

INFOBRIEF

Capitol Reef National Park



RESOURCES UPDATES, 1990

LATEST ON ISSUES

Grazing--Since the purchase of grazing permits began in 1988, 70% of grazing cattle have been removed from the park. Also, the staff has initiated a fencing project to inhibit trespass from outside the park, while studies will chart a course for "restoration" of lands where cattle no longer roam. In a sense, grazing is no longer a major issue, even though some allotments will be held by cattlemen well into the next century.

Fremont River Dam--The Wayne County Water Conservancy District has proposed the construction of an earthen dam to produce hydroelectric power and increased irrigation water on the Fremont River, 9 miles west of the point where it enters the park.

The National Park Service (NPS) is concerned that a dam might impact the river's pristine natural values. The dam could cause downstream changes in water temperature, flow rates, and sedimentation, all of which could affect the riverine environment within the park.

Increased awareness of the Fremont River and concern about possible effects of the dam has caused the NPS to suggest the river for listing on the National Rivers Inventory. Inventory status could result in the river being designated as a Wild and Scenic River of national significance.

The NPS is concerned about the dam project but at this time does not take a position either objecting or not objecting to it. Intensive study and data gathering by the NPS is underway while the proponents complete their own required environmental effect studies. When those proponent studies are completed and reviewed, the NPS will develop an official position.

Power Line Changes--The Garkane Power Company maintains a utility corridor across the park and some of the corridor is visible to visitors using Highway 24 or the Scenic Drive in historic Fruita. The NPS has agreed to the replacement of existing 12.5 kilovolt lines and poles with a 34.5 kilovolt system, based on the power company's assertion that the change is necessary to continue adequate subscriber service to the east of the park.

For some time, the NPS has taken a position that the existing 12.5 kilovolt line approaching and running through the historic pioneer settlement area of Fruita is intrusive. Telephone lines were moved underground in 1986.

In response to the power company's desire to increase the power handling capabilities of the existing line (taller poles and bigger cable), the NPS sought special Federal funding for undergrounding in 1987, but was not successful. Garkane Power Company affirms that they have no funds for undergrounding any portion of a new 34.5 kilovolt system.

Burr Trail Road--Controversy continues over paving this scenic 66-mile road, 8.4 miles of which lies within Capitol Reef National Park. Minimal funding, administrative appeals and litigation have slowed Garfield County's paving project.

At present, realignment and roadbed preparation work to the west of the park have not affected the portion of the road within the park. The NPS will exercise authority over all construction and realignment within the park that might impact park resources.

ORCHARD CHANGES

Workers have removed an orchard of old peach trees from an area next to the campground amphitheater. They are replacing them with nut trees, all almonds.

The baskets long used to protect young trees from damage by deer are time-consuming to build. In the old days, farmers kept the deer population low by hunting. Orchard workers are experimenting with a protective plastic tube device that circles the young tree and is less intrusive than the old baskets. The tube also protects against the gnawing of rodents.

