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# WEEKLY NEWSLETTER ISSUE 1 1/15/2023



## BLUERIBBON COALITION

### We're excited to announce the release of the Lost Trails Guidebook!



### Message from our Executive Director

The first trail I inventoried as part of the Lost Trails Guidebook was BLM Route 781 in the San Rafael Desert. This route was on my radar, because in a recent appeal of the Bureau of Land Management Travel Plan in this area, wilderness groups had made the claim that this route was reclaiming and should be permanently closed.

I was surprised to learn that the reason for closure was because the trail wasn't being used enough, because I had been conditioned to believe that the primary reason for trail closures was excess resource damage from irresponsible use.

Contrary to the claims of the wilderness groups that this trail wasn't apparent on the ground and was reclaiming, I was easily able to find the trail. It had become more faint than other trails in the area from lack of use, but the bulldozer lines were still apparent. The two tracks were still visible in the desert brush.

On top of that, it was a trail that provided access to a unique recreation experience for offroad users. It leads up into a wash from a stunning overlook of the San Rafael River. In the midst of the wash there is one area where the trail traverses a sandstone obstacle that would make this one of the few great technical trails in the San Rafael Desert with some clarity from BLM on the best way to complete the route.

Unfortunately, the BLM closed this route through a recent settlement with the wilderness groups that occurred after the Lost Trails Guidebook had gone to production.

We are currently appealing this closure and over 100 miles of other closures in this area along with the State of Utah. Until we've reached resolution on this appeal, we advise users not to travel on this trail.

However, this trail shows us an important example of the stakes in this fight and increases the importance of why we created the Lost Trails Guidebook in the first place. This is turning out to be a drawn out process, and the reality that we could lose access to 100s or 1,000s of miles of trails is entirely possible. As is the case in the San Rafael Desert the #1 reason that the wilderness groups are successfully closing trails is because they are prevailing in their claims that we're not using the trails enough.

After logging thousands of miles of field work to ground-truth the claims that these trails are reclaiming, I am finding from firsthand experience that these claims are categorically false. I've been able to find every trail that is allegedly reclaiming. I'm also excited to report that every trail I explored was a rewarding experience in its own unique way.

In some cases there was amazing scenery. I had memorable encounters with wildlife. I discovered numerous sites of historical interest. Sometimes the reward was simply exploring something new and being the only person around in a vast and empty desert.



In addition to the San Rafael Desert, we explored some of the further reaches of the San Rafael Swell. People often confuse these two areas as the same area, and they're very different from each other. I also spent several days in the backcountry north of Kanab, Utah in spectacular areas on the outskirts of Zion National Park.

Completing the guidebook was a significant undertaking, and we hope that everyone takes some time to read and understand what we're fighting for and why we do it. We also hope a lot more of you choose to responsibly explore these hidden treasures. We're grateful for the Yamaha Outdoor Access Initiative, which funded this effort with a grant, which was matched by BRC. We also appreciate Jorgensen's Motor Sports in Richfield, UT for being a dealer sponsor of the project.

We're also excited to announce that we are in the planning stages for a 2nd volume of the Lost Trails Guidebook, which will feature trails in the Labyrinth Rims/Gemini Bridges near Moab, and the Black Canyon Corridor in Arizona. We will be looking for additional sponsors and supporters for the 2nd volume, so if you're interested in being a bigger part of this project please reach out.

Documenting the use of these trails is an important part of our legal strategy, and we hope that our members and supporters learn an incredibly valuable lesson from this project: The best thing you can do to fight for our trails is to go have an adventure and connect with the lands and experiences we're working to protect.

Defend Your Ground,

Ben Burr

Executive Director

### How you can get a copy of the Lost Trails Guidebook

As a promotion for the final day of our Yellowstone Winter Sweepstakes, we will send a copy of the Lost Trails Guidebook to anyone who contribute \$25 or more to the Sweepstakes using the promo code "LostTrails"

You will also get 50% more entries to the sweepstakes. The sweepstakes deadline ends TONIGHT (January 5) at 8:00 p.m. MT, and we will be drawing the winner on January 13th.

Enter below:

[BONUS ENTRIES HERE](#)



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BlueRibbon Coalition is a 501c3 non-profit organization. We are able to protect your adventures because of charitable contributions from our members and supporters. Please consider making a sustaining contribution to BRC today!

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