

BIKE BORG MOVES SOUTH

(continued)

For the Discovery Center to become a reality, much of its funding comes from the same wealthy benefactors that keep organizations like the Grand Canyon Trust and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance flush with cash. When the Four Corners School became an active participant and driver of the CCDC, Ross knew how to bring in money in ways other locals would never imagine. Recent major contributors, according to the CCDC's web site, include billionaire Hansjorg Wyss, who sits on both GCT's and SUWA's board of directors. He has provided significant funding, (reportedly \$2 million). Venture capitalist David Bonderman, a billionaire who recently spent more than \$10 million on his own 70th birthday party, added his own generous donation. He also sits on the board of directors of The Grand Canyon Trust and is a major SUWA financial backer. Other multi-millionaires with roots in Moab and longtime supporters of mainstream green causes have tossed some of their largesse into the CCDC pot as well.

The list of Four Corners School/Discovery Center 2013 'gear sponsors' sounds like a roll call of Outdoor Industry Alliance (OIA) members, including: Adventure Medical Kits, All Terrain, Alpine Aire Foods, Backcountry.com, Black Diamond, Camelbak, Carhartts, Camp Chef, Clif Bar, Columbia, Crazy



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Creek, Don't Go Nuts/Pinto Barn, Eureka, Falcon Guides, GSI, GU, Hanes/Duofold, Hi-Tec, Honeystinger, Hyalite, Jansport, Kahtoola, Katadyn, Keen, Kelty, LaraBar, Mountain House Foods, Mountain Khakis, Mystery Ranch, Osprey, Patagonia, Petzl, Princeton Tec, Polar Bottle, Red Ledge, Sea to Summit, Smart Socks, Smartwool, Stage, TEVA, Timberland, and Travel Chair.

Yet the letter that ignited the recent controversy over the "Greater Canyonlands" proposal was, in fact, from the OIA—a letter that Korenblat vainly tried to distance herself from when she addressed the commissioners. The same people pushing the Greater Canyonlands plan are simultaneously dedicated to seeing CCDC work. Why? Is it possible to believe that billionaires like Hansjorg Wyss and David Bonderman or OIA sponsors like Black Diamond and TEVA have the best interests of rural San Juan County in mind and heart when they dump money by the truckload into this project?

No. What these benefactors want, and what most people who embrace a New West Amenities economy to fuel its future want, is the same kind of demographic change that happened in Moab. This is about changing the social fabric of a small town from one that is essentially rural and conservative to a more "progressive"/mainstream "green" New West population center. It's that simple.

Finding Consensus with Ed Abbey & Brigham Young...

So...what would Monticello look like if urban enviropreneurs were as successful as they'd like to be? What would a suddenly booming tourist/recreation economy do to San Juan County and the residents that live there now? Imagine the changes in real terms.

New businesses would mean more infrastructure and extra work for contractors, plumbers and electricians, though once the word is out, new faces in these

fields would come as well, creating more competition. At first, retail stores would see a dramatic increase in sales—the grocery, the mercantile, the drug store. Motels and cafes. But again, competition for increased business would play a role here...as the expanded 'tourist pie' gets carved up, and more businesses come to compete for it, the slices would shrink. Soon businesses would complain that their slice is too small. That they need a bigger pie. That means more funds for tourist promotion and for more "amenities" to draw them.

Expect more motels, more espresso shops and restaurants. Assume that eventually, the local government will acquiesce to the need for some kind of bar or brew pub. Franchise restaurants will finally see a viable reason to expand their markets and small locally owned restaurants will suffer for their arrival. More people means a second grocery and a second drug store. Now that Moab has two weekly papers, Monticello's more conservative San Juan Record could face a similar challenge.



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As the boom grows and Monticello gains cachet, as it assumes its role as the next 'New West' town, the value of homes would increase, perhaps quickly. For those who just want to sell and get out, skyrocketing prices make for good investments. They're not so great for people who want to keep calling Monticello home---appraised values would jump and so would property taxes. As the market for existing homes dries up, a push for new housing would follow. Open fields and agricultural areas adjacent to the city would rise exponentially in value, making it difficult for the current owners to resist selling. Those who choose to hold onto their lands would also face huge tax increases.

Local residents might be surprised to see a new level of cooperation between the non-motorized recreation community and the BLM in San Juan County. At a September 2013 public meeting in Sedona, Arizona, Grand County Trail Mix trails coordinator Scott Escott bragged about his organization's extraordinary success in constructing new single track bicycle trails on public lands near Moab. He pointed to more than a decade of work, "building trust" with the BLM. "And now we have another line of trust," Escott proclaimed. "What Trail Mix has gained from this is that the BLM defers to us when it comes to the actual trail building. They trust us and do not question us on trail alignment and construction. This trust is the basis of our partnership."

Escott noted that their biggest critic at BLM, Katie Stevens, had observed their trail construction. According to Escott, "Katie called it the Appian Way, after the work of the ancient Romans which still exists today." He could not have been prouder. Will that kind of enthusiasm lead to similar single-track/bike-only trails in San Juan County?

I've never liked the idea of giving ANY special interest recreation group, whether they represented motorized or non-motorized interests, a blank check to plan and build trails of any kind across public lands. I'm sure my mainstream green friends have fought tooth-and-nail over the years to block what they perceive to be collusion between government agencies like the BLM and ATV organizations. Now, with the Bike Borg in Moab clearly claiming sovereignty to do as they please on public lands, at the very least, an entirely new kind of debate over public lands access and modification could lie ahead.

(For the full speech: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5438587.pdf)

Some will argue that Moab and Monticello are two very different critters and that to assume the same revolution that hammered Moab will strike San Juan County is a mistake. It is true, Moab has always suffered from a Boomtown mentality, while Monticello has clung to its insularity. And certainly Monticello's long bleak winters could discourage many would-be investors. I used

to think Moab's incredible heat would be a deterrent to its growth. Who could afford to buy a second home and use it for a few weeks a year? But I was wrong. As it turned out there were plenty of buyers, especially when the prices were low, as they are in Monticello now. To assume that Monticello is too cold and too conservative and too isolated to experience a boom similar to Moab's is to make the same mistake we made when we lived in Moab and thought it could never happen there either.

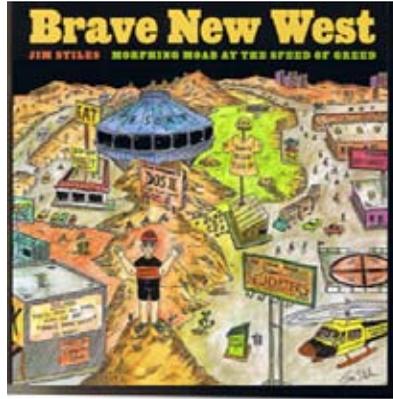
Whatever the impacts and the changes that may result, Ashley Korenblat and her allies at the UOBN insist that the high-paying jobs will come from a tourist/recreation-based industry. And to make her case she points to, "the loads of people leaving Salt Lake City to move to Moab." But isn't that the point? Her Grand Plan helps the "loads of people" who live elsewhere, who see an opportunity to cash in on what they perceive to be a depressed economy in San Juan County. And at whose expense? The people who already live here.

Ed Abbey once said, "Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell." And it was Brigham Young who noted, "Those who are covetous and greedy, anxious to grasp the whole world, are all the time uneasy, and are constantly laying their plans and contriving how to obtain this, that, and the other. . . . How the Devil will play with a man who so worships gain!"

Good to see Brigham and Cactus Ed on the same page...Sometimes it helps to stop and consider just how much 'stuff' any of us really needs to be happy. We say this town is depressed and that community is thriving. But what device do we use to make the measurements and draw conclusions? Must we always view wealth in dollars and cents? Do we ever look at its more intangible aspects? Brigham Young also noted, "Men are greedy for the vain things of this world."

Monticello is not a perfect place to live. Its insularity can be exasperating and its politics as petty and self-serving as any other small town in the rural west. Every vice known to 21st Century humanity can be found there if you look hard enough. And, for crying out loud, even the grocery closes on Sunday! But for the vast majority of good and decent people who choose to live there, Monticello works. It works for them. It's home. No, the town isn't flush with 'amenities' and no, you can't get a good Merlot.

Recently a friend argued that Monticello NEEDS changing. "It's so backward," he complained. "So...parochial." Yes, I guess it is. But it's their town. Those who hope to transform Monticello don't do it out of some deeply held moral concern. They're doing it for the money. And that, as Brigham and Cactus Ed note, is always the bottom line.



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-- Terry Tempest Williams

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