

Conservation Connections

Newsletter of Plateau Restoration from Moab, Utah

Fall, 2005

Engaging the Public in the Long-Term Care of Native Habitats since 1995

www.plateaurestoration.org

Nature Trail Invites Discovery and Learning



Sand Island project area before reclamation (1997)

Same project area, fall, 2005

The Sand Island Recreation Area has long been a destination for rafters and kayakers. It's one of two major launch points for float trips down the Sand Juan River. It also has one of the most accessible and spectacular rock art panels in the Four Corners. Eight years ago, the BLM upgraded the campground. Now it is also a camping and picnicking destination for many people traveling throughout SE Utah.

Right after campground construction, Plateau Restoration, in partnership with the BLM established this area as a reclamation project site to restore a healthy bench and riparian habitat along the San Juan River. Now that this major reclamation area has been completed, the second phase of work has begun. PRI created a self-guided nature education trail for the enjoyment and education of the tens of thousands of people who visit Sand Island annually. We are spreading the word about the trail to commercial outfitters and the numerous college groups that use Sand Island as a launch for river trips, so hopefully lots of folk will learn about native habitats and invasive weeds.

No.... It's Not a Corral

We put in a small new kiosk at the west end of Sand Island, where Northwestern University and University of Colorado students helped us this spring to build an enclosure for an area in which we hope to restore a diversity of plants. The BLM put water to the site this summer (just as funding ran out!). We're planning to get some new and different native plants growing with a simple drip irrigation line, hopefully next spring.

This is one of several revegetation test sites at the campground. We are monitoring changes through photos, and counts of weeds and native vegetation before and after weeding and transplanting in the site. The fence draws lots of public attention and has opened up some great discussions with visitors and college groups coming to the area. We saw most of the visitors walking or driving past the new kiosk right after we installed it, stop and take a look.



Education is the Key to Understanding

Bright new displays have been added to the three kiosks at our restoration site at Sand Island Recreation Area near Bluff, UT. These describe the history of the project from bare ground through the weeding, planting and irrigation, most of which was done with volunteers in our service-learning programs. The reclamation is complete and these new signs provide outstanding information to the area visitors, which now number over 16,000 annually.

Presidents Corner

It is my pleasure to welcome a new board member to our team: Ron Godin, Ph.D. Ron spent his formative years working, jumping off bridges and hiking at the Grand Canyon and running nearby rivers for 7 years. The stint at Grand Canyon was followed by 12 years of international travel as a flight attendant for Pan-Am Airlines. When the airline went bankrupt Ron went to Pima College in Tucson then to the University of Arizona where he earned a B.S. and M.S. in Soil and Crop Science in 1998. He completed his PhD at Colorado State University. He is currently employed by the University as a research scientist in organic and sustainable agriculture at the Roger's Mesa Research Station in Hotchkiss, CO. Some of his projects include organic weed management and production of native seeds for restoration for the Uncompahgre Plateau Project. "I still run rivers whenever possible and the Western Slope of Colorado and surrounding area provide plenty of opportunity". Ron has also served on the board of the North Fork River Improvement Association for four years prior to joining the Plateau Restoration board. - M.S.

Plateau Restoration

A 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit, licensed, insured and permitted with the BLM.

Mission:

To protect and restore native habitats of the Colorado Plateau through hands-on education, landscape restoration, revegetation and research.

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**Stop by and say "Hi"
at our booth at the
3rd Annual Moab Folk
Festival, Nov 5-6,
2005
and at the 16th
Annual Wilderness
Wildlife Week in
Pigeon Forge, TN, Jan
7-15, 2006.**

Who's in Charge?



Kane County sign (left) shows trail open to ATV's in Grand Staircase-Escalante NM while BLM sign shows it closed.

Cadillac Desert



Wyley and Heather recording soil properties in Juniper campground

With the help of our interns Wyley Hodgson and Heather Hosterman, we continued our monitoring of two newly constructed BLM campgrounds near Moab. The Juniper Campground, near the popular Porcupine Rim trailhead, was opened last September and we completed the first year follow-up monitoring. Pre-opening surveys were also done at the new Horsethief Campground, a few miles north of Deadhorse Point and Canyonlands National Parks boundaries, which opened at the end of September. As part of our documenting recreational impacts at the campgrounds we have taken high-resolution aerial photographs, set up photo-trends for each site, and measured several transects for soil compaction, soil stability (cryptobiotic or biological soil crust) and vegetation.

All of the campsites are 'hardened' - a strategy of bringing in gravel to define parking areas and acceptable area of impact. It works well, but in the end what we have is an RV park in the desert. Nearly all of the sixty sites in Horsethief were built to hold full-size RV's with trailers in an area that previously received very little use. Building a site of this size in this area was an interesting choice. Monitoring will show the effects on the land of a campsite for RV's or trailered OHV's in nearly pristine desert upland. We'll keep you informed.

Parks, Plates and Plateaus

Our resident geologist, Tamsin McCormick, PhD presented part of a 2-day geology training for employees of the National Park Service in June along with Profs. Bob Lillie from Oregon State and Paul Weimer from University of Colorado, Boulder. Bob, who is also a PRI member, authored the book "Parks and Plates, The Geology of Our National Parks, Monuments, and Seashores", which is a great resource on geologic setting for National Parks across the nation.



Prof. Karl Mueller of University of Colorado points out features at Upheaval Dome in Canyonlands National Park to structural geology students

Some footage from an old Discovery Channel film showing Tamsin pondering Upheaval Dome landed up as the feature video at the new Arches Visitor Center, which just opened in September. In October she also joined a University of Colorado geology field trip that explored Upheaval dome and salt domes along Onion Creek up close. Maybe it *is* all because of salt.....The debate continues.

On the Road Again

Our key staff, Michael Smith and Tamsin McCormick, PhD are also busy preparing presentations for the 16th annual Wilderness Wildlife Week in Pigeon Forge, TN next January. The great responses to the presentations given at last year's conference prompted us to do even more at the next one. Michael's three talks at the conference are "Native Plant Adaptations of Arches N.P.", "Natural History of the Colorado River", and "Adventures in Conservation" (restoration efforts on Public Lands of the West). Tamsin will be presenting "Comparative Geology of the Great Smokies and Rocky Mountains", "Canyons, Plateaus and Peaks: Scenic Wildlands of the Colorado Plateau" and "Jurassic Journeys and Triassic Travels - Geologic Tales of the Intermountain West". We are one of the few exhibitors from the west. We'll also have a display up for the entire eight days of the conference, which we're told attracts over 15,000 people every year.

Wish List

A few of the things we sure could use.....
All donations are tax deductible:

- ✂✂ Mechanically sound pick-up truck
- ✂✂ Hand Tools, especially shovel and rakes
- ✂✂ Wood chipper
- ✂✂ Laptop computer (PC compatible)
- ✂✂ Tents

Cheater's Waltz

Prompted by the super-invasion of cheat grass this spring, we've been learning new things about this tenacious weed. Several scientists presented data at the "Ecology and Management of Pinyon-Juniper and Sagebrush Communities" conference in May, attended by PRI's Tamsin McCormick, but the future still looks bleak. New records are also being set for fires in the saguaro country of AZ from cheat invasion, an ecosystem unadapted to fire. Intern Wyley Hodgson chose to write an article on the history of cheat grass and control methods that will become an information sheet for anyone that has a cheat grass problem (who doesn't these days!). The wet spring and summer, however also made it a great year for native seed and we managed to collect quite a bunch.

Trails in the Trees

Plateau Restoration is partnering with The Great Old Broads For Wilderness of Durango, CO on a new project to monitor trail conditions in the Manti-LaSal National Forest. With funding from National Forest Foundation, a survey of trails in the LaSals started in October. Data collected, which includes photographs, GPS coordinates and a classification of trail conditions, is entered in a web-searchable database maintained by GOBW. Ultimately, Volunteers will be recruited and trained to perform the monitoring on a fairly regular basis. Trainings will begin this winter so that the team will be ready to hit the 'road' when the snow melts around Memorial Day.

Membership and Fund Raising Update - New Conservation Team Members:

Wendel McConnell, Glenwood Springs, CO
Ron and Peggy Godin, Hotchkiss, CO

Lanette Smith, Basalt, CO
Pam Hackley, Castle Valley, UT
National Forest Foundation

Brad Jones, Johnson City, TN
Joe Smyth, Boulder, CO

BECOME A CONSERVATION PARTNER

Join our organization for any amount from \$5 to \$25 and show your support. Memberships are good for one year. You may also take advantage of lifetime membership for \$295.

Member benefits include: our quarterly newsletter in the mail, first opportunity to sign up for trips, programs, events, invitation to "members only" trips, discounts on outdoor "Plateau" clothing, discounts on native plants and seed through our members purchase program, and outdoor rental equipment.

SPONSOR A VOLUNTEER, SPONSOR A PROJECT

Friends who wish to help further can directly sponsor our volunteers and restoration projects. Contributions over the \$25 membership are applied towards our Nature's Legacy Fund, inspired by our former BLM advisor, the late Linda Siebert. Plateau Restoration uses this fund to identify, plan and implement conservation projects and to underwrite our student service-learning programs. As a token of our gratitude, we offer a Plateau Restoration baseball cap or T-shirt for contributions of \$50 or more.

Your donation not only offers a powerful learning opportunity for our future leaders, educators and land managers, we stretch your dollar by contributing volunteer labor to direct conservation work on our public lands. For example, \$25 sponsors a student volunteer for 1/2 day, providing a \$50 value in labor, a 2:1 match.

Plateau Restoration is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit organization and contributions are tax deductible. To make a contribution, please fill out the following form and mail it, along with your check payable to Plateau Restoration, to: Plateau Restoration, P.O. Box 1363, Moab, UT 84532

Feel free to contact us by phone at (435) 259-7733 or toll-free at 1-866-202-1847 or by email at info@plateaurestoration.org. Also, visit our website at www.plateaurestoration.org and contribute on-line.

Yes, I'd like to join or renew my membership. Enclosed is my contribution of: \$_____ (amount)

I want to sponsor volunteers and conservation projects at the following level: _____(amount)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____



Specify (for contributions of \$50 or more, including membership):

- Cap Brim Color: green blue black
- or Visor Brim Color: green blue
- or T-shirt: Size: med. large X-large Color: sage sand granite