

READING THE WEST

read-ing [from ME *reden*, to explain, hence to read] – vt. 1 to get the meaning of; 2 to understand the nature, significance, or thinking of; 3 to interpret or understand; 4 to apply oneself to; study.

THE MIGHTY FIVE

Two years ago, Mark Sundeen reviewed the history and results of Utah's "Mighty Five" campaign to promote tourism in the five national parks in Utah – Zion, Bryce Canyon, Capitol Reef, Canyonlands, and Arches – for Outside magazine. He wondered if the campaign had worked too well.

Utah had a problem. Shown a photo of Delicate Arch, people guessed it was in Arizona. Asked to describe states in two adjectives, they called Colorado green and mountainous but Utah brown and Mormon. It was 2012. Up in the governor's Office of Tourism, hands were wrung. Anyone who had poked around canyon country's mind-melting spires and gurgling green springs knew it was the most spectacular place on the continent – maybe the world – so why did other states get the good rep?

The office hired a Salt Lake City ad firm called Struck. The creatives came up with a rebrand labeled the Mighty Five, a multimedia campaign to extol the state's national parks. . . . By 2013, a 20-story mashup of red-rock icons towered as a billboard over Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. A San Francisco subway station morphed into a molten ocher slot. Delicate Arch bopped around London on the sides of taxicabs. . . .

The campaign introduced to the mainstream a type of adventure that for decades had only a cult following. Unlike traditional park fare – peaks, woods, wild animals – canyons are an acquired taste, less achievement and more mystery, an immersion into the stone inwards of creation that can be at once sensual, hallucinatory, and religious.

The Mighty Five campaign was a smash. The number of visitors to the five parks jumped 12 percent in 2014, 14 percent in 2015, and 20 percent in 2016, leaping from 6.3 million to over 10 million in just three years. The state coffers filled with sales taxes paid on hotels and rental cars and restaurants. The Struck agency brags that the state got a return on its investment of 338 to 1. The clink of crystal flutes bubbling with Mountain Dew echoed across the land. . . .

Since then, Arches has been swamped often enough to shut its gate at least nine times. . . . Meanwhile, in Zion, hikers wait 90 minutes to board a shuttle and an additional two to four hours to climb the switchbacks of Angels Landing. There, visitors sometimes find outhouses shuttered with a sign that, although specific to excrement, might well express the condition of the Utah parks as a whole: "*Due to extreme use, these toilets have reached capacity.*"

Source: Sundee, Mark. "Utah Wanted All the Tourists. Then It Got Them." *Outside*, 29 January 2020, <https://www.outsideonline.com/adventure-travel/national-parks/utah-mighty-five-tourism-campaign/>.

IMPACT ON GATEWAY TOWNS

Gateway towns are the communities at the mouth of national parks. Utah has four – Moab, Torrey, Bryce Canyon City, and Springdale. Each of these towns is experiencing enormous growth – of tourism and gentrification. They have problems with ensuring that they have enough water to meet the growth, that they have enough affordable housing for year-round and seasonal workers, and that they can maintain a sense of community for long-time residents. Recently, three of these towns elected new mayors – each of them faced with dealing with these issues. The Spectrum sent out a questionnaire for the mayors-elect asking how they plan to tackle their biggest challenges and what they see for the future. The main points each brought up were about water, housing, and tourism management.

Joette Langianese (Moab): It will be important to network with other communities and federal/state officials to gather information on what is working and what the challenges we will face as the population and interests in recreation on public lands continue to grow.

Mickey Wright (Torrey): State and federal agencies must understand the impact their decisions have on small towns and counties that must provide visitor services. Everything from water, campgrounds, RV parks, hotels, restaurants, housing, public services, and the workers needed to support all these businesses must be considered. The county currently provides many of the needed public services, but their resources are also very limited. The greatest need is help developing and providing housing and public services.

Barbara Bruno (Springdale): The state and federal governments can help by allowing us to enforce our own land use ordinances. We need to be able to maintain our “village scale” environment and unique aesthetic. We need to be able to regulate the number of properties that are allocated to nightly rentals in order to keep housing for residents and employees of the town and its businesses.

Source: Will, Sophie K. “Meet the New Mayors’-Elect of Utah’s National Park Gateway Towns.” *The Spectrum*, 24 November 2021, <https://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/2021/11/24/meet-mayors-elect-zion-arches-capitol-reefs-gateway-towns/6253796001/>.

MESSING UP MOAB

Moab, Utah, is one of the cities affected by increase in tourism. The tourism economy relies on tour guides, restaurant staff, hotel staff, and services sector employees – all of whom are being priced out of the housing market. In the past five years, mobile home parks have become particular targets for developers, who can triple the property values by evicting long-time, low-income residents and replacing them with second-home owners. As reported by Richard Markosian in Utah Stories:

The Moab Master Plan states that if current build-out rates continue at the pace they are at, water usage will need to decline per-capita by 52% to provide enough water for both residents and tourists. Besides supplying water to its 5,300 residents in peak season, Moab needs to supply water for an additional 19,000 visitors. This requires a huge amount of additional capacity which is provided by three tanks



Delicate Arch, Arches National Park

and several aquifers and wells. The city needs to drill at least two more wells in the near future to accommodate projected demand and population growth. . . .

Accommodating growth while preserving the quality of life of Moab is a huge balancing act that Moab leaders are working to solve. The main barrier now is that the city is still extremely congested, and all amenities and infrastructure are maxed out at peak season. Locals and leaders have the mindset that they currently do not want to see more tourism in peak season.

Source: Markosian, Richard. "Moab Growth Limited by Building Cost and Water Supply." *Utah Stories*, 3 May 2022, <https://utahstories.com/2022/05/moab-growth-limited-by-building-cost-and-water-supply/>.

BEARS EARS

Federal officials, including at the U.S. Department of the Interior, have often had fraught dealings with the nation's 574 federally recognized tribes across the Lower 48 and Alaska. In the late 19th century, federal officials removed Native Americans from their ancestral lands, including from Yellowstone, the nation's first national park.

Recently, the Biden administration reached a historic agreement to give five Native American tribes – the Hopi Tribe, the Navajo Nation, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, and the Pueblo of Zuni – joint management over the Bears Ears National Monument.



The Sixshooter Peaks in Bears Ears National Monument, U.S. Bureau of Land Management

Humans have inhabited the southeast corner of Utah for 13,000 years, carving arrowheads from stone, farming corn, painting images on rocks and creating communities on the mesa tops. But in recent years, Bears Ears has been at the center of a fierce political battle over America's public lands.

In 2016, President Barack Obama established the Bears Ears National Monument, named for a pair of tall buttes that resemble the top of a bear's head peeking over a ridge. His proclamation recognized the land's "profoundly sacred" meaning for many Native American tribes.

Eleven months later, in December 2017, President Donald Trump shrank Bears Ears by more than 1.1 million acres, or about 85 percent. While conservative lawmakers cheered the decision, activists protested outside the White House and in Utah.

In October, President Biden used executive orders to protect 1.36 million acres in Bears Ears – slightly larger than the original boundary that Obama established. The orders also reversed Trump's cuts to the 1.87 million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante monument. And they reestablished the Bears Ears Commission, which comprises one elected officer from each of the five tribes.

Source: Joselow, Maxine. "Native American Tribes to Co-Manage National Monument for First Time." *The Washington Post*, 20 June 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/06/20/bears-ears-national-monument-tribes/>.

EDITORIAL MATTER

ISSN 0891-8899 – Weber is published biannually by The College of Arts & Humanities at Weber State University, Ogden, Utah 84408-1405. Full text of this issue and historical archives are available in electronic edition at <https://www.weber.edu/weberjournal>

Indexed in: Abstracts of English Studies, Humanities International Complete, Index of American Periodical Verse, MLA International Bibliography, and Sociological Abstracts. Member, Council of Learned Journals.

Subscription Costs: Individuals \$20 (outside U.S., \$30), institutions \$30 (outside U.S., \$40). Back issues \$10 subject to availability. Multi-year and group subscriptions also available.

Submissions and Correspondence: Editor, **WEBER THE CONTEMPORARY WEST** | Weber State University
1395 Edvalson Street Dept. 1405, Ogden, UT 84408-1405.
801-626-6473 | weberjournal@weber.edu

Copyright © 2022 by Weber State University. All rights reserved. Copyright reverts to authors and artists after publication. Statements of fact or opinion are those of contributing authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or the sponsoring institution.