

# Southern Utah Group to Promote Wilderness

Thirty eight local citizens met last week to hear Dick Carter from Utah's chapter of the National Wilderness Society speak concerning areas proposed for wilderness designation.

Carter explained the need for wilderness areas and refuted the arguments of wilderness protesters. He raised concern over protecting our natural areas saying, "no other country has a wilderness act" and noted "that nothing will happen without local support."

Carter urged that local people inform their representatives in Congress to show their support for wilderness areas in southern Utah. He said that while there will be wilderness areas in the north, that areas south of Provo need to be promoted. "Our job is to draw maps, our job is to find information, our job is to convince someone to support it-and that's unique," stated Carter.

A group of about ninety members have formed to promote wilderness areas in southern Utah, specifically the proposed Ashdown Gorge and Pine Valley Mountains wilderness areas. Temporary leaders are Pat Heidenreich for Iron County and Ron Rencher from Washington County.

Carter said that the act only prohibits use of motorized vehicles and anything else which might hurt wilderness character but did provide flexibility. He said that "buffer" zones with Class one air restrictions around wilderness areas would be unlikely. Wilderness areas would be Class two air quality standards unless these stipulations were changed by an act of the Governor or Congress, according to Carter. He said that over two million acres of Forest Service wilderness had not become Class one air quality areas, to support his argument that changes in standards were unlikely.

He stated that fire and search and rescue operations would not change under the proposed legislation but would be

handled normally whether the land was designated as wilderness or not.

Carter feels that wilderness areas would not cut back on livestock grazing of those lands. He said that water troughs and ponds necessary to sustain the present levels of livestock would be allowed and that other necessities such as fences and windmills would also be considered.

To counter the argument that wilderness "locks up" areas so that oil, minerals and other resources can't be developed, he said that only a small portion of the nation's land had been recommended for wilderness, 1.6 million roadless acres. He said there was more oil, gas, coal and hard rock minerals produced in Utah in 1978 than any year before."

He felt that timber harvesting was not important since Utah is not a large lumber producer. A report from the Wilderness Society stated that according to a Forest Service Publication of 1974 that 88.4 percent of Utah's National Forest timber is classed as "poor".

He cited statistics from an Atlantic Richfield Poll that 40 percent of Utahns feel that environmental protection is more important than economic growth. He said that 27 percent of Utahns felt that the National Wilderness system was too small, 49 percent feel that they system is about right and only 18 percent feel that it is too big. He further reported that the poll showed that 27 percent of Utahns feel that the federal government will designate too little wilderness area, 25 percent too much and 38 percent just about right.

He said that Utah has one of the lowest percentages of total lands designated as wilderness in the entire nation at .05 percent. Florida has the highest with 3.7 percent with Montana, Washington, and Wyoming each having 3.5 percent. According to the Wilderness Society, "Utah has less wilderness than any other western state, 29,000 acres."