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The Salt Lake Tribune

MONDAY, June 2, 2008

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Millville Canyon project brings together all sorts of backcountry users

By Tom Wharton
The Salt Lake Tribune

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MILLVILLE - Environmentalists, ATV riders, four-wheel-drive enthusiasts, hunters, Boy Scouts and horseback riders seldom see eye to eye on anything to do with public lands and their management.

So what were more than 100 people representing all of those groups doing working together in Millville Canyon south of Logan this weekend?

Wasatch Outlaws Four-Wheel Drive Club member Shaun Howard, of Brigham City, had a simple explanation.

"All of these groups have the same goal, which is to preserve the mountain forever," he said. "We might have different viewpoints about how the mountain should be used but we can still want to come together like this."

The work project on the Logan Ranger District of the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest brought together groups that often demonize each other when debating how public lands might be used.

Organized under the auspices of the Bear River Watershed Council, the weekend's work project included volunteers from the Backcountry Volunteers, the Wasatch Outlaws, Bridgerland Audubon Society, a Boy Scout group from nearby Hyrum, the Bridgerland Trail Riders Association ATV group and the Utah Backcountry Horsemen, as well as dedicated hunters.

Dan Miller, executive director of the Bear River Watershed Council, chose his words carefully when describing what the volunteers enjoying beautiful spring weather, a Dutch oven dinner and a lot of hard work were trying to accomplish.

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about it."

One of the most useful parts of the projects involved volunteers using the skills of Wes Thompson, a hydro-geologist from Bio-West, to create water bars to divert flowing water off the rugged dirt road to

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Scott Greenwell hauls shovels up the canyon. (Tom Wharton/The Salt Lake Tribune)

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control sediment and erosion.

Jennefer Parker, the Logan District ranger for the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest, called the resource value of what the hard working volunteers did "dramatic."

"We can't do this ourselves," she said, adding that responsible motorized groups that promote legal trail use are effective in preserving access.

Still, in an era where user groups seem more inclined to fight and go to court than to work together, it seemed strange to see motorized trail users putting up barriers to limit use.

Four-wheel enthusiast Larry Olsen of Ogden said groups like the Wasatch Outlaws have worked on projects such as this one for a long time. He passed out bumper stickers proclaiming four-wheelers as true environmentalists.

"When we start working together, we find that we're not all that different," said four-wheeler John Fritsche, of Ogden.

"This encourages people to stay on the trail," added four-wheeler Fred Westra, of Clearfield.

Guy Perkins, who works for Cache County-based Camp Chef and is an avid hunter, including being a member of the Cache Mule Deer Recovery Group, brought some hunters into the mix in an effort to preserve both habitat and some motorized access.

On the other end of the spectrum, members of the Backcountry Volunteers backpacked to near the top of the canyon to help with the project and paid \$100 to participate.

At the end of the day, with barriers up blocking illegal routes and newly built water bars diverting water off the eroding main road into the natural streambed, many members of the groups enjoyed one another's company and dinner in a green meadow.

* TOM WHARTON can be contacted at wharton@sltrib.com. His phone number is 801-257-8909. Send comments about this story to livingeditor@sltrib.com.

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