

One way that UPLA stays on top of current developments is that we made a decision 2 years ago to invite Ben Burr from BlueRibbon Coalition to be on our Board of Trustees. Ben keeps us on top of current developments so we can focus on the issues. As a result of this collaboration, BlueRibbon invited UPLA to be a part of our recent trip to Washington DC to meet with top administration officials, and his recap of the trip was so good we asked for permission to publish it in its entirety.



WE NEED ALL HANDS ON DECK

## A Week In DC Followed by a Week of Wins



I am more of a tortoise than a hare when it comes to the recreation experiences I enjoy. I'm usually looking for catharsis and escape more

than I'm looking for thrills. Even though these are my personal preferences, I do cross paths from time to time in my work for BRC with those who are there to push limits of human ability combined with extraordinary machines.

A few summers ago I was invited to be a passenger on a speedboat for a brief cruise up Lake Powell. It felt like we were going fast enough for the wind to blow the hair out of my head. The captain of the boat explained that when a speedboat travels at this speed, you have to adjust your bearings long before you get to a bend in a canyon. You can't wait until you get to the turn to make your turn. Your instincts and reflexes must be more tuned to the future than to the present. The present is something that passively passes you by as you are already attuned and preparing for a new future in a state on constant high-alert.



Living that fast – even if only for a fleeting few moments – has left a lasting impression and reminds me of what it has been like to prepare for a trip we took to Washington, DC a week ago. I was joined by BRC Vice President Shannon Welch, BRC Marketing Director Nick Pucci, UPLA President Loren Campbell, and CAL4Wheel Natural Resource Consultant Rose Winn.

After the Supreme Court reversed major precedents like Chevron deference, we knew we had wide open water ahead of us. The election of 2024 – with the deregulatory agenda that became the driving force in DC politics – was like finding a full tank of high-octane performance fuel for anyone who has been building a speed boat. And, building a speed boat is exactly what we've been doing at BRC.

For years our policy team commented on hundreds of federal agency actions to find every rule, regulation, guidance document, handbook, and abuse of discretion that has led to the closure of our public lands. Our legal team has been actively challenging closures and exposing the fault lines that are being used to wipe our trails off the maps. As BRC's Executive Director, I've been wearing myself out traveling across the country to build alliances with allied groups, policy makers, lawyers, and elected officials. This has resulted in a deep network of strong relationships that can't be built from one meeting.

Here is what went in to planning for this trip:

- Hundreds of in person meetings and discussions
- Three preparatory trips to DC
- Several additional trips to participate in policy conferences and field visits
- Advancing several federal lawsuits
- Mobilizing our army of supporters to answer calls for regulatory revisions, to support our petitions for administrative relief, and to fight

for our list of top priorities (Rescind Roadless Rule, Rescind Public Lands Rule, Rescind Western Solar Plan, Correct Abuse of Antiquities Act, etc.)

- Educating elected officials about our priorities
- Building a social media and communications presence backed by a large and growing database of grassroots supporters.

This is the speed boat we built, and we went do DC ready to fully open the throttle.

Here's how it went...



**Priority #1:** Deliver our petition to the White House to show community support for rescinding Executive Orders 11644 and 11989.

**Outcome:** On the Friday before our arrival President Trump signed *Executive Order 14408: Removing Unnecessary and Counterproductive Restrictions on Access to Federal Lands*. This Executive Order rescinded the two Nixon and Carter era Executive Orders that we've been fighting against for decades. The President's staff was thrilled to receive the petition and see the broad support for rescinding the Minimization Criteria created by these orders that have been used to close trails from Moab to the Mojave. This action set the stage for a productive week of discussions of ways to implement this order to ensure that it has a positive and permanent impact for our access. We will continue to release information about the impact of this order in the coming weeks, but we see it as one of the best things to happen for motorized access to public lands in 50 years.



**Priority #2:** Secure a House Sponsor for the *Outdoor Americans with Disabilities Act*.

**Outcome:** Earlier this week Representative Mike Kennedy from Utah introduced this legislation in the House of Representatives. We're now ready for a full court press to get this passed by the end of the year.



**Priority #3:** Build support for rescinding the Roadless Rule

**Outcome:** We shared feedback about how the Roadless Rule is blocking wildfire risk reduction efforts in a hearing on wildfire policy. Representative Hageman and Senator Lee advanced legislation through Congress to codify a rescission of the Roadless Rule. We also had meetings with USDA officials to express our

support for reopening the 45 million acres that will be more accessible if the Roadless Rule is reversed.



**Priority #4:** Build support for reforming other restrictive policies such as Wilderness Buffer Zones, Wilderness Study Areas, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, and Antiquities Act Abuse.

**Outcome:** In the last week we have learned that the USFS plans to release guidance to roll back Recommended Wilderness Areas. The Department of Interior announced it is updating its manuals to reform its policies for managing Wilderness Study Areas. And, even though the deadline expired to rescind the Grand Staircase management plan through a Congressional review, we are still sensing a strong appetite for reforming abuse of the Antiquities Act.



For an organization to accomplish any one of these outcomes would be a successful trip to our nation’s capital. While the priorities listed above are the biggest highlights, we also left with more work to do, more opportunities to pursue, and we’ve now laid the groundwork to go back in September for our plan to bring advocates with us to promote the Outdoor Americans with Disabilities Act.

While this trip felt like a high-octane speedboat ride, we are still driving full speed ahead. We know windows of opportunity like this don’t last long in DC. The results we are seeing are exceeding expectations. However, we’re not close to done and time is short. We’ve already planned our future moves, and we already know the destination we want to reach. The next few months will be some of the most exciting and productive times in the

history of BRC.

We are rising to the challenge to seize the opportunities before us, but we also know that in addition to moving fast we need to move smart to make sure the changes we're seeing are future-proof. This is a topic that was discussed in every meeting, and once we started discussing our ideas on how to make these changes durable is when the 20-minute scheduled meetings became much longer meetings. These leaders know it's going to take a group backed by a strong network of grassroots advocates, full-time attorneys, policy thought leaders, and relationships up and down the government to make these changes stick.

Ultimately, it is because of your support that they are seeing our potential. This is something we've built together, and we encourage all of you to ask how can you push down on the gas a little harder. We need all hands on deck and all hair blowing in the wind as we drive this 1700hp speedboat through this window of opportunity.

We Belong Here,

Ben Burr  
Executive Director

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