

WILDERNESS QUANDARY (CONTINUED)

face otherwise. I see twisting and contorting the actual legal requirements and definition of wilderness to people who have other things to do for a living and don't have the time to become "public law savvy"

In effect, they are attempting to convince the general population that "pretty" = "wilderness"!

I believe in protecting unique landscapes, wild landscapes, and yes, sometimes "pretty" landscapes. Not all areas have to be or should be developed or utilized by motorized recreationists or commodity developers.

What bunches my shorts up however is the subterfuge being used here. There aren't 9.8 million acres of "wilderness" on public lands in Utah as established by the criteria set forth in the Wilderness Act, almost 50 years ago. If groups want to protect 9.8 million acres of public land in Utah, then they should be honest about what they want to do.

- * Quit focusing on the manipulation of public opinion and stick with facts and legal definitions.

- * Quit trying to demand that all "pretty" places should be designated wilderness.

There are several other ways to protect land without without using smoke and mirrors to confound the whole philosophical and legal concept of wilderness. It can be designated as natural areas, national monuments, areas of critical environmental concern. BLM can and has, through the RMP process, closed roads into areas, withdrawn lands from mining claim locations, and decided not to issue oil and gas leases in some areas. Designate wilderness where it's wilderness, by God! Protect the rest if you will in some other fashion.

I suppose I'll be eviscerated by some environmentalists and others of similar ideological inclinations. They'll claim they are simply using the "tools" available



to them. They'll claim they have to use these tactics to counterattack the dirty tactics used by the other side, the evil-doers and pillagers of the earth. They'll suggest that too many years at BLM ate whatever few brain cells I may have once had. They'll say they would expect no less from someone who spent a career at the Bureau of Livestock and Mining. They'll say I clearly don't see the big picture! They'll say I don't want to save the earth. They'll probably even say my mother wears combat boots (I told you, I have a few rings around my waist).

What they won't say however is this: that they're using the emotional romance of wilderness to push an agenda of public land closures to all but hikers and

backpackers. They won't say that they are manipulating and misusing the legal system to accomplish their goals. They won't say they will utilize all manner of press and news media to purposely spread misinformation (otherwise called hooley).

There are several other ways to protect land without without using smoke and mirrors to confound the whole philosophical and legal concept of wilderness....

(But) There aren't 9.8 million acres of "wilderness" on public lands in Utah as established by the criteria set forth in the Wilderness Act, almost 50 years ago.

The Message

I'm not really a neophyte or a Pollyanna (I don't think?). I was in public land management in southeast Utah for 32 years. I know there are politics involved in public land management. I know part of politics is manipulating legal definitions, the media and public opinion. I don't think that wilderness in Utah is the only place such things happen. In fact, it's rampant in our society. None of us know what to believe anymore. The truth, as Fox Mulder used to say, is out there. But it requires effort and diligence to find it.

So seek the truth about wilderness before you decide. Don't believe all the hype being put out there by either side. The best way to resolve the wilderness situation in Utah is through fully-educated public citizens, politicians, leaders and special interest groups, dealing in actual facts and actual legal definitions.

Hmm, maybe I am a Pollyanna.

Lynn Jackson lives in Moab, Utah.



**Is it Wilderness? (left)
Or is it NOT? (right)**

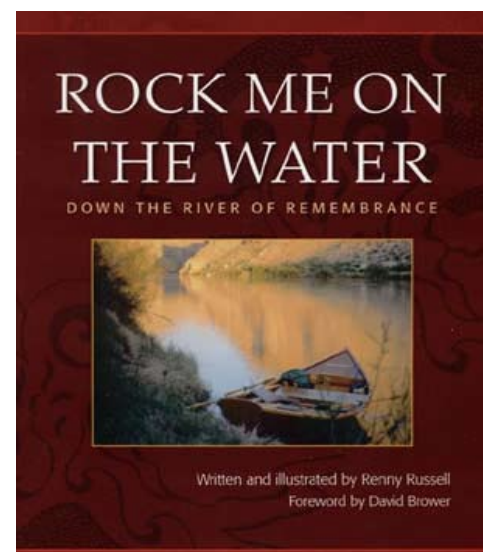
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by either side.**

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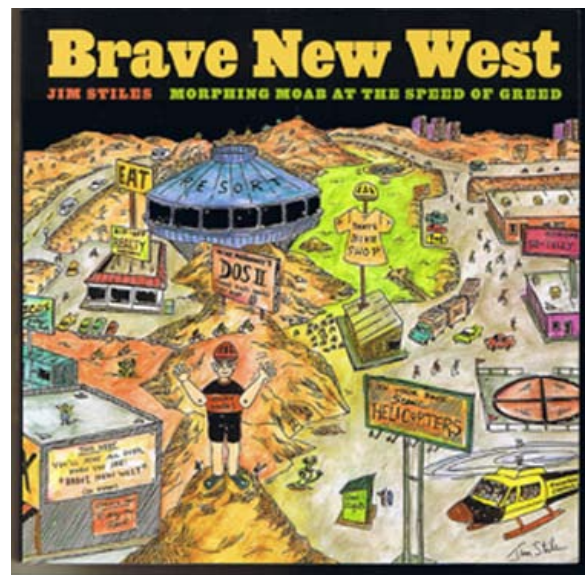
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