



FIELD REPORT

Southwest Region • Spring 2018



Utah National Monuments Slashed with Two Strokes of a Pen

Last December, President Trump—surrounded by Utah’s elected leaders—signed two proclamations removing protections from an unprecedented 2 million acres of public lands in southern Utah. President Trump acted upon Department of the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke’s recommendation to illegally slash Bears Ears National Monument by 85 percent and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument by 40 percent and parse the remaining land into smaller units, ignoring 2.8 million Americans who voiced their support for keeping the original boundaries intact. Resizing the monuments removes protections from the sacred and scientifically important lands formerly within monument boundaries and threatens Utah’s adjacent national park sites, including Canyonlands, Bryce Canyon and Capitol Reef National Parks, Natural Bridges National Monument and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

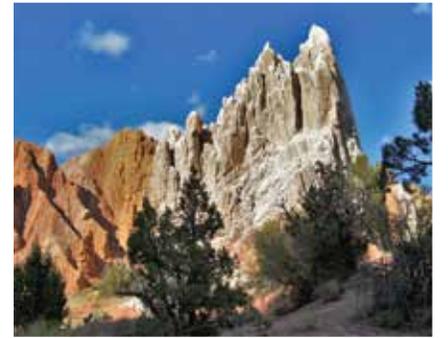
NPCA joined nine other conservation organizations represented by Earthjustice to challenge the legality of the proclamation shrinking Bears Ears. The lawsuit follows and complements a separate legal action by the Native

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Holding Fast to our Values in the Face of Unprecedented Assault

The deep and special affection Americans have for national parks is the foundation for NPCA’s advocacy work. We operate from the perspective that regardless of the politics of the moment, Americans of all persuasions love national parks. We held on to that belief during this first year of the Trump administration, and we still contend that the fondness Americans have for parks, when organized and directed, can shape policies and decisions to preserve and protect the remarkable landscapes and stories of our National Park System. In this issue of our Southwest newsletter, we highlight what’s at stake and what we’re doing about it.

Over the past year, the relationship between citizens and policymakers in this administration has been challenged. Bedrock environmental laws and regulations that protect air, water, wildlife and public lands are being threatened and overturned. “Energy dominance” is the new mantra that shapes planning and development adjacent to parks, especially those in the Southwest. Even the presidential authority to create national monuments has been challenged and manipulated to shrink protected areas or otherwise remove protections, as we’ve witnessed with Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments.



In response, NPCA and our allies and supporters have been fighting back. We’re building strong public support and forming coalitions to defend our parks against what amounts to an unprecedented assault on our public lands and environmental protections. And, in some circumstances, we are seeing success. We’ll share these hard-fought victories at Grand Canyon National Park and Chaco Culture National Historic Park in the coming pages as well as highlight our work in gateway communities where we’re empowering individuals to use their voices. We continue to believe the path to these and other victories is built upon the power and will of a public that cares deeply about national parks and public lands.

Top: Protesters opposed to downsizing Bears Ears and Grand-Staircase Escalante National Monuments in Utah. ©Pacific Press | Alamy Above: Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument ©Cynthia Mccrary | Dreamstime

FIELD REPORT

SPRING 2018

Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico & Utah

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New Southwest Regional Staffer

CASSIDY JONES

In January 2018, Cassidy Jones joined the Southwest team as the administrative, outreach and engagement coordinator.

Born and raised in Utah, Cassidy comes to NPCA

with a natural interest in parks, public lands and political-cultural conflict. She earned a B.A. in English from Westminster College (Utah) where she researched literary perspectives on Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, and she holds an M.S. in Parks, Recreation and Tourism from the University of Utah where she studied urban engagement in urban-proximate parks. Cassidy draws on experience working for the National Park Service (NPS) in many capacities, including as a graduate research assistant developing urban youth engagement strategies in Salt Lake City, an interpretive ranger managing youth



and night skies programs at Timpanogos Cave National Monument in Utah, and an intern in visitor services and education at John F. Kennedy National Historic Site in Massachusetts.

Prior to working in parks, Cassidy was a Fulbright grantee in Turkey where she taught English at a university in the southeastern city of Gaziantep. She continues to be involved with the Fulbright Utah Chapter, and she enjoys sharing Utah's national parks with visiting

Fulbright grantees from around the world.

Cassidy loves slickrock, snow and sleeping under dark skies. She is thrilled to be with NPCA to advocate on behalf of the parks in her beloved corner of the world.

Above: Cassidy Jones in Kings Canyon National Park in California ©Michael Haas

New Southwest Regional Council Member

MAYOR RALPH BECKER

In February 2018, the Southwest Regional Office welcomed former Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker to its regional council. Ralph served as mayor from 2008 to 2016 and led the city on transit improvements, downtown revitalization, protections for the LGBTQ community, urban agriculture efforts, preservation of natural areas and access to recreation, among many other initiatives. Ralph also served as president of the National League of Cities, a resource and advocacy organization. Before his tenure as mayor, Ralph served six years in the Utah legislature (four years as House Democratic leader) where he advocated for the Quality Growth Act (funding for trails, open space and transit), Utah's first Energy Policy Act and social justice issues. He also served as

Salt Lake City planning commissioner from 1988 to 1996.

Ralph earned a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania, as well as a J.D. and an M.S. in Geography and Planning both from the University of Utah. He is a professional planner and lawyer, and in 1985 he founded the consulting firm Bear West which specializes in community planning, environmental assessment, public lands, land use, consensus building and public involvement.

A former NPS employee, Ralph worked in parks from 1971 to 1976 as a garbage man, firefighter and ranger (law enforcement and EMT). Ralph is an outdoor enthusiast, and he enjoys backcountry skiing, cycling, backpacking and running rivers.



Ralph Becker ©R. Becker

Hybrid Bison Removal from Grand Canyon Starts This Year

No historical or archaeological record of bison herds exists in the Grand Canyon region. Perhaps some of the 30 billion bison that once roamed the continent's prairies wandered into northern Arizona, but the terrain and habitat—combined with wolves, smart native hunters and other predators—kept bison from becoming permanent residents. A relatively recent series of human-caused events brought hybrid bison to the Grand Canyon.

In the early 1900s, “Buffalo Jones,” a friend of Teddy Roosevelt’s, selected some bison near Yellowstone National Park and cross-bred them with longhorn cattle in an attempt to develop a domestic ranch animal adapted to the arid lands of the Southwest. When the effort failed, the Arizona Game and Fish Department bought the Buffalo Jones ranch for use as a state-managed hunting preserve. Twenty years ago hybrid bison escaped from the hunting preserve, migrated across public lands on the Kaibab Plateau and now make their home on the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park.

At least 600 hybrid bison roam the park today—way too many according to a Park Service Environmental Assessment completed last fall. The hybrid bison (also

called “beefalo” or “cattalo”) cause damage to sensitive native meadow vegetation, ephemeral ponds, permanent springs and seeps. They also destroy archaeological sites where they like to rest and wallow. The park’s water supply may also be threatened according to biologists studying water quality in the Grand Canyon; monitoring has indicated increased levels of E. coli bacteria in standing water associated with bison grazing areas.

After assessing available alternatives for controlling the hybrid bison population, the Park Service plans to use two processes to trim the herd size to 200 or fewer in the next five years. (Full eradication of the hybrid bison—the favored approach of NPCA and other conservation groups—will be assessed another day as this initial reduction plan plays out.)

In the first process, hybrid bison will be rounded up, driven into corrals, loaded onto trucks, shipped out of the park, and distributed to tribal partners and others who need or can use the hybrid bison. In the second process, carried out during the winter when the North Rim is closed to visitors, Park Service personnel and well-trained volunteers will shoot individual

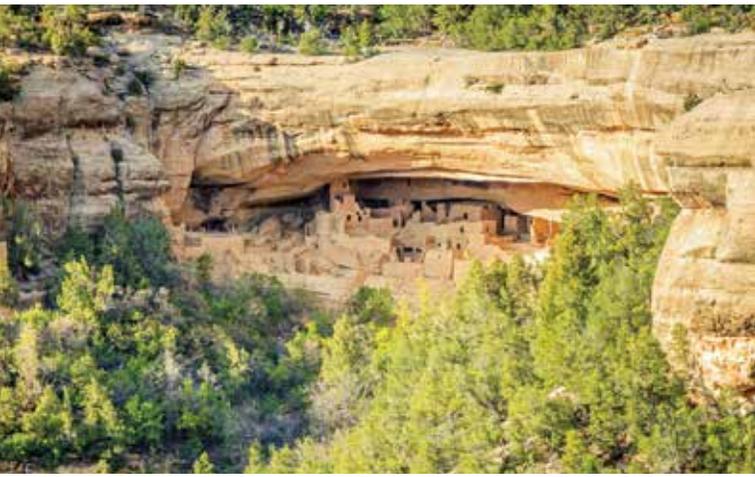
animals whose location or inclination make them impossible to round up. (This second process resembles a successful elk culling program at Rocky Mountain National Park.)

A proposal by the state of Arizona to open the park to state-regulated recreational hunting was considered during the Environmental Analysis, but it was rejected by the Park Service and legislation to force the proposed hunting option stalled in Congress. NPCA holds the position that recreational hunting has no place in this national park.

Recent Park Service-wide problems related to hiring staff and securing funding raised concerns about the hybrid bison removal plan being delayed, but efforts seem ready to proceed. NPCA continues to advocate for quick and decisive action as the damage to natural and cultural resources will only grow greater the longer hybrid bison are in the park.

Below: Hybrid bison roam the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park. ©imageBROKER | Alamy
Bottom Row-Left: Large wallows and deep game trail in meadows on the North Rim. NPS, 2012
Middle: A herd of bison using a fenced off water source on the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park. NPS, 2017
Right: Mullein, an invasive species, grows easily in disturbed soil of bison wallows. ©Samuel Areny | Dreamstime





ONE YEAR LATER

Protecting Parks in the “Energy Dominance” Era

This article is a follow-up to an article published in our Winter/Spring 2017 Field Report: “Six Parks the Trump Administration Must Protect from Encroaching Oil and Gas Development”

Interior Secretary Zinke’s “energy dominance” platform has morphed from a cable television talking point into far-reaching policy with serious implications for how public lands are managed in the West. New directives from the Trump administration not only require quarterly lease sales in states with oil and gas activity, they restrict public input opportunities.

The “lease now, talk later” approach creates great uncertainty in Western communities and, at times, results in lost revenue to taxpayers when leases are nominated and

... sold at rock bottom prices in areas unlikely to be developed based on market conditions. A recent lease sale in southeast Wyoming is a shining example: of the leases available for sale near Fort Laramie National Monument, only one parcel sold ... for a mere two dollars an acre. Effectively, this method allows the oil and gas industry to buy public land for pennies on the dollar. Leasing land when the market requires it, on the other hand, could yield significantly higher prices.

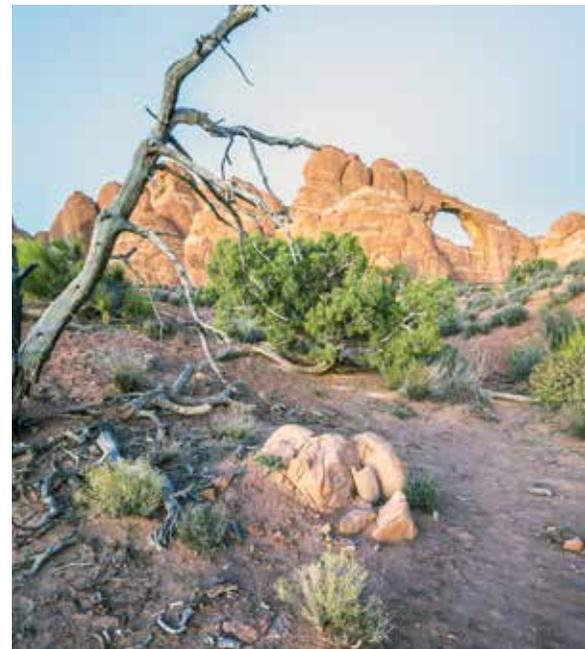
The previous drilling planning process for public lands adjacent to sensitive areas involved the creation of Master Leasing Plans (MLPs), which brought key stakeholders together to seek consensus on where drilling should and should not occur. That process is now dead. Other opportunities for public involvement in this process have also been curtailed. Thirty-day public comment

... periods for oil and gas leasing proposals shrank to 15 days and protest periods—a last gasp of public input—have been cut to 10 days.

The quest for energy dominance also resulted in the rollback of offshore drilling regulations and an unwarranted review of air quality measures designed to benefit the public and parks alike.

As NPCA adapts to these accelerated leasing policies, reduced opportunities for public participation and rollback of environmental protections, we continue to stand up for parks regardless of the forum. However, we are concerned that these shortened time periods will impact the ability of our partners and park advocates to adequately engage, organize and respond to the many complex energy proposals threatening our parks.

Left Page-Clockwise from Top Left: Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado ©Golasza | Dreamstime • Canyonlands National Park in Utah ©Donald Fink | Dreamstime • Capitol Reef National Park In Utah ©Dmitry Pichugin | Dreamstime **This Page-Right:** Lechuguilla Cave in Carlsbad Caverns National Park, New Mexico ©NPS | Daniel Chailloux and Peter Bosted **Bottom Left:** Dinosaur National Monument in Utah and Colorado ©Zrfphoto | Dreamstime • **Bottom Right:** Arches National Park in Utah where the completed Moab MLP is being implemented ©John Anderson | Dreamstime



Parks Under Growing Threat from Encroaching Oil and Gas Development

Capitol Reef and Canyonlands National Parks (UT)

The Trump administration stopped the San Rafael Desert MLP process initiated by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 2016. NPCA continues to advocate for an inclusive oil and gas development planning process that involves community collaboration.

Carlsbad Caverns National Park (NM)

Extensive oil and gas development in southern New Mexico raises concerns for NPCA about the potential of drilling into cave systems that are incompletely mapped and likely extend beyond the boundaries of the park. We're also wary of air pollution, the loss of dark night skies, and the blight of a viewshed pockmarked with drill rigs and pump jacks. Working with our partners, we are responding to the onslaught of lease sales and have prepared a proposal for

managed development of the most important areas near the park, prioritizing protection of resources connected to the park, as well as critical waterways and wildlife habitat. The local BLM office is releasing a draft Resource Management Plan this spring, and we will be advocating for a strong, long-term plan that integrates all of these concerns.

Dinosaur National Monument (CO-UT)

In August 2016, Colorado BLM completed the Dinosaur Trail MLP for northwest Colorado. However, plans for an MLP on the Utah portion of the monument were shelved by the Trump administration, leaving thousands of acres in northeast Utah without comprehensive planning for oil and gas development. NPCA contested a lease sale in 2017 that resulted in two leases near the park entrance being deferred. We continue to oppose development on four leases that would adversely impact the park.

Mesa Verde National Park (CO)

The Trump administration sidelined the MLP for this park despite significant planning

Interior Secretary Zinke's "energy dominance" platform has serious implications for how public lands are managed in the West.

and analysis by the BLM and support from the NPS. NPCA will continue to monitor the area and challenge any leases that would adversely impact the park, and we remain supportive of collaborative planning processes.

In addition to this list, **Bears Ears National Monument, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Hovenweep National Monument**, and other parks are also under threat from pending lease sales or lack of inclusive public planning processes.

Hot and Steamy Good News from Valles Caldera

Valles Caldera National Preserve, one of the newest units of the National Park System, survived its first major threat. The caldera contains some of the most extensive geothermal activity in the West, including hot springs, bubbling mudpots and steaming fumaroles—much like Yellowstone National Park, but on a smaller scale. In 2015 the U.S. Forest Service proposed commercial geothermal energy development right next door to the preserve. Such development could have dried up these fantastic features, as has happened in other parts of the world.

A valuable renewable energy source that does not produce carbon emissions, geothermal energy development still requires drill rigs, a fracking-like process, massive infrastructure, roads and bright

lights. Geothermal energy development may be appropriate some places, but definitely not here.

Thankfully, the staff of Santa Fe National Forest—in response to strong public pressure from NPCA and other conservation groups, the All Pueblo Council of Governors and traditional Hispano community interests—chose “no-leasing” as the preferred alternative. Once the final decision is signed, geothermal development in this area will be permanently prohibited, saving these special geothermal features for future generations to learn about and enjoy.

The most active geothermal features in the caldera are on a 40-acre private inholding that was also at risk of development. We

are thrilled to announce that NPCA worked with a conservation buyer to protect that property, and the omnibus spending bill passed in March included a Land and Water Conservation Fund appropriation to transfer legal ownership of the property to the Park Service.

Meanwhile, the Park Service has nominated the entire preserve as a “significant thermal feature” under the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970. An obscure law for most of us, the act has been used in Yellowstone to protect geysers and thermal pools from the impacts of development outside park boundaries, and it will do the same for Valles Caldera.

These are great victories for Valles Caldera and the public who enjoys it!



Valles Caldera National Preserve in New Mexico ©Brian Welker | Dreamstime

INTERN SPOTLIGHT

NPCA Developing Messaging to Reach Millennial and GenZ Recreationists



The Southwest Regional Office is working with **Kailyn Haskovec, Kasha Malling, and Alicia Tigges**—graduate student interns in the Masters of the Environment program at University of Colorado

Boulder—on a nine-month project aimed at improving how land managers (and others) communicate with millennial and GenZ audiences (ages 16-30). Through field studies, focus groups, surveys, interviews and a pilot campaign to test initial concepts on priority issues, the project will distill best messaging practices into a handbook for creating respectful, thoughtful public lands visitation and recreation behaviors among this important emerging demographic.

Uncovering Untold Stories of the Manhattan Project in New Mexico

Alexie Rudman has been selected through the Stanback Internship Program to assist with NPCA’s “Manhattan Project Untold Stories” oral history project. Alexie—currently earning her Masters at Duke University in the Environmental Management program—has experience in conservation, environmental education, research, fieldwork and international travel, and she is passionate about environmental and social justice. She will be based in Taos, New Mexico this

summer where she will work with the New Mexico Program Manager to collect oral histories about the Manhattan Project from the perspectives of nearby Indian Pueblos and Hispano communities. This research will help inform the new national historical park’s interpretive program.



Victories for Parks in Arizona and New Mexico



Chaco Cultural Legacy Protected (for now)

Chaco Culture National Historical Park and the surrounding Greater Chaco Landscape is rich with archaeological and sacred sites. It's the ancestral homeland to many tribes, and Navajo communities still live throughout the area. As oil and gas drilling continues to hem in the park, making it a tiny island in a sea of development, NPCA continues to oppose inappropriate development and call for better collaborative planning. Most recently, NPCA filed a legal protest of a lease sale slated for March 8, one of a record-breaking 459 formal protests submitted by tribes, conservation groups and local residents. As a result, Interior Secretary Zinke postponed the sale until the BLM can conduct a thorough inventory of archaeological and traditional cultural sites. The deferral vindicates Chaco as a special landscape worthy of protection and is a move that NPCA applauds. It also reveals flaws in the existing oil and gas lease planning process. We anticipate similar opportunities ahead and will remain vigilant in our efforts

to monitor oil and gas development in the area and throughout the Southwest.

Victory for Navajo Citizens and Grand Canyon

Local residents stopped a proposed massive resort on the rim of the Grand Canyon with a unanimous vote in February. This ends a Scottsdale developer's seven-year effort to build the Escalade resort hotel, which would have featured an aerial tramway capable of taking up to 10,000 tourists a day to the remote confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado Rivers.

The vote to halt the Escalade development follows a 16-2 Navajo Tribal Council decision to not invest \$65 million in the plan. The local Navajo residents' group, Save The Confluence, led the opposition and ensured the entire Navajo Nation knew the proposal to develop this sacred area was opposed by traditional Navajo as well as nearby tribes, conservationists and river runners. **Learn more at <https://goo.gl/osX7sk>.**

Above: Chaco Culture National Historical Park in New Mexico ©Kojihirano | Dreamstime

Utah National Monuments Slashed with Two Strokes of a Pen

continued from page 1

American Rights Fund, a coalition of some of the Native American tribes that led the efforts to create the monument. NPCA also supports a separate suit challenging the proclamation impacting Grand Staircase-Escalante.

Before the issue can be decided in the courts, the BLM—under direction from the Trump administration—has moved to create land use plans for what is left of the national monuments as well as the land removed from Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. NPCA continues to advocate to maintain and enhance protections during this time, urging thoughtful and comprehensive planning. We fear moving forward with new plans before the courts weigh in could open the area to multiple threats, including looting of cultural sites, irresponsible off-road vehicle use, mining, and oil and gas drilling. NPCA supports careful planning at the appropriate time. Once a monument's cultural, historic or sacred sites are destroyed, they cannot be restored.

Colorado Gateway Communities Tackle Big Challenges

Colorado's visitors and residents are spending more and more time in the great outdoors. The state's tourism and recreation industries have soared 37 percent over the past six years, far exceeding the 17 percent post-recession national economic growth. In the same timeframe, visitation to the state's national park sites rose by 2 million, reaching a total of 7.6 million in 2017. This growth has yielded a \$50 billion economic engine largely dependent on visitors' access to public lands and open spaces. However, such economic opportunity has also brought challenges to Colorado gateway communities.

Many gateway communities—often historically dependent on mining, energy production, agriculture and ranching—are transitioning to local economies fueled substantially by tourism and recreation.

Both outdoor recreation destinations and the gateway communities that serve as visitors' jumping-off points face pressures related to infrastructure, services and resources. Many gateway communities—often historically dependent on mining, energy production, agriculture and ranching—are transitioning to local economies fueled substantially by tourism and recreation. In the process, Colorado gateway communities are grappling with accommodating visitors, new residents and businesses, while still protecting landscapes and preserving existing economic influences and local characteristics.

NPCA began convening gateway community stakeholders and land managers in Colorado in 2016 to explore approaches to addressing visitation and recreation growth. Through workshops and ongoing dialogue, the Colorado Momentum Initiative (coloradomomentum.org) gave rise to six regional sub-initiatives connected by a statewide network. Participants share a recognition of the symbiotic relationship between national parks and other outdoor destinations and the nearby towns that serve visitors, house workforces, and provide important local input on planning and management decisions.



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CONFLUENCE

A Musical Journey through the National Parks of the Colorado Basin

On the heels of the NPS centennial in September 2016, a young indie folk band set off on a journey to explore beloved parks and monuments in the Colorado River basin. The four members of the Infamous Flapjack Affair (“the Flapjacks”) spent time with people who depend on the fragile river system, using music—the band’s most refined tool—to communicate some of the contentious issues that have divided previous generations in the American Southwest, including energy development, dams, land and water rights, and climate change.

The journey was documented in the film “Confluence,” directed by Amy Marquis and Dana Romanoff of National Park Experience, and is scheduled to premiere this summer. “Confluence” follows the band members through some of America’s most iconic landscapes, from the Grand Canyon to Rocky Mountain National Park, as well as

some of the most contested, such as Bears Ears National Monument. As the nonprofit partner for the project, NPCA looks forward to introducing the film to our members and

the public through screenings, events and performances in the upcoming year. Find more information at confluencethejourney.com.

Below: Infamous Flapjack Affair band members (left to right) David Carel, Sarah Noyce, Ben Barron and James Mitchell. ©DanaRomanoff | NPX



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