



American Lands Access Association, Inc.

January-February-March 2009

Protecting the Public Lands for the Public

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ALAA Webpage
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President Message

By Dick Pankey

As I sit at my computer ready to write my first President Message, the ideas are swirling in my head and I jump from thought to thought. Where do I start first?

First is to thank Bob Carlson for his years of service to ALAA as a Director and President and look forward to his continued service and council.

2008 and early 2009 has not been good to rockhounds and users of the public lands. The Omnibus Land Management Act of 2009 is one of the worst assaults on our right to access and use our public lands in recent memory. One hundred and fifty plus bills combined into one piece of onerous legislation. Fortunately as noted in the ALAA News article this bill was defeated in the House of Representatives by one vote. I wonder whose letter, phone call or e-mail to which Representative tipped the scale and made the difference. All of our letters, phone calls and e-mails are important. We need to be ready and vigilant; we haven't seen the last of this legislation. We need to prepare now to participate in the legislative process, not just react to it.

2008 was not a good year for ALAA, also. We did not have an editor for our newsletter and were not able to communicate with the membership. Less than half our members renewed their membership. Our annual meeting at the AFMS/SCFMS in Houston was canceled because of Hurricane Ike. But the good news is that we now have an editor and new webmaster for the ALAA web site.

So what lies ahead for ALAA? Our purpose and need is the same: "promoting and ensuring the right of the amateur hobby collecting, recreational prospecting and mining, and the use of public and private lands for educational and recreational purposes; and to carry the voice of all amateur collectors and hobbyists to our elected officials, government regulators and public land managers." But we need to reestablish our voice. We need to inform and reinvigorate the people we serve.

At this point in time, as I see it, our biggest challenge is to communicate the need for and the worth of ALAA to the people we were formed to serve – the rockhounds, the users of our public lands, the societies and members of the AFMS and Regional Federations. And to meet this challenge and fulfill the purpose of ALAA we need their support. To be an effective voice we need "mass", i.e. members. To be effective our "mass", our members, must participate and respond.

My first focus as president is membership. The AFMS has 633 societies with over 49,000 individual members. Currently ALAA has 76 individual members and 21 society members. Our growth potential, our membership potential, our financial support potential is GREAT. The potential of our Voice is great. We represent and

President's Message

(Continued from page 1)

advocate for over 49,000 AFMS members plus their families. We are significant. However, to represent them adequately we need their support. And how do we calculate/estimate the number of unaffiliated rockhounds. And how do we calculate/estimate the number of kids and families, teachers, and people that just like to pick up "pretty rocks" or participate in some other form of recreation on our public lands. We represent and advocate for these people, too.

At the annual SFMS meeting in Nashville, TN, John Wright spoke about ALAA and membership for societies. He told them "that I planned to get all four clubs in Mississippi to join ALAA and challenged the other states to match us. I don't know if it will work, but maybe we will get some to join." Let's extend that challenge, that objective, to all Federations, to all states.

One way to accomplish this goal is to hold ALAA meetings at each regional federation shows and meetings. The purpose of these meetings would be to inform about and promote ALAA, promote membership and support of ALAA, as well as, inform about pending legislation and regulations. I will hold the first of these meetings at the CFMS Show in April 2009 in Santa Clara, CA. I request that the ALAA directors that are members of and represent a regional federation take on the task of hosting one of the regional ALAA meetings. As our membership increases there will be more help to hold these meetings. This will be a discussion item at our annual meeting in Billings. I will also report on the CFMS ALAA meeting in the June issue of our newsletter.

As ALAA grows, our impact will grow. We need to justify our existence and prove our worth continually. We can't rely on past successes for future justification. We need the financial support and participation of all of you that are concerned and interested.

ALAA Newsletter Contribution**Dr. Robert L. Carlson**

As my last act as your ALAA President, I attended the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show (the club show, not the Commercial part). The ALAA/AFMS has a free booth in the entry hall, if we choose to use it. In the past, we have used it to promote our organizations, and to recruit new members. The past response has not been spectacular.

This year, I went to lobby against Senate Bill, S-22. When I got there, the bill had been railroaded through the Senate. I had assembled a two page information packet that pointed out some of the worst features of the bill.

Because the bill had so many bad features, I was able to talk to people who had a wide variety of interests. It is the first time since that I have manned the booth that I have had a very positive response. It is the first time that the Show Information Booth has directed people to pick up literature at our Booth.

The Tucson Gem and Mineral Show draws people from all over the country, and other countries as well. It is an excellent forum for a lobbying activity.

Bottom line: If the ALAA needs to lobby, the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show is an excellent place to do it. There are people all over the country that are interested in Gems and Minerals, as well as Wilderness and those bills that make lands virtual Wilderness. On the flip side, if we don't have any thing to sell except ourselves: Don't waste the time and money.

Ps: This is a non-paid Political Announcement that is the sole opinion of the person involved.

A Word From the Vice-Prez

Hi Everyone,

When Dick Pankey took over the Presidency from Bob Carlson February 18th, 2009, I was asked by Dick to be ALAA'S Vice President till the meeting in Billings, Montana in July/Aug, 2009. So here I am. A long time advocate for Public Use of Public Land. I have been a member of ALAA most of the time since it's inception back at Brunswick, OH. in 1992.

Here's why I decided to accept Dick's challenge. Since the middle of 2008 I've been contacting individuals and clubs throughout the U.S. to let them know about the huge LAND GRAB by the U.S. government And to ask for their help by contacting their congressmen. I have no clue as to how many responded to my plea. Hardly any actually contacted me and said they had done so.

Both Dee Holland and I are life members of the Blue Ribbon Coalition and receive "alerts" from them constantly about road proposals and closures under the Forestry and BLM and pass them on to clubs in the hopes they will do something to keep those roads open. I have been able to help get at least two rockhounds on boards that decide on policy by the Forestry/BLM. And we had three others who applied but were turned away. This is a small beginning, very small, but these rockhounds stepped forward when I contacted them and offered their services.

.By the time you read this the senate and house omnibus land bill will have passed, signed and put into law. If that's so, then your life as a rockhound has changed considerably and it won't get any better any time soon. There will be huge tracts of land closed off to the public, except for those who can hike or ride a donkey in and out. **There will be no collecting in these areas.** The Fossil Bill within this package and is now law, and that means, nothing that even remotely looks like a fossil can be picked up under penalty of law, with your equipment and car confiscated on the spot. You are guilty, until you prove yourself innocent in a court of law – court costs are up to you.

I've had people, knowledgeable people, tell me it's a lost cause....rockhounds don't care. Rockhounds won't contact their Congressman, let alone bother to sit down and write a letter of concern. So what are we to do???

This organization is at a crossroads, do we rebuild and move forward, or is this our last dying gasp of working toward a cause on behalf of people who just don't give a damn. YOUR CALL!

Are YOU willing to contact individuals and club members

who want to be heard and carry on? Will they be willing to fork over \$25 in membership to ALAA? We only have a fraction of the original people/clubs who currently belong to ALAA. If we are to be heard, we need to make the membership swell. Can we do it? Are you willing to try? And, what are we going to give these people in return for their money and support?

Or do you want to fold your tent and ride off into the sunset and say, it just couldn't be done. I know someone who is willing to join the environmentalists and "educate them to understand our side of collecting....that we're really not bad people as they believe, just misunderstood." Your thoughts on this idea.

Shirley Leeson
ALAA Vice President
shirleyleeson@cox.net and
beauholland@centurytel.net

Norman W. Hanschu - 2009

Norm Hanschu, Midwest Federation and American Lands Access Association Treasurer passed away on January 26, 2009 of cancer.

During his working years, Norm was employed in the photographic department at Ford Motor Company. He and wife Joyce became interested in our hobby many years ago and became involved with local clubs and ultimately with the Midwest Federation. It was not unusual to find Norm, camera in hand, photographing gems, minerals or people at the shows and places they visited.

Norm is survived by Joyce, the current MWF Uniform Rules Chair, his sons David and Charles, four grandchildren and a brother.

Contributions in Norm's memory may be made to the AFMS Scholarship Foundation, % of your regional federation coordinator.

Carolyn Weinberger

From AFMS Newsletter March, 2009

ALAA News

By Dick Pankey, President

In the last 2 months ALAA has seen a lot of change. In January we were saddened with the passing of Norm Hanschu, our treasurer for many years. Norm handled our finances and our membership. The passing of Norm Hanschu has left a hole in ALAA, but for the time being it is being filled by his wife, Joyce, our Secretary, and Marv Starbuck, our past president. Please give them your support and help.

In February Bob Carlson announced his resignation as President of ALAA. Based on our bylaws I am pleased and proud to become ALAA's President. Starting last year and soon to resume this year there is a ferocious legislative assault on our rights and access to our public lands. Now is the time for a strong, proactive ALAA to take the lead and mobilize the support and participation of all of our members and all members of the AFMS. I look forward to being a proactive, involved president and I am counting on your active and involved participation and support.

I am appointing Shirley Leeson to fill my vacant position of Vice President. She has accepted the appointment. As most of you are aware she and Dee Holland have been a vital link in monitoring legislative activity and advising us on what is happening. Shirley will continue her efforts in establishing an "e-mail tree" to facilitate rapid communication and response to breaking legislative news and other governmental agency action.

Several years ago Marty Hart saw that the ALAA web site was falling by the way. He saw the need and stepped up and assumed the duties of the ALAA webmaster. He maintained our presence on the internet and fulfilled this crucial communications link. Several weeks ago Marty let me know that if we could find somebody else he would be glad to turn over the webmaster duties. At the SCRIBE meeting last January in Quartzsite I mentioned that we were looking for help with the ALAA web site. John and Suzy Martin said they would be interested. Following some e-mail exchanges it was agreed that John and Suzy would be the new ALAA webmaster. I am pleased to appoint John and Suzy Martin as the new webmasters and to thank Marty Hart for his service as the ALAA webmaster.

As was announced in the December ALAA newsletter Jay Valle is our new editor. This is his first addition.

Our next annual meeting will take place during the NWF/

AFMS Show and Convention in Billings, MT this summer. I hope all/much of you will be there. This will be an important meeting for ALAA. In addition to election of 3 directors and election of officers, I hope this will be a time of planning and reinvigoration of ALAA.

Some great news showed up in my "in box" yesterday (3/11). The infamous Omnibus Public Lands bill, commonly known as "S. 22," failed by 1 vote in the House. The Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 had been fast-tracked through the U.S. Senate and had been expected to pass the House earlier today. Tell me one vote doesn't count! The bill is over 1,200 pages long with over 160 different bills, designates 2.2 million acres of Wilderness, identifies three new national parks, 10 national heritage areas, and designates over 1,000 miles of wild and scenic rivers. We'll have details later. Thanks to all who made calls and emailed on this bill.

I look forward to and I am counting on your participation and support.

ALAA Meeting

I have scheduled an ALAA meeting on Saturday afternoon following the Directors' Meeting at the CFMS Convention in Santa Clara. This meeting is an open meeting and EVERYONE is invited. Everyone who collects rocks, minerals, fossils and/or recreates on public lands should attend. The purpose of the meeting is to reintroduce ALAA to the members and societies of the CFMS and to explain what we do and how we do it. The meeting will be held in the Town Hall building where the lectures are given. The meeting will be held at 2:00 or 3:00 (exact time will be announced at the show and Directors' Meeting.) and will last about an hour.

We just had our annual SFMS meeting in Nashville, TN. I told them that I planned to get all four clubs in Mississippi to join ALAA and challenged the other states to match us. I don't know if it will work, but maybe we will get some to join. At any rate I need the name and address of the ALAA official for the clubs to send their money and membership application to. I believe it's still \$50.00 for a club and \$25.00 for individuals.

I also need a copy of the application. It would be great if you could e-mail it to me. I will follow up with information and the application in the Lodestar (SFMS bulletin). If we can move on this quickly, I may be able to get it in the January or February edition.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND HISTORY OF ALAA

Dee Holland, Director

As I mentioned in the last ALAA Newsletter, ALAA was formed as a lobbying 501-C-4, the title of the corporation is "American Lands Access Assn Inc." When this organization was formed, it was to keep collecting areas, both public and private open.

ALAA needed to be a clearing house of people throughout the U.S. who would be available to move immediately on any issue regarding the use of lands, be they public or private as the AFMS had no such list. (and they still don't have such a list)

In our heyday, Jon Spunaugle, our ALAA president at the time, wrote a Fossil Bill "Paleontological Resource Preservation Act of 1995" S-506, which was signed on by several Congressmen and presented in Congress countering the Baucus (democrat, Montana) Fossil Bill. Baucus' bill was written by people in academia who had no real field experience but wanted to control the fossils on public land. For two years ALAA sent a representative, Marion Zenker, a lobbyist who also worked for the Black Hills Institute in South Dakota, back to Washington, DC. to lobby for our fossil bill.

We were able to keep the Baucus Bill, from being resurrected until now, 2008-09 when it was included in the HUGE Omnibus Land Bill, S-22 with even more restrictions, fines and confiscations of cars and equipment and passed late in 2008 by the Senate. Under this new bill, the forest service and BLM, who now carry side arms can stop YOU and search your car for fossils, but they have no degree in paleontology.

Our membership has dwindled for the last several years, and is practically non-existent. Those of you who have hung on are to be congratulated for sticking with us, when it seemed hopeless. I can

only hope we are not too late to regroup and move forward.

For your information: ALAA was accepted by the IRS, as a "social welfare organization." in 1993. Incorporated in the state of Idaho, 1992.

ALAA WEBSITE NEWS

We want to take this time to thank Marty Hart for all of his hard work maintaining and keeping the ALAA Website up and running. He has done an outstanding job. As new web masters for the ALAA Website John and Susy Martin are going to try to carry on the outstanding work that Marty has started.

We have been members of the Palmdale Gem and Mineral Club of Palmdale, California for nearly 30 years. John has been active in the California Federation as the PLAC South Chairman from 2005 through 2008 and was appointed to the AFMS Conservation & Legislation Committee in 2008 and continues to serve on the committee. Susy has been active in creating and managing websites since the early 1990's for the company where she was working and currently she has created and manages the Palmdale Gem and Mineral Club Website.

Our plans for the ALAA Website are to continue with the current format and keep it up to date on all current legislation that may have adverse affects on the Rockhounding Hobby as we know it. We are open to any and all suggestions and ideas to increase the effectiveness of the website to current and future legislative actions in all 50 states as it pertains the American Rockhound and Rockhounding. For Suggestions, Ideas and most important, legislative actions we can be reached at smartin@antelecom.net.

John Martin
ALAA Webmaster
smartin@antelecom.net
pgmc@antelecom.net

Omnibus Land Management Act of 2009

Below is the link to the US House of representatives by state. You can find your representative and go to their own web site. There you can find how to contact them. On the contact page are blanks that you can fill in and a space to enter your comments and concerns. Then after you have entered your statement, you can press the send button and your comments will be delivered with the proper heading and signature to your congressman.

<http://www.house.gov/house/MemStateSearch.shtml#wi>

The House is scheduled to bring this important piece of legislation before the House in the week of February 9, 2009 to February 13, 2009. Your concerns and comments are urgently needed on this vital piece of legislation. Please take a few minutes to write an email message and state your feelings, opinions and concerns. Do it now, if you wait it may be to late to have any effect on this piece of legislation. It has already passed the U.S. Senate and the only hope is in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Attached is my open letter (In MS Word and Plain Text Formats), which I have sent to my Representative, in the house regarding my opinions on the Omnibus Land Management Act of 2009 (see following page).

The contents of the letter may be cut and pasted into the block provided at the House Rep web site.

All or any part may be used as needed to get your feelings across to your U.S. House of Representative member.

If you do not have a way to read MS Word or plain text documents I have included the letter at the end of this email.

This is being provided for your information only and is not endorsed by the AFMS, CFMS or PGMC organizations. These are the opinions of the undersigned.

Your help is greatly needed. Please pass this on to others who have interest. Bring it up at club meetings and put it into your newsletters.

Thank you for your time and effort.

John Martin
AFMS Conservation & Legislation Committee
CFMS PLAC South 2005-2008
Palmdale Gem and Mineral Club - Vice President 2009
smartin@antelecom.net
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Open Letter to the U.S. House of Representatives

The Omnibus Federal Land Management Act of 2009 bill is one of the largest public land grab in the history of the United States.

If you have not read the bill in its entirety, then you should not vote blindly for this bill.

Each of the over 150 bills, should be considered on its own merits, some are good and are needed, but the majorities are not needed and are full of pork spending, and they will do more harm to the American People than good.

In the current economic condition of this great country, the last thing that we need is blind spending of the limited tax resources that are available. Some of the included legislation is left over from several of the last Congressional Sessions and should be reconsidered for their validity and timing under the current economic crisis. We do not need another 10 Billion Dollar burden laid on the American Tax Payer.

The Omnibus Federal Lands bill takes about 8.8 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 300 million barrels of oil out of production in Wyoming, according to the Bureau of Land Management. The energy resources walled off by this bill would equal our domestic natural gas production for 15 Years. If we are going to become emergency independent we need to have future access to these reserves.

Just one bill in the 150 bill package, the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS), covers 26 million acres and will lock the American Tax Payer out of BLM multiple-use, energy lands, national monuments and Wild and Scenic Rivers. Grazing, mining, forestry and many other uses will be greatly affected.

Please look at and reconsider your vote on this portion of the bill as presented, Subtitle D Paleontological Resources Preservation. If this becomes law it will instantly make over 3,000,000 amateur fossil collectors and Rock Hounds throughout the United States of America an instant Federal Criminal. This portion will not stop poaching of Paleontological Resources or prevent them from being smuggled out of the country. We all agree that significant finds like "Sue" need to be preserved and protected. However non significant, non decrepit fossils collected by Rock Hounds and School Children must be considered and allowed for in this poorly written piece of legislation.

You, as my elected Congressman need to ask for a vote on each Individual bill that is included in the Omnibus Federal Lands bill. We the voters want you to know you will be held accountable for your vote on The Omnibus Federal Lands bill that is before the House.

Giant Omnibus Bill Goes Down by 1 Vote!!

BLUERIBBON COALITION LAND USE UPDATE

Dear BRC Action Alert Subscriber,

Greg Mumm, BRC's Executive Director, just called me from Washington D.C. He told me that the infamous Omnibus Public Lands bill, commonly known as "S. 22," failed by 1 vote in the House. The Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 had been fast-tracked through the U.S. Senate and had been expected to pass the House earlier today. Tell me one vote doesn't count! The bill is over 1,200 pages long with over 160 different bills, designates 2.2 million acres of Wilderness, identifies three new national parks, 10 national heritage areas, and designates over 1,000 miles of wild and scenic rivers.

We'll have details later. Thanks to all who made calls and emailed on this bill.

Brian Hawthorne
Public Lands Policy Director
BlueRibbon Coalition
208-237-1008 ext 10

Thank you for your support

Wednesday, March 11, 2009
From: "JR Martin" <smartin@antelecom.net>

I want to thank each and every one of the Rockhounds and Friends who took the time and effort to contact their legislative representatives on the Omnibus Public Lands Act of 2009. Though the bill has been defeated and by only one vote this time, it will be back and we may not be so lucky. They are already discussing the reintroducing the bill and will try to force it through the legislative system again. I feel if we were not in the economic crisis this bill and all of its spending measures may have passed the house. We need to keep our guard up and to continue our fight to keep our Public Lands open to all Public Usages. Please continue to check the Federation Website and the ALAA Website for information. If you have concerns or comments please feel free to email me and I will try to find answers.

Again thank you for your comments, time and effort in this important issue.

Thank you
John Martin

Giant Omnibus Bill Goes Down by 1 Vote!!

Wednesday, March 11, 2009
From: "Palmdale Gem and Mineral Club" <pgmc@antelecom.net>

It's Not Over Yet! So don't quit fighting and sending in comments....

John Martin
AFMS Conservation & Legislation Committee
CFMS PLAC South 2005-2008
Palmdale Gem and Mineral Club
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Amargosa River bill will only affect California

By Mark Waite, PVT

The passage in the U.S. Senate of the Omnibus Public Lands Bill of 2009, including the designation of wild and scenic river status for the Amargosa River in California, was like a dream come true for the newly-formed Amargosa Conservancy.

Across the state line, however, Nevada District 36 Assemblyman Ed Goedhart, R-Amargosa Valley, who has seen the influence of environmental designations like Death Valley National Park and Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge on water rights applications in Amargosa Valley, sees a possible nightmare.

Goedhart said a "wild and scenic river" conjures up images of people rafting through white water rapids in scenic national parks. The segment of the Amargosa River under wild and scenic river protection extends from four miles north of the Tecopa Hot Springs road, south to just past the Dumont Dunes access road crossing.

"Any time you want to make wilderness, national monuments, wildlife refuges, wild and scenic rivers, it's like dropping a pebble on a pond. These ripples go a long ways," Goedhart said. "It's an expansion of locking people out of not only public lands but also being able to utilize their own property and water rights, such as people in Amargosa Valley."

The legislation reminded him of the Death Valley regional groundwater flow model, which places limits on application for water rights. Goedhart said the area affected by that flow model would measure 20,000 square miles.

Amargosa Valley is being eyed up for solar power projects by companies like Solar Millenium and Ausra NV.

"When Death Valley was changed from a national monument to a national park, that now gives the National Park Service a buffer area where they can protest things being done outside the park borders up to 50 miles away. These types of things, they get increasingly difficult for people to utilize their land and water rights to attract capital, create wealth, produce payroll and pay taxes," Goedhart said.

Brian Brown, a founding member of the Amargosa Conservancy, which was formed as a nonprofit organization in September 2005, thinks those fears are overblown. Brown doesn't see any impact of the legislation across the state line. Instead, he sees benefits to the economy in the Tecopa-Shoshone area.

"Those small businesses that are surviving are doing it on tourism, and what we have to offer is the desert itself. It's a unique area. There's a lot of endemic plants and animals, and this will go a long way toward protecting their water source in that river," Brown said.

The lands bill is expected to be introduced in the House

within the next couple weeks. The wild and scenic river designation was one of 160 bills in the Omnibus Public Lands Act introduced by U.S. Rep. Buck McKeon, R-Calif.

Brown said he met with the California delegation during a trip to Washington, D.C., in September, along with other residents of Inyo County.

"It's difficult to examine the scenario where this wild and scenic section might affect something 90 miles away in Beatty. It seems like a stretch," Brown said. "States control their water. That's their job. So this is in California, it's not in Nevada. The people in our area are looking forward to it. We look on it as an asset that will bring more tourism and travel to our area."

Brown said the conservancy is working with the state of California to cut a recreational trail down to the Amargosa Canyon from the China Ranch Date Farm he owns. A 17-mile hiking trail from Shoshone, Calif., to Dumont Dunes, part of it using the rail bed from the old Tonopah and Tidewater railroad, has also been discussed over the last several years, with kiosks, watch towers and other facilities.

"This legislation only affects federal land. It does not affect any private landowners' rights to their land," Brown said. "There aren't a lot of places in the lower 48 where you can get the vistas and quiet solitude like we have here. That has value. The truth is there are other values than an economic one, and those have to weigh into decisions on public land."

Brown said the public lands bill is an attempt to wrap up conflicts over wilderness study areas, enacted by the Desert Protection Act of 1994, which designated the Mojave National Preserve in a wide swath of desert from Interstate 15 to Interstate 40.

McKeon's legislation includes designating 11,000 acres in the Sierra Nevadas as a snowmobile area as well as wild and scenic river designation for places like Cottonwood Creek, just south of Lone Pine, Calif.

Brown said the legislation is written so there are seven different locations where off-highway vehicles can cross the Amargosa River.

The bill will also allow the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to measure the stream flow to prevent large diversions upstream that would lessen the flow through the wild and scenic section.

But Brown said that shouldn't affect users upstream since the Amargosa River doesn't have a lot of water.

Bob Haueter, deputy chief of staff for Rep. McKeon, said the water flow isn't sufficient on the Amargosa River to affect potential users in either California or Nevada.

"It has no impact in Nevada. It doesn't reach Nevada," Haueter said. "There can be no impact outside the area affected."

<http://www.pahrumpvalleytimes.com/2009/Jan-30-Fri-2009/news/26600144.html>

BLM Desert District Advisory Council to Meet in Barstow

It is not too late to take advantage of this opportunity participate in an event where our ideas can be voiced. Try to attend on March 20 & 21, 2009 at the Holiday Inn in Barstow. More details below.

John Martin
AFMS Conservation & Legislation Committee
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News Release

For Release: February 20, 2009
Contact: Stephen Razo, 951.697.5217; email: srazo@ca.blm.gov
CA-CDD-09-22

BLM Desert District Advisory Council to Meet in Barstow

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) California Desert District Advisory Council will participate in a field tour of BLM-administered public lands in the Johnson Valley Off Highway Vehicle Area on Friday, March 20 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and meet in formal session on Saturday, March 21 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites, 2700 Lenwood Rd, Barstow, CA 92311.

The council and interested members of the public will depart for the field tour from the lobby of the Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites. Members of the public are welcome to participate in the tour, but should plan on providing their own transportation, drinks, and lunch.

Agenda topics for the formal session on Saturday will include updates by Council members and reports from the BLM District Manager and five field office managers. Additional agenda topics are being developed. Once finalized, the field tour and meeting agendas will be published in a news release prior to the meeting and posted on the BLM California state website at: <http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/info/rac/dac.html>.

All Desert District Advisory Council meetings are open to the public. Times for public questions/comments are scheduled at the beginning and end of the meeting, and may be made available by the council chairman during the presentation of various agenda items.

While the Saturday meeting is tentatively scheduled from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., the meeting could conclude prior to 4:00 p.m. should the council conclude its presentations and discussions. Therefore, members of the public interested in a particular agenda item or discussion should schedule their arrival accordingly.

Written comments may be filed in advance of the meeting for the California Desert District Advisory Council, c/o Bureau of Land Management, External Affairs, 22835 Calle San Juan De Los Lagos, Moreno Valley, CA 92553. Written comments also are accepted at the time of the meeting and, if copies are provided to the recorder, will be incorporated into the minutes.

For more information regarding the California Desert District Advisory Council meeting, contact David Briery, BLM California Desert District Public Affairs at (951) 697-5220.

Posted by: "onyxcollector" OnyxCollector@aol.com
Mon Feb 23, 2009 9:26 am (PST)

Ominous forfeiture provisions in new bill restricting use of federal land

WASHINGTON – A land management bill that swept through the U.S. Senate last month and is headed for a House vote this week punishes rock collectors and paleontologists with arrest and expropriation of their cars and other equipment for even unknowingly disturbing fossils on public land, say critics.

In the **Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009**, a "forfeiture" provision would let the government confiscate **"all vehicles and equipment of any person"** who digs up or removes a rock or a bone from federal land that meets the bill's broad definition of "paleontological resource," says a report by Jon Berlau of the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

"The seizures could take place even before a person and even if the person didn't know they were taking or digging up a 'paleontological resource,'" writes Berlau. "And the bill specifically allows the 'transfer of seized resources' to 'federal or non-federal' institutions, giving the government and some private actors great incentive to egg on the takings."

Tracie Bennett, president of the Association of Applied Paleontological Sciences, is protesting the bill's vague language and severe penalties.

"We can visualize now a group of students unknowingly crossing over an invisible line and ending up handcuffed and prosecuted," she wrote to members of Congress.

Subtitle D of the bill called the **"Paleontological Resources Preservation Act"** would make it illegal to "excavate, remove, damage, or otherwise alter or deface or attempt to excavate, remove, damage, or otherwise alter or deface any paleontological resources located on Federal land" without special permission from the government.

"Paleontological resource" is defined in the bill as "any fossilized remains, traces, or imprints of organisms, preserved in or on the earth's crust, that are of paleontological interest and that provide information about the history of life on earth." Penalties for violations include up to five years in jail.

Berlau believes picking up rocks could be interpreted as a violation of the law since most would fit the broad definition under the law.

The forfeiture provision is effective before a trial and conviction, making the defendant guilty until proven innocent, Berlau suggests.

Berlau believes the House will take up a vote on the bill this week. He is urging Americans to contact representatives before the bill, known both as S. 22 and the "Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009" is approved, as expected, and heads to the White House for President Obama's signature.

Dear Jay,

Our club Editor was asked to make up a petition to our local representatives. As club President and one of ALAA's Directors, I thought you might be interested in reading it. Not sure if it would or could be used as a resource for any of ALAA's future publications. My husband Bob (who is also a Director) thought he did a fine job.

Sincerely,
Kathy Miller

PETITION WILL CIRCULATE

The petition below will be available at the January meeting for those who wish to sign it. More information was in the last issue. You should also contact your US Representative individually! The easiest way to do this is via email. All you have to say is, "I urge you to vote against HR 554," adding a sentence or two of explanation. It only takes a minute and can have a big impact.

The representative for local Indiana members is:
Joe Donnelly
1530 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515
(or) 207 W. Colfax Avenue
South Bend, IN 46601
Phone: 574-288-2780
Fax: 574-288-2825

The representative for local Michigan members is:
Fred Upton
2183 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515
www.house.gov/upton

PETITION:

We, as members of the Michiana Gem and Mineral Society, affiliated with the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies, express our strong opposition to HR 554, the so-called Paleontological Resources Preservation Act. This bill proposes that the federal government prohibit the collection of vertebrate fossils on public lands managed by agencies such as the BLM, USFS and others. This bill would make it a crime to collect vertebrate fossils, even for children doing science projects!

Amateur and academic collectors have always collected fossils on public lands and they should continue to do so. Amateurs, not scientists, have discovered and preserved nearly all the *T. rex* skeletons, along with many of the greatest fossil finds of our time. Amateurs have made numerous discoveries in vertebrate paleontology, and many fossils are named after them.

The fossil resources of the US are truly vast, and only a few vertebrate fossils can be considered rare or scientifically useful. To prohibit all collecting will do more harm than good. This bill guarantees that uncollected fossils will be destroyed by erosion, because no one will be able to collect them. Very few professional or academic paleontologists are in the field collecting today. Most scientific institutions in the US recommend that fossil collecting actually be encouraged, and certainly not made a criminal offense.

Fossil collecting by amateurs should be protected, not discouraged. For children, the hands-on experience of finding fossils is a great way to encourage them as future scientists.

We urge you to vote against HR 554.

Sincerely, Members of Michiana Gem & Mineral Society

Via the Rockfinder 12/08

ALAA - WHO ARE THEY AND WHAT IS THEIR PURPOSE?

In 1991, the President of the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (AFMS) appointed a select committee to recommend ways to make the Federation more effectively responsive to the political challenges of increasing regulation and decreasing access to public lands that State and Federal Land Management agencies were imposing on amateur fossil and mineral collectors. The committee recommended that the AFMS form a separate 501(c)(4) organization whose primary purpose would be to promote the amateur collectors' interests in present and proposed policies, rules, regulations and legislation with State and Federal land managers, elected officials and legislators. In compliance with that recommendation, the AFMS directors voted to establish the American Lands Access Association (ALAA) in July 1992 at their convention in Brunswick, Ohio. The Association is a 501 (c)(4) (non-profit) organization which means that all moneys raised by the association can go toward lobbying activity. Donations and memberships to ALAA are not tax deductible.

The purpose of the Association is to promote and ensure the rights of amateur fossil and mineral collecting, recreational prospecting and mining, and the use of public and private lands for educational and recreational purposes ; and to carry the voice of all amateur collectors and hobbyists to our elected officials, government regulators and public land managers. Their work began immediately! Within days of the July meeting, Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) introduced the Vertebrate Paleontological Resources Protection Act of 1992 into the U.S. Senate. If enacted, the legislation would have ended amateur fossil collecting on all public lands managed by the Federal government except under supervision of certain decreed paleontologists in "acceptable institutions."

ALAA has become an organization that is present wherever there are hobbyist and recreational users of our public lands whose interests and concerns are not being heard or are being jeopardized by proposed policy, regulation or legislation at the local, state and federal level. From defeating the Baucus Bill in 1992 to coordinating massive public protest to the proposed US Forest Service rules (withdrawn) and the Bureau of Land Management's RS (Revised Statutes) 2477 Rights-of-Way (rewritten), the ALAA has earned the respect of public officials from Washington, DC to state capitols across the country as the voice of the amateur and recreational users of public lands. The Association has also formed working relationships with many other organizations fighting for private property rights and multiple use of public lands including the Blue Ribbon Coalition, the Alliance for America as well as treasure hunters, metal detectorists, fishing and hunting enthusiasts, and mining and timber interests. With this network of contacts, the Association reaches into every State and into every Congressional District in the country on a national level. That network provides a swift and effective response to issues brought to our attention.

On another level, many officers, directors and members of the Association have developed ongoing working relationships with local, state and federal officials and legislators. This other network provides us with immediate access to and an impact on many proposals for changing regulations, policy or legislation before they become set in the concrete of implementation.

ALAA is also there when there are confrontations in the field and when proposals are made for expanding federal ownership of land such as publicizing and fighting the Heritage Corridor Act, and other attempts to establish additional wilderness areas under federal control.

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED TO CONTINUE OUR STRUGGLE TO PROTECT PUBLIC LANDS FOR THE PUBLIC TO WHOM THEY BELONG! ADD YOUR VOICE TO OURS! JOIN ALAA NOW !

WHY MEMBERSHIP IN ALAA?

I am an 80 year old rockhound who has been collecting rocks and minerals for the past 25 years. My concern is not about my future collecting, but rather that of the future hobbyists. I was unable to enjoy a hobby when fully employed and making a living for my family. Since my retirement I have become fully involved in earth science hobbies. I belong to several clubs, have been President of Eastern Federation of Mineralogical Societies (EFMLS), the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (AFMS), and the American Lands Access Association (ALAA). I have thoroughly enjoyed the association with others of like interests and wish to do whatever I can to preserve the future of rockhounding. Many folks who retire in future years will need an outlet for their own well being. I want that to be related to the earth sciences. Children who are introduced to the hobby often become our future geologists, mineralogists and museum specialists. They also have a right to love the hobby, and it is our responsibility to protect it for them.

The American Lands Access Association (ALAA) was organized as a lobbying organization to protect the rights of American citizens to collect materials relating to the earth sciences for preservation, education, and hobby purposes from Federally Managed Public Lands.

If you are a rockhound, fossil, or mineral collector, or in any way connected to this growing group of hobbyists, the ALAA is an organization you must support. The entire future of this hobby depends upon your ability to be able to collect materials. Federally Managed Lands are our only salvation. As you know private holdings are becoming more restrictive with each passing day.

Thus far the ALAA has achieved significant success. Never before has a grass roots organization such as ours gotten a bill introduced in Congress. While HR 2943, the Fossil Preservation Act of 1996 did not pass before the close of the 104th Congress, folks on Capitol Hill have now heard of ALAA and know about our fossil bill. We have promises that "our bill" will again be introduced in both houses soon after the 106th Congress convenes. We are making progress.

We need help from the general public, those people who have an interest in learning about, preserving, and protecting earth science materials. WE NEED HELP FROM YOU.

HOW CAN YOU HELP? JOIN ALAA NOW!!!

Your membership will do two things.

Add needed funds to our treasury. (Membership is \$25.00 per year per member).

More importantly, we will have the name and address of another person sympathetic to our cause, when vital news breaks.

If we lose our rights to collect on Federally Managed Public Lands, and continue to have private lands closed off, we will only be able to collect in our own back yards. Won't that be fun?

Attached is an application form to join ALAA. Fill it out, and send it in with your \$25.00 membership fee. It may be the best investment of your life.

Fred C. Schaefermeyer, (ALAA Vice President, retired in 1998)

A.L.A.A Membership Application

AMERICAN LANDS ACCESS ASSOCIATION, INC.

Protecting the Public Lands for the Public

Please enroll me as a member of the ALAA! Annual membership fee is \$25.00

Annual membership fee for clubs is \$50.00

___ New ___ Renewal Date ___ / ___ / ___

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Club Affiliations _____

Hobby Interest _____

Remit fees to: ALAA
Joyce Hanschu, Acting Treasurer
6607 Sturbridge Lane
Canton, MI 48187-2638

The A.L.A.A. is a 501(c4) organization. Its purpose is promoting and ensuring the right of the amateur hobby collecting, recreational prospecting and mining, and the use of public and private lands for educational and recreational purposes; and to carry the voice of all amateur collectors and hobbyists to our elected officials, government regulators and public land managers. Contributions to the A.L.A.A. are not deductible as charitable contributions for Federal Tax Purposes.

ALAA Newsletter
Jay Valle, Editor
1421 Latchford Avenue
Hacienda Heights, CA 91745

FIRST CLASS MAIL



**AMERICAN LANDS ACCESS
ASSOCIATION, INC.**
Protecting the Public Lands for the Public

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