

*POINTBLANK: A Reply to Last Issue's 'Bike Borg' Story*  
**The Bishop Public Lands Initiative, Local Control and Shared Values**  
 Ashley Korenblat

*EDITOR'S NOTE: The Feb/Mar issue included an essay called, "Moab is Assimilated: Bike Borg Moves South...Is Resistance Futile in San Juan County?" Ashley Korenblat, of the Utah Outdoor Business Network, asked for an opportunity to reply. Here is her guest editorial...JS*

In 2013 I attended a San Juan County Commission meeting to talk with the commissioners about how the proposed public lands bill being considered by Congressman Bishop would affect the recreation economy of the region.

I am an outfitter and have lived in Grand County for 18 years. My company, Western Spirit Cycling runs multi-day bicycle trips on the public lands throughout the county, and is headquartered in Moab. I have served as the President of the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) and am now working with Public Land Solutions, a non-profit that works with government, businesses and other public land stakeholders on issues that affect gateway communities.

Congressman Bishop has begun the challenging process of crafting a public lands bill that would set the stage for the future of public land management in Eastern Utah. The work I did for IMBA included studying 30 similar federal land bills around the country.

While each bill involved entirely different specifics, they all included a great deal of blood, sweat, and tears on the part of locals such as hunters, loggers, conservationists, skiers, miners, firefighters, and climbers—to name just a few, as well as hundreds of thousands of dollars spent by national advocacy organizations that represent diverse stakeholders.

In some places people met for years to sort out all the issues and find ways to meet everyone's needs going forward. And even though mountain bicycles are prohibited in federally designated wilderness areas, IMBA endorsed 28 of those 30 bills. You might wonder why we would support something that prohibits our use, and the answer is that the mountain bike community depends on public land in its natural state. A big part of mountain biking is being outside in the great outdoors.

But of course we use metal and oil and all kinds of resources to make the bikes themselves. The bills we support optimize the public lands. These bills sorted out who was going to do what where. They protected large amounts of natural places, while allowing for timber, mining, and oil and gas. They also resolved decades old debates that have tied everyone's hands for years.

Most importantly, these legislative efforts all involved broad local support. The locals have used the legislative process to make their voices heard. They have worked with their neighbors to compromise, to zone, to plan balanced futures that don't lock up all the land, but don't use it all up either.

Yes the land is still owned by the federal government and yes it is federal legislation, but the people that wrote these bills have embraced their federal land and are making progress managing it for their future. We have that same opportunity right now in all of Eastern Utah. Winston Churchill once said, "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others." Writing legislation can be frustrating and terribly inefficient. We are guaranteed lots of challenging meetings, where people in circles, but in the end these public land bills are the best way to plan for the lands we all share.

And speaking of sharing, I think it is time to move beyond the concept of shared values. In the sound bite world we live in, we have all been reduced to one-sentence mission statements declaring our values, both in our own eyes and those of others, and we rarely bother to talk to those that don't share our values.

**I am an outfitter and have lived in Grand County for 18 years. My company, Western Spirit Cycling runs multi-day bicycle trips on the public lands... I have served as the President of the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) and am now working with Public Land Solutions, a non-profit that works with government, businesses and other public land stakeholders on issues that affect gateway communities.**

Whether the label on your forehead says "save the earth," "reduce government spending," or "cling hopelessly to the Ed Abbey era"—it is time to start talking to people who don't share your values. I don't think the people who are for smaller government want their children to breathe bad air, anymore than I think the people who want to save the earth, want to give up all the modern conveniences of cars and cell phones. And by the way in *Desert Solitaire*, Mr. Abbey says: "Let our people travel light and free on their bicycles— nothing on the back but a shirt, nothing tied to the bike but a slicker in case of rain."

Everything we do on this earth is a compromise, and living in a democracy is probably the most important. It is time for us to stop judging each other, and instead sit down and look at the maps. We own this land together and this is our chance to plan for its future.



*Ashley has spent the last 15 years at Western Spirit Cycling, an outfitter based in Moab, Utah who runs multi-day trips throughout the US, and is one of the largest holders of recreational permits on the public lands system. Ashley was inducted into the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame in 2003. She was appointed to the Utah BLM Resource Advisory Council for two terms, as well as the Outdoor Recreation Economic Ecosystem Taskforce created by Utah Governor Jon Huntsman. Ashley created IMBA's Public Lands Initiative and has testified before Congress on the recreation economy. She recently served on The Western Governor's Association's Get Out West Committee.*



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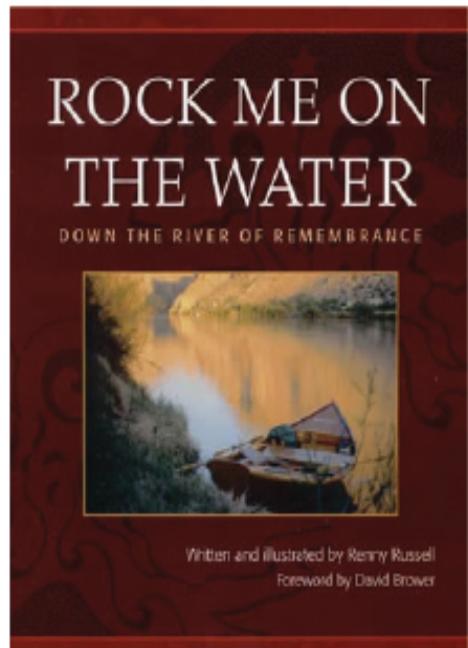


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*Robert Redford*

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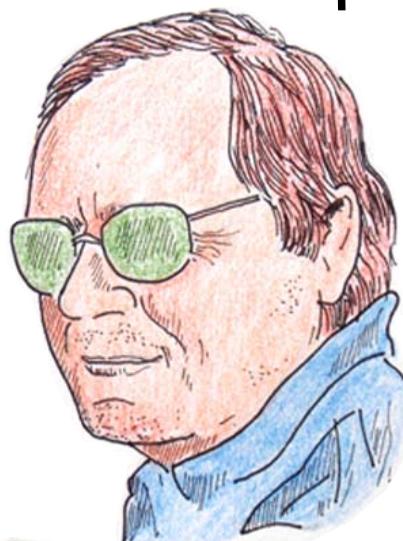
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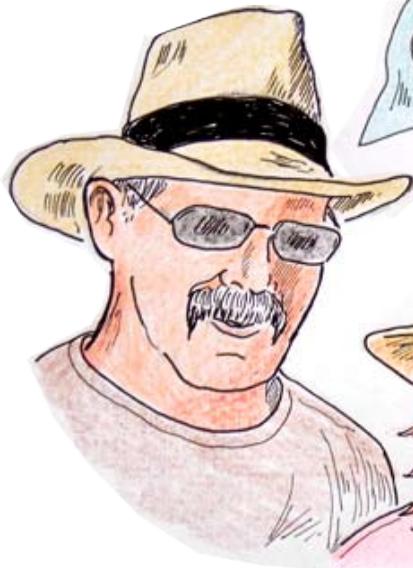
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