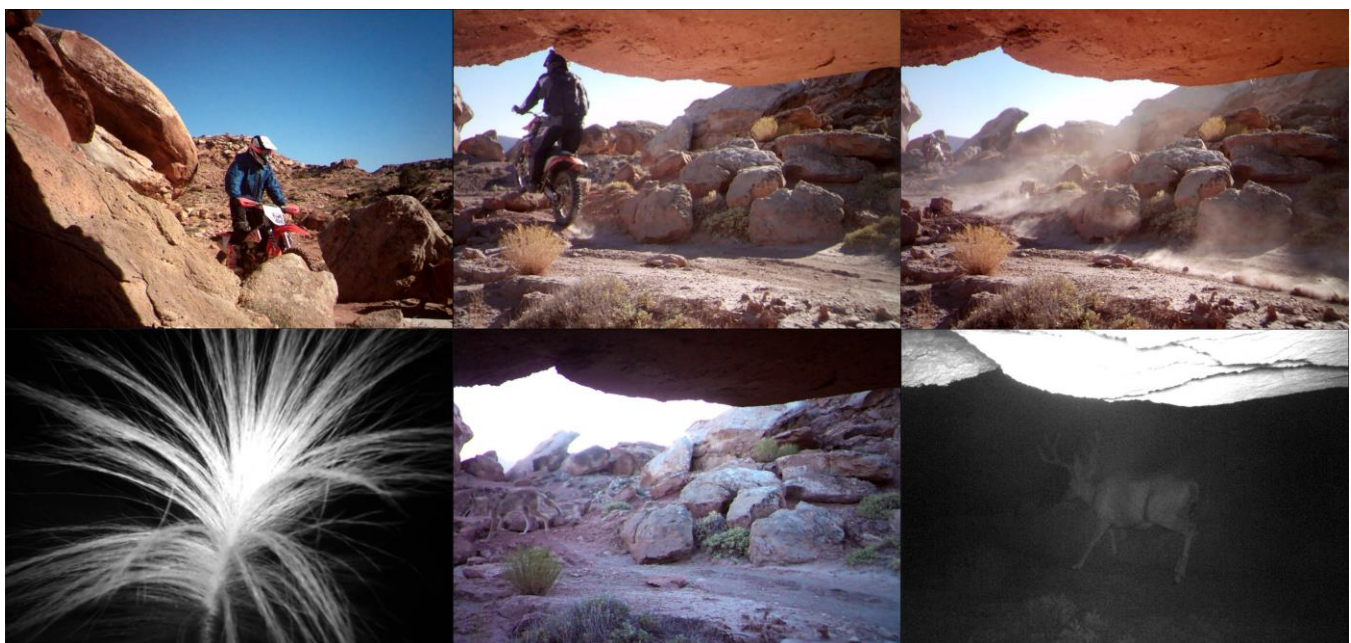
From Klondike Bluffs Road down to Archview Resort, RwR mitigated the impacts of increased use. Also, to improve range management, we installed a swing fence across Courthouse Wash (see fourth photo). Spanning a hundred feet with cable wound up requiring the help of a nearby dozer from Williams NW Pipeline. On SITLA property, RwR provides trail work for free, but the swing-fence project was actually funded by SITLA.

We appreciate it because, even though Courthouse Wash is not claimed as a road by the county, SITLA provided a cattle guard for installation next to the swing fence to accommodate continued OHV use of the wash bottom.

HELP IDENTIFY RIDERS

In fifteen years of maintaining Sovereign Trail, riders have stuck to the designated routes until this year, when we had to spend several days cleaning up after a group of people who started treating sovereign state land like it's their own private playground. Delineating the designated route, blocking off the nondesignated route, and placing custom signs that explain the restriction have not persuaded this group to stay on the designated routes like everyone else. If you recognize these individuals (see 7th, 8th, and 9th photo's), please let RwR know so we can more effectively get through to them.

A variety of wildlife call this area home (see 10th, 11th, and 12th photo's), and it even hosts a raptor nest. To understand how this misuse jeopardizes Sovereign Trail, put yourself in the land manager's shoes. State agencies had accepted RwR's development of Sovereign Trail because it would get riders to stay on designated routes, thereby preserving the surrounding land. Please help RwR maintain compliance by providing any information you may have about the individuals shown.



Abajo Mountains

RwR began in the middle of Red Ledges Trail to follow up with a reroute we had done a half-dozen years earlier. Then we moved down Red Ledges to where a landslide had caused a spring to run along the trail. We were able to construct a climbing turn to avoid crossing the spring altogether. Finally, where Red Ledges crosses Indian Creek, beaver dams had flooded the whole area. Since beavers are a native species that actually improve water quality and habitat for other species, we rerouted the trail up and away from the ponds for several-hundred yards to reach a crossing point that should remain stable for years to come. The slope was rocky, so it was a relief when USFS provided a crew from the Canyon Country Conservation Corps to dig the bench (see fifth photo).

Utah Public Lands Initiative

For the fourth year in a row, RwR participated in developing a comprehensive bill that could provide stability across eastern Utah for natural-resource conservation, recreation, and economic development opportunities. After the first draft was released, we consulted with BlueRibbon Coalition, met at the state capitol, and followed up with other OHV groups, other stakeholders, and elected officials to develop a second draft that would be worthy of widespread support.

On a field trip in the San Rafael Swell in July, we conveyed the mutual benefits of the PLI directly to Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell. We also expressed to her our concerns with administrative action that's heavy handed, such as proclaiming a national monument that's long on acreage and short on local support. A few days later, we reiterated this message at Secretary Jewell's listening session in Bluff, and again at Senator Lee's congressional field hearing in Blanding. RwR summarized virtues of the PLI in our local newspaper:

http://www.moabsunnews.com/opinion/article_f93a4954-6554-11e6-bfe0-2b9e4005b0f7.html

Also a founding board member of RwR provided his local perspective on the competing proposal for a Bears Ears National Monument:

http://www.moabsunnews.com/opinion/article_ef5971ce-6ad3-11e6-9df0-7f8b753a069a.html

In September, RWR testified before the Public Lands Subcommittee of the Natural Resources Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives (see sixth photo). We also met with staff from eight congressional offices as well as the Department of Interior, thanks to the guidance of Duane Taylor from the Motorcycle Industry Council. In fact, MIC made this trip possible, along with assistance from the Off-Road Business Association.

It's been an honor to support the PLI. Although the bill could be further refined for OHV and conservation interests, the fact remains that it's the greatest attempt we've seen to resolve Utah's public-land conflicts in the Twenty-first Century.

Bears Ears National-Monument Proposal

Four years ago, industry and public-land users were compelled to the negotiating table by the threat of a Greater Canyonlands monument proposal. This past year, wilderness-expansion advocates turned their backs on negotiation in favor of a Bears Ears monument proposal. So, while the president's authority to proclaim monuments through the Antiquities Act of 1906 spawned the Utah Public Lands Initiative, this same authority appears to be paralyzing the legislative process.

The Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition and wilderness-expansion groups are funded by the same foundations, some of which contractually obligate them to advocate a 1.9 million-acre Bears Ears monument proposal in the western half of San Juan County. BEITC complained that the PLI wouldn't allow tribes to co-manage the western half of San Juan County alongside the federal government. Receptive to the concept, Congressmen Bishop and Chaffetz requested co-management language to adopt in the PLI. BEITC said they would send the language, but finally by the last day of November, BEITC said it wouldn't send the language unless the congressmen agreed to a 1.9 million-acre boundary and many other demands that go way beyond what could be offered even by a national monument.

The wilderness-expansion advocates who fund BEITC know that a Bears Ears monument would do nothing in the other Utah counties, but they explicitly expect the other counties to become monuments with successive administrations. It appears that they'll patiently accept the piecemeal approach because it ultimately requires no compromise on their part. Never mind that the Antiquities Act was originally written to proclaim national monuments of less than 640 acres, that the act was revised at the eleventh hour to read "the limits of which in all cases shall be confined to the smallest area compatible with proper care and management of the objects to be protected," or that subsequent laws have provided many other layers of protection to antiquities, and non-antiquities for that matter. So long as the Antiquities Act can be exploited, apparently wilderness-expansion groups won't bother dealing with that messy process called democracy.

For his part, the President is supposedly poised to proclaim a "mini" Bears Ears monument that is a mere 1.3 million-acres based on boundaries in the PLI. Unfortunately the proclamation is unlikely to protect the net value of OHV opportunities within these boundaries, let alone the PLI's benefits beyond those boundaries such as designated recreation zones and the limitation of future presidents to exercise the Antiquities Act within the affected counties. Not to mention, monuments further alienate those living closest to the land by providing no special input despite that local residents are disproportionately affected. Therefore, while a Bears Ears monument would not leave a legacy of tribal co-management, nor any more assurance for the actual resources within western San Juan County, it would become the most compelling reason yet to reform the Antiquities Act toward its original intent.

More importantly, a Bears Ears monument would only entrench controversy. Two decades after the controversial proclamation of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, the PLI finally brought stakeholders together to advance conservation, recreation, and other land uses where appropriate. These issues are too important to have to wait another couple decades. Hopefully our president will decide to tell the wilderness-expansion advocates that they need to go through Congress just like everyone else.

Press

When RWR is busy working on the trail, and then we have to go as far as D.C. to defend those trails, it can feel like spinning wheels. However articles, interviews, and awards allow us to step back and notice what's been achieved or averted, even if only part-way. BlueRibbon Magazine provided an avenue to convey the broad approach that's needed to effectively advocate for responsible recreation:

<https://sharetrails.org/publication/blueribbon-magazine-issue-5/>

American Motorcyclist had interviewed me (Clif) for a segment on young advocates, with a focus on how they got involved and how we might get others to do so. The editors turned it into a stand-alone article after realizing that I'm not exactly young! Still it retains that focus on what compels someone to get active:

<http://www.americanmotorcyclist.com/For-Members/The-Magazine/Story-Members-Only/lessons-learned-10>

At its annual conference this past October, the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council wound up issuing its thirtieth Hall Of Fame award to me for my work through RWR. To be recognized by people whom I admire was truly humbling. Of course these accomplishments have been done through RWR, so all of its contributors deserve a piece of this award:

<http://nohvcc.org/Materials/Newsletter/october-2016#HoF>

NOHVCC's next annual conference will be held in Manchester, NH:

<http://nohvcc.org/Education/Conference.aspx>

Also NOHVCC will help the BLM develop a National Motorized Recreation Action Plan by hosting several meetings in Arizona:

<http://nohvcc.org/Resources/blm-management-plan/blm-plan-meetings>

Finally NOHVCC will help COHVCO instruct trail-building workshops in Grand Junction (May 5-7, 2017) and Denver (July 14-17, 2017):

<http://cohvco.org/>

Conclusion

Recreation enables us to escape to the middle of nowhere, but in order to keep the trails

accessible and beautiful, we must routinely engage with the issues of the day. With the SUWA lawsuit against BLM's resource-management plans on the horizon, next year will present even more challenges, but also more opportunities. Supporting your local, state, and national OHV groups is key, but so is rejuvenating yourself by returning to nowhere. Whether you're on a horse or an iron horse, that combination of some exercise, adversity, flow, and fresh air is good for the body and mind alike. Thanks for your support of healthy people to enjoy healthy landscapes.

Clif Koontz
Executive Director