

Nine Mile Canyon Coalition Press Release Final Draft
P.O. Box 402, Price, UT 84501
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mar. 25, 2008

Contact Person: Pam Miller, Coalition Chair
(435) 613-5751, (435) 637-6838
pam.miller@ceu.edu, millers@emerytelcom.net
www.ninemilecanyoncoalition.org

SAVING SANTA CLAUS

Price, UT - This year, Santa can't wait for Christmas. A small but dedicated group of rock art preservationists in Utah and their allies are fighting to preserve what may be the original Santa Claus.

Located high on the side of a sheer cliff in a rugged place in central Utah named Nine Mile Canyon is an ancient petroglyph dating back over 1,000 years that has an uncanny resemblance to the modern day "Santa," an elf, and his nine reindeer (see attached photo). A petroglyph is a work of prehistoric Indian rock art that is chiseled or "pecked" into rock, usually into a dark patina surface.

Unfortunately, Santa is in danger of being destroyed by industrial gas and oil development in the area. According to Pam Miller, a trained archaeologist and Chair of the Nine Mile Canyon Coalition, "Santa is one of more than 10,000 unique petroglyphs and pictographs (prehistoric Indian art painted on rock) found in the canyon that are being obliterated by dust and destroyed by dust-suppressant chemicals (magnesium chloride) being sprayed on roads, and the vibrations of huge trucks, drill rigs, bulldozers, and industrial traffic."

Bill Bryant, the photographer who managed to photograph Santa using a super-telephoto lens said: "The destruction going on here is tragic. This entire canyon is a national treasure that should be made into a National Monument or Park." For more photos of "Santa" and other petroglyphs, go to <http://www.flickr.com/photos/bryant99/>

The federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has sold mineral leases in Nine Mile Canyon and on plateaus north and south of it. BLM has not ordered industrial traffic re-routed in order to preserve countless prehistoric and historic sites in the canyon. Ms. Miller commented: "BLM has decided to do the bidding of the gas and oil industry and the Bush Administration while sacrificing cultural and historic values, air and water quality. It is time to restore balance to BLM's public land policies and decisions."

Fortunately, there is time to stop further destruction. A public comment period ends May 1 on the BLM West Tavaputs Plateau Natural Gas Full Field Development Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The proponent prepared DEIS is a proposal from the Bill Barrett Corporation to drill over 800 wells in the next eight years using the historic and scenic National Back Country By-Way Nine Mile Canyon road as its industrial thoroughfare and staging area. Petro-Canada Resources (USA) is also drilling

in the area. Public comments can be submitted electronically to UT_Pr_Comments@blm.gov and you can examine the EIS at www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/price.html. The phone number of the BLM Price Field Office is (435) 636-3600, FAX (435) 636-3657. You can go to the Nine Mile Canyon Coalition website for more information and links, www.ninemilecanyoncoalition.org.

Pam Miller observed: "While the intentions and beliefs of the original artist(s) will never be known, the beauty of rock art is that future generations will continue to be inspired by it." She added: "Of course this Santa interpretation must clearly be seen as ethnocentric by later observers; it is not likely that Santa, the elf, and reindeer were in the mind of the original people making the markings."

Miller concluded: "The only way to save Santa and the world-renown rock art of Nine Mile Canyon from destruction is for people to get involved and make their voices heard to BLM and their elected officials across the country. This place needs to be saved for future generations." [END]

Other knowledgeable links to rock art and Nine Mile Canyon:

Ray Matheny, retired BYU Archaeology Professor, and Deanne Matheny, Archeologist and Attorney, (801) 785-4267, yaxche@aol.com

Utah Rock Art Research Association, <http://utahrockart.org>, Layne Miller (435) 820-4326 and Troy Scotter (801) 377-6901

American Rock Art Research Association, <http://www.arara.org>, Mavis Greer, Mavis@GreerServices.com, (xxx) xx

Utah Statewide Archaeological Society, <http://www.utaharchaeology.org>, Chanel Atwood, ccric@ceu.edu, (435) 650-3701

Utah Professional Archaeological Council, <http://www.upaconline.org>, (801) xxx

Colorado Plateau Archaeological Alliance, Jerry Spangler, Director, (801) 388-3387, <http://www.cparch.org>, jerry_cpaa@att.net

Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, Steven Bloch, Staff Attorney, (801) 486-3161 ext.16, <http://www.suwa.org>, steve@suwa.org

Steve Tanner, Chair of the Nine Mile Canyon Coalition Research Impact Committee, (435) 637-5986, tanner@emerytelcom.net

Edythe Marett, former resident of Nine Mile Canyon, (435) 738-2294, emarett@ubtanet.com

H. Bert Jenson, History Professor, (435) 722-3931 est. 243, bertj@ubtanet.com

Ivan White, NEPA consultant, (253) 347-1969, wildtrv@wolrnet.com

Bill Bryant, photographer, (972-418-0014), bryantconsulting@gmail.com,
<http://flickr.com/photos/bryant99/>