Board Chair’s Message, by Pam Miller

Dear Members:

The summer seems to be passing quickly and the Fall Gathering is coming up soon. We have been very busy with Nine Mile business as you can see by reading the accompanying articles in this issue of the newsletter. I appreciate all those who have taken time from work and personal activities to come to meetings and make trips to Nine Mile Canyon. So much is happening in the area of Nine Mile and we must keep abreast of the issues and activities. We will forward developments to you through this newsletter or through our email alerts. Steve Hansen and Jerry Vaculin do a tremendous amount of work on the newsletter and on the action alerts and I thank them for their efforts. Board members are finding Nine Mile Canyon issues to be a full-time job.

One exciting new development is our recent meeting with the core team of the Price Field Office EIS for their Range Management Plan. There is a report of that meeting in this newsletter, but I would like to thank the Price Field Office team and especially Fred O’Ferrall for setting up the meeting. Those board members in attendance felt it was a positive meeting and were encouraged when we left the BLM office. We must also recognize Patrick Gubbins for making the initial contact with the Coalition for the meeting. Mr. O’Ferrall has also set up a meeting with Bill Barrett Corporation, the BLM, and the Coalition Board. That meeting is set for August 17th in Price. We will report on that meeting in our next newsletter.

The Fall Gathering is our most important event of the year. Chanel Atwood and Diane Gorman-Jenkins have been working on the program and arrangements. We thank them for their work. You will find the registration form in this newsletter. Please make your reservations promptly so we can plan effectively. Notice that we are emphasizing tours this year, and our program will be smaller and simpler. We will still have the Coalition store and the silent auction. These two activities are critical fundraising events for the Coalition. Hopefully the National Register Nomination for the prehistoric resources of Nine Mile Canyon will be submitted soon, and we will need additional funds to develop the nomination for the historic sites. Also, the interpretative panels for the Gate Canyon intersection are nearing completion and we will need funding for the protective kiosk.

We need your donations for the silent auction. Items related to Nine Mile history or prehistory are especially popular. Please take items to the Castle Country Regional Information Center in the lobby of the Prehistoric Museum in Price, or to the Welcome Center in Duchesne. If you bring them with you, please let Diane or Chanel know what you are bringing. Plan to donate and to purchase. We expect many fine and interesting items, and all proceeds go to furthering the Coalition’s mission of preserving and protecting Nine Mile Canyon.

Thank you for caring about Nine Mile Canyon and all that you do to contribute to the efforts to preserve and protect the Canyon.
A meeting was held in Price on June 29th between the Coalition and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to address issues pertaining to the ongoing West Tavaputs Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Coalition Chair, Pam Miller was joined by board members Chanel Atwood and Steve Tanner, and Coalition member Ivan White at a meeting that was originally proposed by former BLM Price Field Office (PFO) Manager, Patrick Gubbins. The meeting was attended by Julie Howard, cultural resources representative for the BLM State Office, and from the BLM-PFO, Fred O’Ferrall, Don Stephens, Brad Higdon, Mary Maddux and Wayne Ludington.

The first issue discussed in the meeting was the Nine Mile Canyon Scenic Backcountry Byway and how the Bill Barrett Corporation’s (BBC) proposed industrial development will affect the integrity of the byway during drilling operations. Issues pertaining to the visual and aesthetic qualities of the National Backcountry Byway, and how monumental increases in industrial traffic coming from the Uinta Basin and from Carbon County will affect the integrity of these qualities was discussed. Traffic problems and residual dust were two of the issues considered.

The BLM pointed out the boundaries of BBC’s proposed project, and that other than four well pads (a pad may have multiple wells) on BBC’s recently acquired private land in the bottom of the canyon, there wouldn’t be any drilling along the byway. The Coalition reminded the BLM of the increase in industrial traffic in the canyon using the Nine Mile road to access the plateau from both the Uinta Basin and Price. The BLM indicated that they had carefully considered the feasibility of other routes that would primarily avoid Nine Mile Canyon, but they claim that none seem plausible. According to the BLM, BBC initiated a travel study a year ago and is monitoring seasonal use and recreation vs. industrial traffic. This information will help them develop a transportation plan and identify engineering problems and corridors.

BBC currently has 38 wells installed, three drilling rigs in operation and five wells will be drilled in the near future. When asked why BLM is allowing BBC to exceed the development of wells beyond the 38 well drill plan without awaiting completion of the EIS, Mr. O’Ferrall reminded the Coalition that on August 8, 2005, Congress passed the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which included a provision to exclude certain oil and gas related activities from National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review (you may recall the alert we sent to you prior to the congressional vote, urging you to contact your representatives to voice your opinions concerning this ill-conceived legislation). This legislation allows “statutory categorical exclusions” (CX’s) of otherwise required public notification and comment concerning proposed energy development where surface disturbance does not exceed a five acre area.

Board member Steve Tanner again raised the Nine Mile road issues, including dust, the affects of dust suppressing magnesium chloride on rock art and cultural sites, industrial traffic-induced vibration and its effects on rock art and cultural sites, traffic control and enforcement, weekend industrial traffic, and the legal right-of-way (claimed by Carbon County to be an RS2477 route) through the canyon. BBC contractor, Buys & Associates (B&A), is preparing a transportation plan for the BLM, and they invited the Coalition to send comments on road issues to B&A. Mr. O’Ferrall announced that he would put the dust study back on the table.

Coalition Member, Ivan White, presented photographs of spacious dust plumes taken just a few weeks ago at the Great Hunt Panel, and Steve Tanner presented results of dust accumulation samples that were gathered along the Byway and near rock art. Health and safety issues surrounding airborne dust were raised and there was some discussion on Carbon County’s plans to widen the road and eliminate blind curves. The Coalition stressed that it does...
not take a stand on whether or not to pave the road. The Coalition’s top concerns are visitor safety, preservation of rock art and cultural resources, and environmental impacts. Steve Tanner asked about water quality and hydrology studies. The BLM said that water quality would be addressed in the EIS and that the BLM hydrologist is currently working on a baseline study regardless of the EIS. Steve recommended that the roads through the side canyons be tested for remnants of magnesium chloride carried on vehicle tires as part of a study on how mag-chloride is impacting the canyons and waterways. Private landowners are concerned about the quality of their surface water, as well as how chemicals used in drilling operations may affect ground water (wells, seeps and springs).

Coalition Chair, Pam Miller, asked about activities that are happening that the 38-well EA said would not happen, such as drilling during winter months (critical wildlife habitat period). The BLM acknowledged that there was activity last winter that they had denied the previous winter due to milder winter conditions, consultation with Utah Department of Wildlife Resources, and the BLM wanting to establish quantitative baseline information on the effects of winter drilling. BLM and a private firm monitored the drilling activity and BLM claims the dust was minimal because the roads were frozen.

Mary Maddux argues that winter drilling is better for nesting/breeding raptors and that some of BBC’s leases are very old and don’t have stipulations. This discussion lead to the question of why the Environmental Assessment (EA) process is conducted with public notification, a public comment period, and a record of decision, but in the end the decisions outlined in the resulting EA are not followed. It is frustrating to the Coalition and others when changes are later made and the public is not made aware of these changes, nor given the opportunity to respond to those changes. Mr. O’Ferrall indicated that it is frustrating for the BLM as well, saying that Congress passes new laws, or new rules are issued that have to be worked into the process. He reported that there is a website (www.ut.blm.gov/enbb/index.php) where every NEPA activity is posted, including CX’s that allow changes to stipulations set forth in the EA (remember this when you go to vote for your congressional representatives in November).

The Coalition raised concerns about the rumor that the Nine Mile Canyon Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) had been removed from the draft resource management plan (RMP). The BLM assured the Coalition that the proposed ACEC was still contained in the draft RMP, but with minor changes to the boundaries that did not warrant another public comment period.

Cumulative effects of past, present, and future projects in the West Tavaputs region were discussed. BLM’s Brad Higdon said they were working with the Vernal Field Office to address the GASCO project on the north side of Nine Mile Canyon, as well as prospective tar sands and oil shale development in the region.

Issues regarding the EIS will be discussed in further detail in an upcoming meeting (August 17th) arranged by the BLM-PFO with representatives from BBC. The need for comprehensive dust studies, water quality, and traffic control are among the topics to be addressed.
Representatives of the Nine Mile Canyon Coalition and the Utah Rock Art Research Association (URARA) joined representatives from Questar Gas Company, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), consulting archaeologist for Questar, Keith Montgomery, BLM archaeologist, Blaine Miller, and pipeline contractors for a field trip in Nine Mile Canyon on June 7th, 2006, to assess the proposed route for a new 24” natural gas pipeline. Because the proposed route and the associated construction project will affect Nine Mile Canyon, Questar invited the two preservation organizations to join them for a tour of the proposed route with hopes of gleaning feedback from “the experts.” Representing the Coalition were Chair, Pam Miller, board members Steve Tanner and Steve Hansen, and Coalition member, Ivan White. URARA was represented by Diane Orr and Steve Manning.

Environmental Supervisor for Questar, Mike Molenaar, contacted the Coalition in January, requesting an opportunity to present their plans to install a 24” buried pipeline that will affect Nine Mile Canyon. At the January board meeting, Mr. Molenaar and Questar representative, Mitch Shields, presented three alternative routes under consideration, 1) the northern corridor running primarily parallel to, and on the north benches of Nine Mile, 2) adjacent to the existing pipeline through the bottom of Nine Mile Canyon, and 3) the southern utility corridor over the Tavaputs Plateau. The Coalition board unanimously agreed that the southern utility corridor was the preferred route, and asked that an alternative route exiting Nine Mile through Olsen Canyon be considered.

The “on the ground” trip held on June 7th was a tour of the preferred southern utility corridor alternative, selected through public scoping meetings and Questar’s own “on the ground” work. The proposal is that the pipeline would enter Water Canyon from the north, supplied by a newly constructed natural gas compressor facility northeast of Water Canyon on Wrinkle Road. It would then drop into Water Canyon on its eastern slope approximately one half mile northeast, and out of sight, of the Scenic Byway. The proposed pipeline route would enter Nine Mile Canyon on the Nutter Ranch, where it would turn westbound in or near the large coral on the south side of the road then run upstream, primarily through the Nutter hayfields alongside the recently installed Bill Barrett Corp’s (BBC) natural gas pipeline. It would exit Nine Mile Canyon approximately two miles upstream from where it enters Nine Mile at Water Canyon, climbing south from the Nutter Ranch to the top of the plateau on the south side of the canyon and adjacent to BBC’s pipeline. The pipeline would then follow a west-southwest direction across the West Tavaputs Plateau and cross the Backcountry Byway again in Soldier Creek Canyon, approximately 1.5 miles downstream from the abandoned Soldier Creek coal mine.

As previously mentioned, on the recommendation of the Coalition board, Questar evaluated a potential modification to the preferred southern utility route where the pipeline would exit Nine Mile Canyon through Olsen Canyon, directly across Nine Mile from Water Canyon. This route would have posed the least impact to Nine Mile, but was found to be prohibitive due to geological obstacles in Olsen Canyon. The environmental and geological damage that would be sustained in Olsen Canyon to install and accommodate a buried pipeline was too great to make this a feasible route. BLM’s Blaine Miller saw advantages to routing the pipeline through Olsen Canyon, but indicated that there are pros and cons to either route. Photos taken inside Olsen Canyon were convincing to the board members in attendance.

Questar representatives assured the Coalition that:
- A comprehensive archaeological survey and inventory would be completed
- Extreme care and responsibility would be taken to avoid damage to prehistoric and historic cultural sites, rock art, and the environment, and that an archaeologist will be present at all times during construction to make sure that cultural sites are not dis-
gas industry operations are currently putting on the canyon, including excessive road dust that left participants with zero visibility at many points along the Byway. The few water trucks that were working on dust abatement as part of current natural gas projects were drawing their water supply from private (not BBC’s) irrigation ditches along the roadway (the previously-approved Environmental Assessment (EA) specifies that water will be drawn from BLM wells). FERC Project Manager, Rafael Montag, advised the Coalition and URARA to urge BLM’s enforcement of the approved EA stipulations.

After viewing the pipeline route and addressing important issues along the way, and having seen tour participant’s interest in the rock art through the day, Diane Orr suggested an impromptu tour, under the direction of Blaine Miller, to some of the canyon’s impressive and treasured sites, such as The Great Hunt, Daddy Canyon, The Owl Panel, Edythe’s Granary.

The Coalition appreciates Questar’s outreach to key players like the Coalition and URARA and are grateful for their desire to include such organizations in their planning process.

Board Members

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Newsletter Editor
Jerry Vaculin - Holladay, Utah

Web Master
Tracey Johnson - Price, Utah
Great Hunt Panel Interpretive Plan Update

by Margene Hackney

Nine Mile Canyon enthusiasts who love rock art, have for many years visited the Great Hunt Panel located at the mouth of Cottonwood Canyon. Numerous tourists from around the United States, as well as other countries, have also visited this site. Countless pictures have been taken and many have been published in several books and magazines.

Lately, as tourists have visited this rock art site, some have been appalled at the neglect that this world-class tourist attraction has suffered. The unfinished fence has several cement block pillars in front of the site. A number of specific complaints about this unattractive barrier have been given to the Nine Mile Advisory Committee members. People have complained that the pillars are ugly, uneven, and pose not only an unsightly physical barrier, but the holes around the site create a safety hazard. Tourists also complained that these pillars were a hindrance to the natural beauty and wonder of the panel.

The Advisory Committee met on May 4 to discuss this problem. Some members felt that removing some of the pillars would alleviate the situation. On Thursday, May 11 the members met again in the canyon to make a final decision about the pillars.

Upon arriving at the site it was discovered that cement had recently been poured inside of the blocks making it very difficult for removal. Heavy equipment would be needed to resume work on the fence. Mike King, chair of the committee sent an e-mail to Kenny Wintch, SITLA archaeologist and asked his group to resume responsibility for the project. Kenny could no longer act as chair because of important projects that need to be completed before college resumes this fall.

The Castle Valley Chapter of USAS (CVAS) obtained a $1000 grant for the project and felt that a letter from the CVAS Executive Board to Kevin Carter, Director of SITLA would be beneficial. In the letter it was explained that they were only partners in the project and that it was not completely understood why the fence was not built according to the original plan. They did not blame any person or partner for the pillar barrier being built. They asked that a SITLA representative visit the site and see for themselves the appalling effect the pillars have on the panel. After viewing the site they could then make a decision as to whether the fence should stay or be torn down.

Kevin Carter had Kenny Wintch immediately reply to the letter and a June 5 meeting was set up for CVAS and some Nine Mile Advisory Committee members to meet with LaVonne Garrison, Kristine Curry and Kurt Higgins at the site in Nine Mile Canyon. The meeting was very positive. It was decided that the entire project should be removed and started anew. LaVonne Garrison will be in charge of the SITLA project, with Kathy Smith will be the chair of the Great Hunt Panel Project.

Another meeting was held on July 6 at the Travel Bureau conference room. A discussion was held about how to proceed with the project. Nothing at the site will be done unless LaVonne Garrison gives the go ahead. She stated that she had been in touch with the Carbon County Commissioners and Dr. Ryan Thomas. The existing pillars will be taken out by the CEU heavy equipment department as early as this August. Some of the cost for the project will be taken up by SITLA and some of the other partners will hopefully help out. LaVonne will contact the original architect and have him make some changes in the fence plan.

The Great Hunt Panel Project will eventually have a fence that will fit in with the surrounding area and have some covered benches for tourists to sit in the shade and view the most famous site in Nine Mile Canyon. The Castle Valley Chapter members are very happy at this turn of events, and will keep the Nine Mile Coalition members updated on all of the progress.

Note: Thanks to your generous contributions, the interpretive sign, designed, spearheaded and paid in-part by the Nine Mile Canyon Coalition, is finished and ready for installation!
Fall Gathering 2006!
Friday September 8th thru Sunday September 10th
Nine Mile Ranch Bunk & Breakfast (milepost 23.7)

Schedule of Events

Friday September 8th
Registration and first chance to buy tickets for drawing. Also, donations for the drawing and live auction (Coalition fundraisers) can be made.
7:00 pm Dinner, followed by fireside story telling. Share some of your favorite Nine Mile tales!

Saturday September 9th
Registration and second chance to buy tickets for fundraiser drawings!
7:00 am Breakfast

TOURS OF HISTORIC GATE CANYON FREIGHT ROAD AND LOWER NINE MILE CANYON—INCLUDING PRIVATE LAND
(Each trip must be limited to 10 cars each, so we encourage car-pooling. Besides, it’s fun! And don’t worry, a third trip will also be added if the first two are filled!)

8:00 Leave Nine Mile Ranch for Day Trips
Gate Canyon Tour will be lead by Bert Jenson and will begin at the Gate Canyon junction.
Lower Nine Mile Tour will be lead by Steve Hansen and will begin at the Daddy Canyon Complex
Noon Break for Lunch. Please pack your own lunch, water, etc.
3:00 Head back to Nine Mile Ranch
5:00 Coalition Board Meeting. Everyone is encouraged to attend.
6:15 Last chance to buy tickets for the drawing. Winners will be announced at dinner!
6:30 Traditional Dutch Oven dinner and Live Auction
Dinner will be followed by a guest speaker. Also, bring your musical instruments and best singing voices for a night of fun!

Sunday September 10th
7:00 Breakfast
9:00 Tour of Warrior Ridge (Private Property) will be lead by Chanel Atwood
Registration for Fall Gathering/September 8, 9, & 10, 2006

Please mail this form and payment in full to: Nine Mile Canyon Coalition, P.O. Box 402, Price, Utah 84501

Please indicate the number of people for each activity:

Note: Non-members add $2 per meal

1. Friday Dinner (7 p.m.) Adult ($15 ea) ______

2. Saturday Breakfast (7 a.m.) Adult/Child ($5 ea) ______

3. Saturday Dinner (6:30 p.m.) Adult ($15 ea) ______

4. Sunday Breakfast (7 a.m.) Adult/Child ($5 ea) ______

* 12 years and younger. Children 4 and younger are free!

I cannot attend but would like to make a donation $ ______

Total amount enclosed $ ______

Please RSVP by September 1st!

Thanks, See You There!

Accommodations: Nine Mile Ranch Bunk & Breakfast
Ben & Myrna Mead
1-435-637-2572

JOIN THE COALITION, RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP OR SIGN UP A FRIEND!

Please mail this form to: Nine Mile Canyon Coalition, P.O. Box 402, Price, Utah 84501

Please circle membership type:

Annual ($25)
Corporate ($1000)
Additional Gift $ ______

With the many pressures currently facing Nine Mile Canyon, your support has never been more important

Please make check or money order payable to: Nine Mile Canyon Coalition

Thank you for your support!

Mission Statement

The Nine Mile Canyon Coalition exists to preserve and protect Nine Mile Canyon, in partnership with land holders, user groups, federal, state and local agencies, and Native American organizations. To that end, the Nine Mile Canyon Coalition will foster educational and interpretive programs which include but are not limited to: assisting in the coordination of canyon interests; promoting programs of scientific research in the canyon; helping with inventory of cultural and natural resources; raising funds, from earnings or gifts, for research, education, interpretive or preservation programs, as such funds become available.
NEW 2006 Tees, Sweatshirts and Hat-Pins!

Our own Diane Gorman-Jenkins has again unveiled brand new shirt and hat pin designs just in time for the Fall Gathering! Our wonderful new limited edition hat-pin features the Triangle Man. This year’s new shirt design features the five large shaman figures found northeast of the mouth of Pinnacle Canyon. (Note: T-shirt depiction is for reference only—actual design is of much higher quality!)

To guarantee availability, all orders must be received by August 27th!

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2006 Hat Pins

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Grand total $ Thank you!
Fall Gathering 2006

September 8th thru 10th

Nine Mile Canyon Coalition
P.O. Box 402
Price, Utah 84501