

Making The Difference

Message from the Board Chair, Tim Wagner

"Isn't about time we did a newsletter?" someone asked at a recent board meeting. Without hesitation, it was a unanimous "YES!" Of course, no one was really thinking that we'd have to write the darn thing. But here we are, task at hand.

Actually, it's with significant pride that we present this newsletter. It goes without saying that putting it together and getting it out to our membership requires a lot of effort from a few people. But it's with even more pride that BRWC has survived for nearly six years now, and that we actually have a host of great accomplishments for which we can write about in this little rag you hold in your hand.

But before I ramble on any further, please allow me to extend all the credit possible to Dan Miller. From the first talk of this crazy dream called the Bear River Watershed Council back in 2000 to the present, Dan has remained steadfast in keeping it alive.

When, for a variety of reasons, the rest of us bailed in that first year or so, there was Dan attending Forest Service meetings, patrolling the backcountry, or perched in front of his trusty Mac cranking out letters and e-mail alerts to those few who would actually pay attention. I'm sure for two or three years, he felt like he was in a perpetual mode of giving mouth-to-mouth to a dying dog.

But slowly the breaths became more consistent and some of us came back to the effort, along with new committed folks, to the point of where we are today with a roster (and growing) of qualified dues-paying members, a small (also growing) active board, and a slew of activities that continue to garnish more attention and positive results.

MUD, MUD, and more MUD

So what was it that finally got BRWC off the ground? In addition to Dan's unwillingness to give up, there was also the realization that, because of our very limited resources, we would

need to focus on one or two issues where we could really make a difference. At the same time, many began to take notice of a monumental and rapidly growing problem in our precious Bear River Mountains. I refer to the uncontrolled and often illegal off-highway vehicle (OHV) abuse that some call the largest single threat to our public lands.

It was becoming very clear that if people didn't start addressing this issue, we would eventually see our beautiful northern Utah mountains and associated fragile ecosystems become one big motorized playground.

As it turned out, there were more than a few individuals and organizations who shared the same values and determination to work towards protecting our watershed from this increasing threat. Out of this concern evolved Project MUD, an acronym for Motorized Use Data. In a nutshell, Project MUD trains volunteers to go out into the backcountry and document impacts by OHVs such as rutting and soil compaction.. The information collected by MUD volunteers is then posted on BRWC's website where the applicable land managers have access and can then take steps to rectify the situation and prevent further impacts.

You can read much more about Project MUD in this newsletter and by visiting our website. At the same time, I would encourage you to volunteer on this project (see page 3 for our volunteer workshops). It's a great way to see beautiful backcountry areas you may not have visited before, a perfect opportunity to get some needed exercise, and also a way to really make a difference. I can't emphasize this last point enough. And believe me when I say that we are making a difference. Project MUD has been met with extreme gratitude from the Forest Service, an agency that unfortunately falls far short of its law enforcement obligations due to budget shortfalls. Project MUD simply provides much-needed monitoring that the agency has little time and staff to do on its own.

Project MUD has been the on-the-ground tool that has allowed BRWC to bring more and more people into the organization. But again, it hasn't come to reality without the assistance from many individuals, most whom would prefer to remain behind the scenes. But in terms of organizations who have help to support BRWC either financially,

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Board of Directors:

Tim Wagner, Chair

Larry McCormick, Vice-Chair

Dan Miller, Executive Director

Peter Mentzel, Member

Sue McCormick, Member



Dan Miller, Executive Director



Bear River Watershed Council
www.BRWCouncil.org
email: dmi11235@aol.com

MUD: The Public's Stethoscope to Forest Recreational Impact

MUD was Born

Four years ago, BRWC realized the off-highway vehicle (OHV) issue was exploding. National Forest Chief Dale Bosworth said, "The number of people who own OHVs has just exploded in recent years. In 2000, it reached almost 36 million. Even a tiny percentage of impact from all those millions of users is still a lot of impact. Each year, we get hundreds of miles of what we euphemistically refer to as "unplanned roads and trails."

Severe erosion, habitat fragmentation, introduction of exotic plant species, degraded water quality are just a few of the problems created by the growing number of uneducated motorized users. BRWC's volunteers were motivated to address the issue locally, and our effective Motorized Use Data Project (MUD) was born.

MUD Documents Impacts

Project MUD trains and sends citizen-volunteers into our National Forests to document motorized and recreational impacts such as unauthorized roads, severe rutting, dispersed camping damage and intrusions into wilderness areas. Volunteers take digital photos and GPS (Global Positioning System) waypoints, and BRWC compiles the information and posts it on our Web site.

BRWC is recording data in a way that clearly defines unauthorized routes, erosion concerns, and soil and vegetation impacts. This past year alone 26 individuals gave their time and energy to this important work by logging over 382 volunteer hours and walking over 100 miles of routes in the Wasatch-Cache National Forest.

MUD Analyzes

BRWC's analysis of Project MUD data found that volunteers have walked 130 miles of the district's 321.43 miles of authorized roads and discovered 30 miles of unauthorized routes. Extrapolating for the entire district, Project MUD's figures indicate a troubling 100 miles of unauthorized routes. We want to emphasize the fact that 100 miles is a conservative estimate.

Project Mud data incorporated with published criteria from the Forest Service will provide a route density analysis. This will help determine which routes are satisfactory or not based on wildlife habitat zones.

BRWC is a member of the Utah Quiet Forest Coalition, where the combined resources of members are addressing OHV impacts. Members include: Great Old Broads for Wilderness (database management), Western Resource Advocates (legal), Wild Utah Project (science, mapping and GIS), and the Utah chapter of Sierra Club.

Utilizing the Utah Quiet Forest Coalition's resources, Project MUD is the first part of a four-pronged approach:

First, is to collect the information through our citizen-based monitoring project and present the Logan Ranger District with our findings. This will give the district the opportunity to address problems. Subsequently, we would identify areas targeted for restoration efforts.

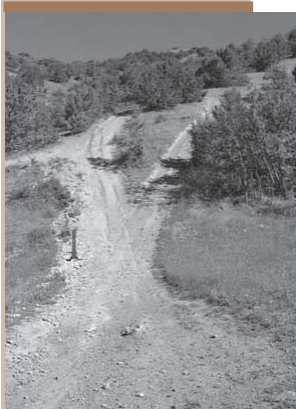
Second, is to look at the broader landscape by incorporating sound science into the monitoring protocol, as well as developing "best management practices" for OHVs. Wild Utah Project is using computer-mapping (GIS) analysis combined with our citizen-gathered field data to scientifically assess both compatible and incompatible OHV zones (including enforceable areas), and will present this analysis to both the agency and the public.

Third, is to develop an integrated media and public outreach campaign to build support among a diverse set of land users, private land owners, ranchers, elected leaders, responsible OHV groups, and the media in ways that give our recommendations increased weight in the Forest Service decision-making process.



Above: Ruts from OHV abuse create widened roadways damaging vegetation and create maintenance nightmares.

Below: Illegal routes despoil the landscape.



Fourth, is taking legal action (if necessary), to enforce route closures. Western Resource Advocates will concentrate on permanent closures of unauthorized “user-created” routes that cause the most ecosystem damage, including those that intrude on wilderness areas. The legal team will rely on both Project MUD data delivered by our citizen monitors and the analysis provided by the science team.

MUD will Address New Travel Plan

The Logan Ranger District is preparing to revise their Travel Plan and there is extreme political pressure from local government and motorized users to open “user-created” and new routes within the new plan.

In addition, Cache County is in the process of filing RS 2477 road claims within Logan Ranger District boundaries. Their preliminary map shows roads that no longer exist, extend into wilderness, and are otherwise in conflict with the current Travel Plan. MUD documentation will aid in these discussions.

Making a difference

Spring Forest Route Workshop

Would you like to hike and explore the local mountains and, at the same time, make a difference?

This is your chance to learn how. Two workshops (in Ogden and Logan) will teach citizens like you how to document recreational impacts in our National Forests.

Citizen-volunteers will walk local Forest Service routes and, when they witness impacts such as unauthorized roads, severe rutting, and dispersed camping damage, take digital photos and GPS (Global Positioning System) waypoints.

The resulting information will be entered into an online database developed by Great Old Broads for Wilderness, and will be available for use by scientists who will analyze and assess the impacts and appropriateness of various uses in the context of the broader landscape. This is a very powerful tool, and your contribution to this process can make a meaningful difference in the future condition of our local forests.

The workshop will include a 2-hour class session and an afternoon field trip to practice data collection skills. The workshop will cover the use of GPS units and what type of impacts to photograph. There will be extra cameras and GPS units available.

If you, your organization, or others you think may be interested, in attending please contact Dan Miller at (435) 258-4432 or Dmill235@aol.com to reserve a space.

Ogden

Saturday, May 13, 2006
Ogden Nature Center
966 W. 12th St.

10:00 a.m.
12:00 p.m.
1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Logan

Saturday, June 3, 2006
Edith Bowen Elementary Laboratory School
on the USU Campus

Class
Bring your own lunch (fruit and juice provided)
Field workshop

Workshops sponsored by the Bear River Watershed Council (BRWC), the Ogden Group of the Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, and Wild Utah Project. For more information see BRWC’s Web site at: www.BRWCouncil.org

Special Thanks...

We wish to thank everyone who has become a supporting member along with those who have volunteered endless hours of their time to see the BRWC come to the forefront of the valley’s environmental community. We are making a difference!

Thanks to the following for their generous donations:

- Mike Johnson & Suzanne Pratt-Johnson
 - Nick Bouwes
 - Phaedra Budy
 - John Carter
 - Bryan Dixon & Jean Lown
 - Laura Fisher & Bob Bissland
 - William & Sylvia Jensen
 - Wally & Sammie Macfarlane
 - John Marcus
 - Martha Balph
 - Mary Palley
 - Heather Robison
 - Alan & Joan Shaw
 - Todd Sherman & Denise Gackstetter
 - Karen & Rick Steele
- To all those who wish to remain anonymous but given so freely.

Special Thanks...

Our thanks to the following local businesses and organizations for their commitment and continued support:

Bridgerland Audubon Society
 Caffe Ibis Inc.
 Crumb Brothers Bakery
 ECOS (USU)
 Great Old Broads for Wilderness
 Nordic United
 Square One Printing
 Utah Conservation Corps
 Utah Sierra Club
 Western Watersheds Project, Inc.
 Western Wildlife Conservancy
 Wild Utah Projects
 Winter Wildlands Alliance
 X-Mission

 Wasatch Outlaws (4X4 Club) and Millville Scout Troop #305 for their supporting efforts in Millville Canyon.

THANK YOU ALL for believing in a better world!



DownStream

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technically or spiritually in the last few years, I must make mention of Bridgerland Audubon Society, Wild Utah Project, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Western Resource Advocates, the Ogden Group of the Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club, National Forest Foundation, and Nordic United. Thank you, thank you all!

SNOW, SNOW, AND ...WHERE DID THOSE TRACKS COME FROM?

BRWC's scope of protecting our watershed and wildlife habitat took on a winter component in the last six months. We decided to join Bridgerland Audubon Society, Nordic United and Winter Wildlands Alliance in challenging the Forest Service's July 2005 decision, in violation of federal law, to open about half of the 9000 acres previously closed to motorized recreation, i.e. snowmobiles. Through a long series of meetings and comment periods, the Forest Service appropriately closed this area to winter

motorized recreation in the 2003 plan, only to be suddenly reversed, without public comment, in the summer of 2005. As a result on December 15, 2005, we filed a legal complaint in Federal Court.

As of this writing, we have reached a settlement agreement in our favor.

YOU GODAN!

Did I mention Dan Miller and all of his hard work? Well, I'm not the only one to take notice. We recently received notice that Dan has been voted to receive the Allen Stokes Conservation Award from Bridgerland Audubon and will be presented the award at BAS's annual dinner on April 28th. Let's all buy our tickets for the banquet and give Dan a standing round of well-deserved applause.

And finally, I also want to give a very special thanks to my co-board members and hot-tub partners Sue and Larry Morgan. BRWC lives because of you!

Tim Wagner

Bear River Watershed Council Needs Your Support!

Are you interested in becoming a member of BRWC or involved in Project MUD? You can make a difference! Please complete the information below and return it with your donation to: BRWC, PO Box 404, Richmond, UT 84333-0404 or contact dmill235@aol.com

Member in the BRWC is just \$20 a year. These funds are used to fund Project MUD; and to help off-set the cost of educational information made available to the public at community fairs and events. Only a small portion is used for administrative overhead thanks to our generous supporters.

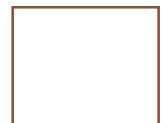
Yes, I would like to become a member of BRWC. Please find enclosed my check for: \$20 in addition, I would like to donate \$_____.

Name _____
 Address _____ City _____ State/Zip _____
 Day Phone _____ E-mail _____

The BRWC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization

Thank You!

BRWC
 PO Box 404
 Richmond, UT 84333



Bear River Watershed Council

Working to restore and sustain the ecosystem health and biological diversity of the Bear River watershed.