



# Partners News

SPRING 2011

## Archaeological Highlights at the Monument

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Grand Staircase Escalante Partners seeks to inspire people to understand and experience the beautiful landscape and unique scientific record of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument by dedicating volunteers and resources to research, conservation stewardship and education.

*Implementing the new Site Steward Program and completing the Hole-in-the-Rock Environmental Assessment kept GSENM archaeologists busy this Spring.*



Archaeologist Matt Zweifel with Site Stewards

### Site Steward Program

Monitoring the many ancient sites in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) is now underway with the new Site Steward Program designed and coordinated by Partners for the Monument. Seventeen volunteers completed their training in May and have begun visiting their assigned sites regularly to check for damage. Any findings are reported to Matt Zweifel, GSENM archaeologist, or to law enforcement. Site Steward Programs have been active in Arizona and New Mexico for years, resulting in

a major decrease in site destruction caused by natural erosion, animal activity, looting, or vandalism. GSENM's program is currently engaged in the southern

portion of the Monument, but will expand to the Cannonville-Escalante area in the Fall, making it a major contributor to the protection of Utah's invaluable cultural and scientific resources.

For information, or to volunteer, contact Karolyn Tenney, Site Steward Coordinator, 435-644-4387.

### Hole-in-Rock

GSENM archaeologists took a novel approach to doing the Hole-in-the-Rock Road Environmental Assessment described on page 2 of this newsletter. Typically they look for archaeological and historical sites only on the acres affected by a project, in this case the proposed camp-

grounds for organized groups. This time, though, they stood in the middle of the grounds and asked themselves, "If I were a bored kid with an hour to kill before dinner, or I wanted to explore the immediate surroundings and maybe climb a hill to take a picture of the camp, where would I go?" With that in mind, the archaeologists explored the acreage around each camp – up to almost 170 acres around one of them. Most of the sites found seemed to be almost exclusively associated with prehistoric grass seed processing or historic use of the original Hole-in-the-Rock trail and early 20th century ranching.



Photo by Allysia Angus

Hole-in-the-Rock Road Reenactment

## Hole-in-the-Rock Road Assessment

To read the entire Hole-in-the-Rock assessment, go to the GSENM website: [www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/grand\\_staircase-escalante.html](http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/grand_staircase-escalante.html)

This spring, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) performed an Environmental Assessment (EA) along Hole-in-the-Rock Road to determine whether organized groups of more than 25, the current limit, could gather without negatively affecting the rich history contained in the area. Larger group numbers would provide opportunities for organized group/heritage activities that haven't yet been possible.

The BLM called for public comment on the assessment through June 17. They developed three alter-

natives for public input:

- 1) No Action Alternative – Keep group size limit to 25 people.
- 2) Proposed Alternative – Limit group size to 146 people and 29 vehicles regardless of whether the group is seeking a recreational experience or a cultural heritage education experience.
- 3) Highest Use Alternative – Allow groups of up to 395 people and 79 vehicles for both recreation and cultural heritage users.

As of this writing, a decision has not been made. How-

ever, you can read the comments Partners submitted to the BLM by going to the Partners web site at [www.gsenm.org/news](http://www.gsenm.org/news)

**L**earning from the land begins when research is taken out of file cabinets and used to enrich the hearts and minds of students, visitors, and neighbors.

*Is Kevin ready for summer in the southwest after living in the humid south-east?*

*"I was raised in the Middle East, and Utah's red-rock desert and dry climate are comfortably similar to Jordan's."*



**Kevin Miller**

## GSENM Hires Science Administrator

Kevin H. Miller is the new Science Program Administrator for the Monument. A landscape ecologist, Kevin worked for over 20 years for North Carolina state environmental agencies in water and air regulatory programs.

Kevin's motivation to work in the west sprang from two things: his interest in applying science to improve policy, and a wish to be closer to his sisters, who are both westerners. "Science can help us make better decisions. Understanding how natural and human systems interact improves our ability to manage them," he says.

In his first months on the

job, Kevin is focusing on revising the Monument's Science Plan, using a technique called *Adaptive Management*. "This is integral to the implementation strategy in the plan," Kevin explains. "Science-based adaptive management treats management actions as experiments. These experiments are monitored to determine whether they meet stated objectives, and policies and practices are *adapted* as needed to best achieve management goals."

Much of Kevin's work will be promoting research at GSENM to help accomplish conservation goals as part of the National Landscape Conservation System. "The

creation of the Monument to protect this land was a significant step in defining a new conservation mission for the Bureau of Land Management. The importance of science in helping the BLM fulfill this new mission is clear. It is encouraging to find people at GSENM dedicated to seeking innovative ways to do scientific research to better manage the Monument's magnificent resources."

Kevin will also work with Partners to explore funding opportunities to revitalize science in the Monument.

*Welcome, Kevin!*

You can contact Kevin at [khmiller@blm.gov](mailto:khmiller@blm.gov) or by phone (435-644-4302).

# Exploring the Lost Continent of Laramidia

Alan L. Titus, Ph.D., Monument Paleontologist, shares the discoveries he and his team of dedicated researchers made in May.

Seventy-five million years ago southern Utah was a steamy tropical swamp on the east side of the lost continent of Laramidia. But on May 9, 2011, as thumping helicopter rotors faded into the distance and snow fell hard on an intrepid crew of 11 researchers and volunteers from the BLM and the Utah Museum of Natural History, one would be hard pressed to visualize “tropical.”

We’d just been dropped off on the Kaiparowits Plateau, into the middle of some of the remotest and fossil-rich country in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM). Our mission was to find and

collect rare and scientifically priceless fossils from the Cretaceous Period, like the remains of alligators and tropical turtles not seen alive in this part of the world for over 50 million years. Fortunately, the ominous weather that threatened the next day never materialized, and it was time to put thousands of pounds of plaster, water, burlap, and tools to work!

These are some of our exciting finds: the new *Kosmoceratops* site, which contains most of the skeleton of a horned dinosaur; spectacular specimens from the new *Utahceratops* site; the remains of a 6-foot long alligator; and a large tortoise shell, a possible bird skeleton, and a substantially complete *Velociraptor*-type dinosaur.

Overall, this trip to the GSENM paleontological frontier was



Dr. Titus’s Intrepid Crew!

one of the most productive ever. It will be many months before all of the specimens collected are prepared and ready for scientific study. However, it is already clear that this investment in studying Utah’s past will pay big dividends to both scientists and the public.

To read Dr. Titus’s full report of this productive exploration, go to our website: [www.gsenm.org/blog](http://www.gsenm.org/blog)

### Just getting started!

Approximately, 93% of Monument acreage with fossil potential still needs to be surveyed.

## Student Research Grants Awarded

This spring, Partners’ Student Research Grant Program awarded financial support for three research projects:

Peter Gurche, an undergraduate at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, will investigate evidence of historic beaver activity along the Lower Escalante River.

Carolyn Leavitt, a graduate student in Geology and Geophysics at the University of Utah, will explore “paleophysiology” and related growth patterns of horned dinosaurs that occupied the Monument during the Late Cretaceous Period.

Joshua Lively, a graduate student in Geology and Geophysics at the University of Utah, will research the evolution of an extinct group of aquatic turtles known as *baenids*.

Student Research Grants are made possible through GSENM and GSEP’s independent fundraising. Awards are provided twice a year through the Partners Student Grant Program and do not exceed \$3,000 per award.

For more information or to apply for a grant, go to: [www.gsenm.org/about/science](http://www.gsenm.org/about/science)

## Mr. Poe Goes to Washington!

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) honored Noel Poe, GSEP President, with the 2011 National Volunteer Award for Making a Difference on Public Land. A total of five individuals were honored with this award during the May 26 ceremony. BLM’s Deputy Director for Operations Mike Pool presented the awards.

“Partners has a good reputation in the Washington BLM,” Poe said. “Our staff are not strangers there. Mike Satter won in 2007 and Cindy Oster in 2009.”

Said Poe of his visit to D.C.: “It’s a fun city, but six days were enough! The hotel was close to the Mall, so with Metro and public transportation, it was easy getting around. And it’s been a long time since we had Greek and German food. But home — the red-rocks and the small town of Kanab — feels better.”



## Grand Staircase Escalante

### Partners

190 E Center St  
Kanab UT 84741



# Join Partners today!

Yes! I would like to join Partners and help promote science, education and conservation on Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. My check is enclosed.

Please circle your level of membership or your gift category:

Grand Staircase \$25

Cottonwood Canyon \$35

Burr Trail \$50

Kaiparowits Plateau \$100

Paria Canyon \$200

Escalante Canyon \$500

Monument \$1000

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Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email: (required to receive e-blasts) \_\_\_\_\_

Are you interested in volunteer opportunities? (please circle)    Yes    No

Please mail to 190 E Center St., Kanab UT 84741. You may also join Partners at [www.gsenm.org](http://www.gsenm.org).