

# Op-Ed

## Skutumpah Terrace Restoration

by SCOTT BERRY & LAURA WELP



COURTESY NORMAN MCKEE

(Photo used in McKee's Op-Ed, included for reference, with original caption.) Pine and juniper trees are encroaching more and more on critical wildlife habitat.

Norm McKee's recent op-ed in the Insider about the Skutumpah Terrace ecosystem restoration project (70,000 acres) in the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument (GSENM) demonstrates how different parties, all committed to a scientific approach towards land management, can disagree about the application of conservation science to specific projects. The first step in doing good science is asking good questions, and it is at this point that McKee's analysis goes astray.

McKee's analysis starts with an express assumption, that "[The Skutumpah Terrace] clearly demonstrates that the ... increase in Pinyon... and...Juniper has occurred" in this plant community since 1870. While McKee adds that no ecologist disputes that conclusion, no scientific authority is offered to support that claim. As a matter of fact, no scientific consensus exists about juniper encroachment. The presence of large and well established relict tracts of p-j between 150 and 200 years old in the project area indicates that some tracts are not the result of recent expansion as Norm asserts.

A strong answer to the question of p-j expansion would begin with detailed project maps, identifying very specific tracts of vegetation with soil types, along with the community of plants and animals' found in these ecosites. Unfortunately, maps of that caliber are not available, forcing

the project managers to guess about the consequences of p-j removal. If the soil types in each location have always supported p-j those same soils will not support healthy stands of sagebrush even with the p-j removed, as demonstrated by a history of many failed sagebrush GSENM restoration projects that ignored this factor.

Mr. McKee correctly declares that "bullhogging" mechanically (grinding removed p-j into chips) can reduce erosion in treated areas. He doesn't mention that the method also buries the existing critical biological soil crust within the p-j stands, which is also reducing erosion. As McKee's observations suggest, a short-term recovery of grasses and forbs is often observed following a bullhogging treatment. But until long term data (10 years plus) is available, it's too early to draw definitive conclusions about treatment efficacy in the long run. Smaller scale less expensive experimental projects should be used to find the answer.

Mr. McKee also fails to address the effects of livestock grazing, the "elephant in the corner" present in nearly all Utah vegetation treatment projects. The operating assumption underlying all such projects is that grazing will continue post-treatment without change. Previous treatments in GSENM suggest that this assumption is misplaced. Rangeland health assessments of these areas reveals that 57%

fail rangeland health standards due to severe erosion, soil compaction and lack of vegetation amount and diversity. Given the uncertainty about the effects of continued grazing in treated areas, a more scientific approach would involve small-scale treatment projects, and incorporate significant grazing exclusion areas (with controls) for decadal time periods, to test quantitatively the impact of grazing on long term vegetation recovery post treatment. Anecdotal reports of recent small scale tree removal projects on the Skutumpah Terrace where post treatment grazing has been prohibited describe a desirable recovery of forbs and grasses, and sage grouse as well. However, experience to date shows that when such areas are returned annual grazing at current stocking levels, those forbs and grasses will quickly disappear.

Science usually proceeds on an incremental basis. Proceeding slowly does take more time and money. Fortunately, the GSENM was created in part to promote and advance biological science. What does the GSENM need to effectively design and implement landscape scale vegetation recovery projects?

First, it needs complete and detailed, small scale ecosite maps describing soil types, along existing flora and fauna at each proposed project location, so that future changes can be observed and recorded.

With those maps available, a comprehensive long term study of the effects of livestock grazing within the Monument at a variety of stocking levels can begin. Until this information is available and in use, vegetative recovery treatment projects on the scale of the Skutumpah Terrace project will be "shooting in the dark", with unforeseen result.

*Scott Berry, Wild Utah Project Board Chair, Torrey, Utah*

*Laura Welp, M.S Botany, Ecosystems Specialist, Western Watersheds Project, Kanab, Utah*

## Henrieville Water Line Moves Toward Completion

HENRIEVILLE - Snaking its way east of Henrieville along Highway 12, Henrieville's new culinary water line is being prepped for trenching in. The project, according to Henrieville Mayor Dave Roberts, should be completed within the next thirty days or so.

The new water line replaces a system that Roberts termed "substandard."

"About a year ago we had a leak and it blew out about 400 feet of line. We lost suction from our well and were out of water for about two weeks," said Roberts.

Funding for the water line has come from the Utah Division of Drinking Water and the Community Impact Board, with Henrieville Town completing the balance of the \$400,000 project. Jones & DeMille are the project engineers and Precision Pipeline are installing the line.

Roberts noted that South Central Communications is also using the opportunity to install conduit to set fiber optic



Henrieville's new HDPE culinary water line, awaits trenching along Highway 12 east of Henrieville.

cable into the line. "They're trying to make a complete loop," said Roberts. Loops help alleviate problems with phone and internet outages such as everyone in the region experienced a few weeks ago, when a backhoe cut through the phone line.

Roberts seems thrilled and relieved to see the project nearing completion. "HDPE pipe it is way better than the PVC

— it's really flexible and each joint is welded. When they get done with it they will dig a four to five foot trench alongside the pipe and put in tracer wire. They go along with a track hoe and pulls it right into the trench—that part of the project goes really quickly."

"This pipe is pretty much idiot proof so hopefully we shouldn't have any problems for a long time," said Roberts.

—Insider

### The Alveys

Cont'd from page 1

Inc.," says Owner, Jessica Alvey.

The Alveys actively participate in various programs and training to add value to their businesses. They have also enrolled their employees in training to teach them how to deliver the best customer service possible. They are always looking for ways to improve their businesses, and it reflects not only on their business, but their community as well.

One of their businesses, Stan's Burger Shak was opened in a little room off the side of Johnson's grocery store in Hanksville in 1984. As the popularity of Lake Powell grew so did the reputation of Stan's old school burgers, shakes and onion rings.

Soon after opening, Stan and his son Dennis (Duke) began construction of the new "Shak" just down the road at the intersection of Highways 24 & 95. This proved to be a profitable move as Lake Powell enthusiasts from all over flocked to their doors. Soon Stan saw

the need for lodging in Hanksville and built the Whispering Sands Motel in 1992. In 1996, Stan and Deena then built Stan's Chevron.

In 1998, Duke and Jessica formed an S-corp call Red Desert Inc. and Stan's Burger Shak became a DBA of that corporation. By 2001 Stan's Burger Shak had far outgrown its facility and was moved to a new location by adding onto the Chevron station. In July of 2005, Stan and Deena were ready to retire and began leasing Stan's Chevron to Red Desert Inc. In 2010, Red Desert Inc. took over management of the Whispering Sands Motel by entering into an agreement to purchase that property as well. In 2013, Red Desert Inc. entered a lease/purchase agreement for the only full service restaurant and campground in Hanksville. On April 1, 2013, Duke's Slickrock Grill and Campground opened for business. Red Desert Inc. has become the largest employer in Hanksville.

Since 2012, the Alveys have participated in training and consultation offered by the

Utah Small Business Development Center located at Snow College, and qualify as long-term counseling clients.

The Alveys not only offer employment to their small community, but also give their time and talents in several civic duties, from being EMT's and members of the Search and Rescue, to serving on the Wayne Community Health Clinic Board and the Wayne County Business Association Board.

They contribute to organizations and Wayne High School Programs including the WHS Scholarship Fund. Stan's Burger Shak also offers high school student employees a scholarship to be used toward their Education or a Mission.

Red Desert Inc.'s main objective is to increase the quality of living in Hanksville. The Alveys believe that the health of any community improves with better employment. As the quality of goods and services improve in Hanksville the stronger the economy becomes.

—Insider

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**Who?**  
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**What?**  
Kickoff the Sunset Series with the Mark Chaney Trio

**When?**  
Saturday May 27, 2017  
7:30-8:30PM

**Where?**  
Robber's Roost Bookstore  
Highway 24 in Torrey, UT

**Cost?**  
This event is FREE and open to the public. Donations appreciated.



**Saturday May 27 7:30PM**

**Sunset Series Kickoff: Mark Chaney Trio**

Mark Chaney "Have drums, will travel" reads the card of this versatile percussionist. Mark Chaney has accompanied a diverse group of artists, including Bobby McFerrin, Mose Allison, and many others. As a bandleader, he has enjoyed two European tours, including a spot at the prestigious Montreux Jazz Festival.



Tully Cathey is a guitarist, teacher, composer and arranger. He has been a professional freelance guitarist since the age of seventeen. He has taught at the graduate and undergraduate levels; and has composed jazz and classical works and numerous documentary scores.



Jim Stout plays electric and acoustic bass and toured the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom with the Osmond Brothers. Jim was an adjunct professor for the University of Utah Music Department and has performed with many national and local professional acts.



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