

The Green Bubble

Refuting more nonsense on the proposed Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument. Words and photos by Steven H. Rich.

Rejected unanimously! The Arizona Game & Fish Commission's fervent wildlife advocates all voted to oppose the Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument proposed by several Green groups. They know this needless administrative boondoggle would severely hurt wildlife in five geographic regions of northern Arizona and southern Utah. "The issue," several commissioners stated, "is not conserving these lands and associated wildlife habitats—[because] *that is already being done very effectively*" [emphasis added].

The commission rejected the standard list of disproven, out-of-touch, out-of-date, hands-off-no-management-allowed claims. Well-intentioned or not, paid-staff Greens' minds share an emotionally held, rarely examined, limited subreality—a bubble, like the Washington Beltway bubble or the academic bubble. As elite culture subrealities, they overlap. As we all know, life and society-sustaining facts can penetrate bubbles—with great difficulty—only after many traumatic failures and after terrible consequences.

It's this bad. Caught in a similar "tradition bubble," it took the Royal Navy 200 years to

act on Captain James Lancaster's 1601 scurvy prevention findings. Without lemon juice—nearly half the men on three ships died on his long voyage. On the "lemon juice ship," with three teaspoons daily, no one died. Thousands of seamen once died of scurvy. James Lind repeated Lancaster's work 147 years later. In 50 more years Admiralty bureaucrats finally acted. Then they confused the issue. Naval Capt. Robert F. Scott's 1911 South Pole Expedition still had scurvy. That same year, many thousands of children, even from wealthy European and American homes, also suffered from scurvy. It was in 1932 (331 years after Lind) that the vitamin C mystery was solved. Many still lack vitamin C by choice of diet. To those directly suffering consequences of Greens' ideological inability to deal with science and lack of direct experience, the above horror story is all too familiar.

By life-and-death necessity the Arizona Game & Fish Commission is vastly "quicker on the uptake" than the proponents. They knew that proposing groups want to "lock away these lands rather than conserve them, which would [negatively] impact public access, recreation, grazing and the ability of

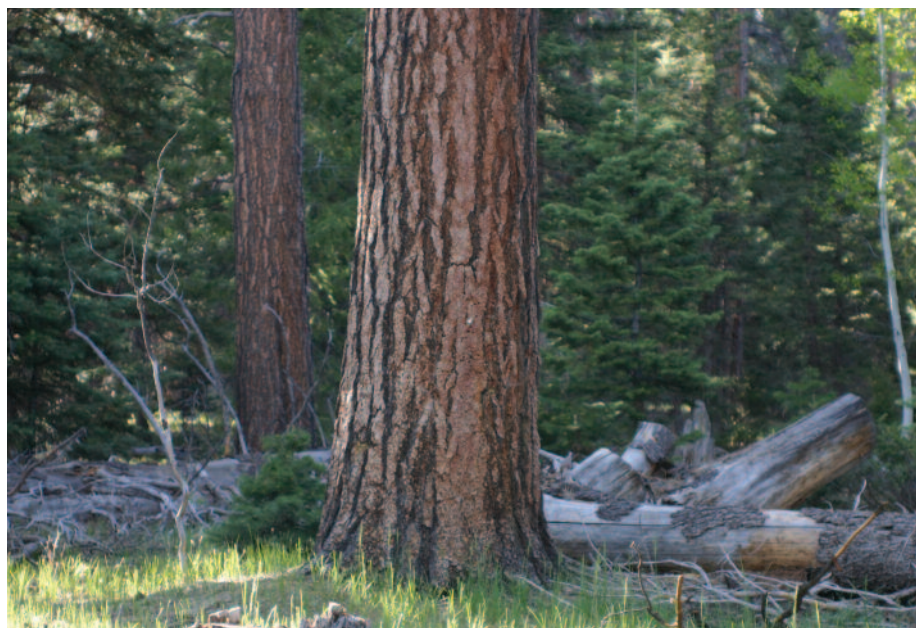
the commission to manage wildlife." The commission's "Resolution Concerning the Loss of Multiple-Use Public Lands Due To Special Land Use Designation" bottom-line logic is: special-use designations hurt wildlife because, in them, department managers, the commission, and others skilled at healing nature can't do their jobs. Seventy-seven percent of Arizona's lands are already restricted from public access by a variety of legal restrictions, federal, state and private. Only 23 percent remain free. Now subtract the 4.5-million acres of "wilderness" where little good can be done.

The resolution states, "Whereas, the [Arizona Game & Fish] Department has *experienced restrictions resulting from Special Land Use Designations...*" Make that, "*Greens have intentionally created needless delays, caused project cancellations, wasted labor, hugely increased costs and filed absurd lawsuits*" [emphasis added]. The commission is tragically aware that Green nongovernment organizations' (NGOs) policy influence is at extreme fault for Arizona's "sea of gasoline" range and forest conditions. The commission expressed a desire to preserve managers' capacity to thin remaining tangled, too-dense forests with appropriate technologies.

The resolution challenges the legality of the monument proposal citing the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960 and the Federal Land Policy & Management Act of 1976 which "both legally prohibit the federal land management agencies from affecting the states' jurisdiction and responsibilities."

"Be it further resolved that the...Commission does not support the continual conversion of [multiple use lands] *to designations that result in the net loss of wildlife resources, wildlife-related recreational opportunities, and wildlife-dependent economic benefit*" [emphasis added]. The proclamation further demands federal analysis of consequences to all wildlife-related values if these landgrabs continue to hamstring the department in doing its duty. How is it that the commissioners—who ardently advocate for every mammal, bird, reptile, fish and frog—could get so crosswise with the groups who want this monument? Of course, the answer is in the phrase, "The Department has experienced..."

The author was once chair of the department's Arizona Strip Habitat Partnership Committee. A Kmart heir funded buying the grazing permits for the Paria Plateau, much of Houserock Valley, and most of the North



Invading firs, etc., are deadly "ladder fuels," lifting fire into unprotected crowns of ancient trees. Thick bark protects old ponderosas from ground fires. Today, fire is thousands of times more threatening than logging. Native Americans used autumn fire to keep forests open. Crown fires were rare.

Kaibab Plateau (all just north of the Grand Canyon) for the Grand Canyon Trust. Game department staff bitterly informed us that the prior owner, multi-millionaire David Gelbaum, had sold the livestock and, apparently ignorant of the consequences, shut everything down. Bill Hedden, Bruce Babbitt and other trust luminaries felt no need to turn on water pipelines and troughs—even during the worst drought period in a thousand years. So they didn't. Nobody knows how many animals suffered or died from this neglect—certainly thousands.

The department had been able to depend on these ranches' water before this. Fish & Game staff hauled load after load. During severe droughts most ranchers find a way to make water available to wildlife despite cost, frost risks and potential loss of this scarce resource. The author's family pumped and hauled tens of thousands of gallons and made them available to stressed wildlife. To quote a highly placed BLM source: "The trust just walked away from [its water] improvements." When they "rid lands of artificial water sources," especially during droughts, Green-group biologists know they're setting off a hopeless competitive death struggle among terribly stressed creatures for remaining scarce habitat requirements. When citing "experience," the department remembers this needless tragedy and others all over the state.

Local ranchers remember dozens of sabotages of their water facilities, fences and other property since the establishment of the Parashant and Vermillion Cliffs national monuments brought a worldwide spotlight to lands the public little knew. "Monkey-wrenchers" cut pipes, closed valves, pulled out H braces, drained whole years' stored water, chased cattle, shot them, cut fences, and left gates open. They did great destruction to grazing resources. By cruelly denying cattle (and wildlife) water, vandals drove thirst-choked cows with little calves from high summer pastures miles down to resting winter ranges during critical growing times, over and over and over.

Again, the resolution reads, "The Department's analysis finds that loss of livestock management can cause significant loss of water availability to wildlife." This new monument proposal wants "voluntary retirement of grazing leases." This logic emanates from faraway strangers who also tell teachers, students and the public that destroying ranching will somehow help wildlife. The



Kaibab-Paiute Reservation is in foreground, Mount Trumball in background. Anonymity and long distances are the best protection. Monument designation degrades every wild-country value by bringing crowds, but no real budget to prevent damage by jerks in huge unpatrollable acreages. Even worse, it brings layers of ill-considered, urban-based attitudes and regulations. Arizona's Game & Fish Commission know both kill large numbers of wildlife and destroy habitats.



Monument proposers know ranchers, landowners and county and state citizens need and own rights-of-way on all these two-track roads. They've no right to close them. Greens tend to resent other recreation-land users they see—including other Greens. At federal expense, they already have the public excluded from most of Arizona's public lands. Now they're after what's left of the Arizona Strip.



Eighty years of "rest" from livestock grazing have done no good for rangeland health in U.S. 89A's right-of-way. The cryptogam-covered sterility's exactly opposite of the biodiversity Greens led the public to expect. Grass and flowers need soil disturbance and relief from tree/shrub competitors to thrive—not overprotection. Ironically, incompetent critics blame obvious overrest problems on livestock.



Here's what thinning pinyon-juniper does. Saved by chain saws, this site still had some flowers and grasses when thinned as a firebreak. Fewer trees means more sunlight, more water and less nutrient competition. Results: This typical grass/flower/biodiversity explosion means much better habitat and soil health. The two worst threats to habitat connectivity, quality and safety are huge fires and degradation from far too many trees.



Monument proposers ignore deadly consequences from too-dense pinyon-juniper. Here the trees outcompeted all flowers, grasses and most shrubs to death. They're also thick enough to carry fire. The crusted soils have already degraded without grass/flower inputs and stabilization. A fire would cause floods, soil loss, years of annual plant and bare ground domination—and even worse habitat.

commission's response amounts to, "We profoundly disagree."

According to brain research, dominance seekers suffer from "dominance-battle-motivated" cognitive distortions. By contrast—when unpaid environmentalists are exposed to on-the-ground results and scientific data and data-collection methods that inform collaborative environmentalist, ranch, federal

and state agency and local-interest teams' decisions—they generally side with the commission. Paid Greens know that. Dominators' brains are not engaged in spiritual functions. All these are forced to serve in the war. Nature's beauty acts like a drug when justifying hurting people and destroying "unnaturally high" wildlife populations. Greens destroyed every man-made water source they

could every time a national park was created. They don't see probabilities accurately. The monument proposal's Executive Summary lists alleged ecological threats which monument status would end.

THREAT 1: Logging of ancient trees

FACTS: Ancient trees in the area are thousands of times more likely to burn in giant fires or be killed by bark beetles—both caused by the proponents' policies. With its hundreds of jobs, Kaibab Industry's mill was dismantled and sold. By federal NEPA law, no tree is cut without biologists' approval. This ancient tree claim is unportable in fact.

THREAT 2: High density of primitive roads

FACTS: This claim is primarily motivated by Greens' desire to exclude all recreation but theirs. It tramples rights-of-way holders' Fifth Amendment rights. Arizona Strip wildlife—especially mule deer and turkeys—have crashed since the backers' ideas got force of law.

THREAT 3: Loss of landscape connectivity for wildlife between Grand Canyon National Park and Grand Staircase National Monument

FACTS: Biologically planned thinning by commercial tree harvest of all forested habitats in the North Kaibab would improve habitat quality, fire safety, and drought resilience in this migration corridor much more than any other possible action. Skillful thinning treatments are proven to hugely increase native grasses and flowers' biomass and ground cover and to increase general biodiversity, reduce evapo-transpiration, stop most surface runoff and erosion, increase soil organics and soil moisture and ground water yield to aquifers and springs. Monument status would prevent these powerfully beneficial results and vastly increase fire and drought risks and habitat connectivity losses.

Leading researchers Christopher Roos (Southern Methodist University) and Thomas Swetnam (University of Arizona) analyzed centuries of area tree-ring data. They found that area forests did just fine during the extremely hot, dry, Medieval Warm Period. This was exactly due to more open, grassier, tree canopy-fire preventing, less dense forest structures.

THREAT 4: Inappropriate grazing, shrub invasion, etc.

FACTS: As stated above, any relevant "improper grazing" has been caused by illegal acts of anti-livestock types. Wildlife-friendly ranchers are an asset. Real scientists know

sagebrush, chaparral species, pinyon/juniper woodland, etc., all increase on their own, if not controlled, whether grazed or not. Either inappropriate grazing, or grazing as an intentional tool of management, can increase, decrease or leave woody species densities and populations unchanged depending on goals and other factors.

THREAT 5: Uranium mining

FACTS: Uranium mining has a painful past. Public statements differ wildly about mining deep, collapsed-cavern “breccia-pipe” uranium on the Arizona Strip. Context: Horn Creek in the Grand Canyon has radiation levels far beyond EPA allowances. Park Service’s Tonto Trail Guide states, “Percolating groundwater picks up traces of the radioactivity and carries it to the surface in the bed of Horn Creek.” This natural pipe has cracks. Removing remaining ore and sealing cracks may be the solution—but not in a national park? There are many mineralized pipes on the Strip with millions of pounds of hot ore. The rock strata are laced with cracks. Removing the uranium makes sense, case by case.

The BLM lands’ ore bodies can be safely mined according to Arizona’s Department of Environmental Quality. Critics point to a four-ton flash-flood washout of temporarily stored tailings from Hack’s Canyon Mine in 1984. Four tons of radioactive petrified wood out of thousands miners removed years ago posed equal risks. There’s a lot left. How worried should we be? To prevent industrialization of this remote landscape, BLM officials can limit the number of mines. The energy-rich ore bodies are quickly mined out. They are to be backfilled and sealed from water entry or exit, according to the permits. Oh, right, Interior Secretary Salazar already banned new mines near the Grand Canyon.

Some universities support the proposal. They expect an endless stream of federal and private foundation money to pay for scientific studies like those the trust conducts. To those expecting a cash/political gravy train—be warned! Arizona and Utah congressional delegations, congressional and state legislative committees, and local governments will ceaselessly demand rigorous, independent scientific review of any study designs, methods, data, interpretation, and publicity of any studies connected with this project.

About 10 years ago, the author met with the Grand Canyon Trust’s Bill Hedden in then-Utah Congressman Chris Cannon’s office. The pair saw many slides and much



From Kaibab National Forest, already completely closed to mining, already protected by thousands of pages of environmental law—looking across two deeply resented national monuments, this beautiful view illustrates how hemmed in by “special land-use designations” traditional Arizonans feel. Arizona’s exceedingly protective wildlife commissioners don’t want another. Ruthless Green “no management” beliefs cause terrible slaughter of wildlife populations, with thirst, fires and needless habitat destruction.



This sink hole is already utterly closed to mining—by articles of the Grand Canyon National Game Preserve. It really needs protection from catastrophic fire! See the dense pines on the far wall? Not one could survive a crown fire. Caused by ancient collapses of limestone cavern roofs 2,000 feet below, uranium, gold, and copper-bearing breccia-pipe sink holes are common on the Arizona Strip and also south of the Grand Canyon.

data from vast lands where every environmental concern Greens complain of was solved—by ranchers. Sage grouse, riparian health, willow flycatchers, white-tailed prairie dogs, 300 bird species, native trout, mule deer, elk, pronghorns. Everything was thriving, on several large properties in several states.

The author laid out a proposal featuring scientifically designed and reviewed comparisons between properly grazed lands with national parks and other long-term livestock removals. Our proposal involved the public in scientific and collaborative, adaptive management in wonderfully educational ways. Cannon and Hedden both saw the truth of it.

The author tried again when the trust got the ranches. You know how that went.

Those who love nature must deal in facts. Organizations fact-blinded by focus on dominance can only, on balance, do harm. “A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion, still,” goes the old rhyme. That assumes he keeps empire building and never gets healthy, wealthy and wise—or actually becomes useful. ■

Steve Rich—a holistic management old-timer—is a rancher, range and ranch consultant based in Salt Lake City, Utah. He can be reached at stevenhrich@comcast.net.