Torrey Fall Foliage Trip-Torrey to Ferron to Skyline Drive
September 27, 2016

The group broke into two trail rides today. Joan Hayes led a trail departing from the Broken Spur Inn. Rick Draney led another group on what was reported as another great trip departing from near his home in Loa. Below, the Hayes lead Jeep waiting to depart.
Sunrise at the Broken Spur Inn.
Another sunrise view at the Broken Spur Inn.
On Highway 72 headed north toward Ferron, Utah. The Henry Mountains in the distance.
Curious cow watches the Jeeps passing by.
A broad, lush valley along the trail.
After arriving in Ferron we turned west onto Canyon Road and drove toward Millsite State Park, Reservoir and golf course.
According to Barry Bishop, a former resident of Ferron, this is the world's best golf course by a dam site! Located in a very scenic setting, they host many tournaments and events.
After passing the Millsite Golf Course and Reservoir the 13 Jeeps reached the end of the pavement and our air down.
Our trail leader, Joan Hayes, prepares to deflate her Jeep tires.
Entering Manti-Lasal National Forest and the drive up the rugged and beautiful Ferron Canyon, FR 0022.
The foliage was hit and miss this year. This photo shows how much the color was knocked off by the recent snow and winds. However, where the color was good, it was great!
Looking back east toward Millsite Reservoir and the village of Ferron.
Gaining altitude, we start to encounter some vibrant golden and red fall colors.
Some cattle enjoying the good life—for now.
Pit stop!
Ferron Reservoir, with evidence of recent snowfall still evident.
Ferron Reservoir

Ferron Reservoir lies in an attractive alpine basin east of the Skyline Drive on the Wasatch Plateau. Ferron is near Willow Lake and Duck Fork Reservoir. Snow at the reservoir usually lasts well into late spring and can fall in early autumn. Summer storms can make roads very slick. We experienced snowmelt on the trail, which caused some slick conditions and guaranteed no clean Jeeps.

Details

**Location:** Sanpete County

**Directions:** Drive on improved gravel Forest Service roads 28 miles west of Ferron or 19 miles east of Mayfield

**Type:** Fishing and wildlife observation

**Size:** 57 acres

**Elevation:** 9,472 feet

**Hours:** No restrictions

** Likely catch:** Brook Trout, Rainbow Trout
An osprey, sometimes called a fish hawk, circles the reservoir.
Looking back toward Ferron Reservoir.
Sheep, numbering in the thousands, spend the day doing some late season grazing.
Arriving at a vista exceeding 10,000 feet elevation on the Skyline Trail.
Arriving at Twelve Mile Campground and lunch. Bonus-rest rooms!
A unique geologic window feature on top of the ridgeline.
Getting into some great color.
From this point on down the mountain we started seeing the reds of maples.
Arriving at Johnson Valley Reservoir.
Johnson Valley Reservoir
Old Spanish Trail/Fish Lake Cut-Off, Johnson Valley
The Fish Lake Cut-off on the Old Spanish Trail

Pathway to Grassy Meadows and Water

An Historic Trade Route Passed This Way

In the early 1800s, thousands of men, mules, and horses plodded along a well-travelled trail that paralleled Fish Lake. Can you imagine the dust, noise, and smells of a trading caravan on the move?

Why Did Traders Come This Way?

You are actually standing on the Fish Lake Cut-off of the Old Spanish Trail. The cutoff was a 72-mile shortcut that skirted the western shores of Walsworth Lake (Fish Lake). Reaching elevations near 9,000 feet, the trail crossed mountain valleys that provided abundant quantities of fish, grass, water, and cool summer temperatures for travelers using this alternate route. This “southern branch” rejoined the main Old Spanish Trail near Kingston, Utah.

The Old Spanish Trail

This pack trail, known as the Old Spanish Trail, stretched 1,200 miles and linked Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the Pueblo of Los Angeles (L.A.) in the Mexican Territory of California. Between 1829 and 1848, traders used the trail to carry New Mexican wooden goods—rugs, blankets, and sombreros—that were traded for California mules and horses.

Old Spanish Trail
The Fish Lake Cut-off on the Old Spanish Trail

A Summer Route to Lush Grass and Water

What is the Fish Lake Cut-off?

There is no doubt about some Old Spanish Trail users taking a cut-off from the regular Salina Canyon portion of the historic route to travel through the Fish Lake area, thereby availing themselves of better grazing for livestock and fishing for the men.

Dr. Edward Leo Lynn, Director of the Old Spanish Trail Association, “Los Chupes,” 2009

Fish Lake Described in the Historical Journal of a Traveler

In late May of 1848 Lt. George D. Brewerton wrote,

“...we encamped one evening upon a beautiful little lake situated in a hollow among the mountains, but at so great an elevation that it was, even in summer, surrounded by snow, and partially covered by ice. There we were again visited by the Estato Indians, who, as usual, behaved in a very friendly manner... and, upon Kit’s asking for fish, one of the Indians... returned with a fine trout...”

Old Spanish Trail
The Fish Lake National Forest has been working to mark the general route of a portion of the Old Spanish Trail known as the Fish Lake Cut-off that crosses public lands administered by the Forest Service. Trails are being marked and efforts are underway to interpret the story of this commercial “highway”. Interpretive displays have been placed at Red Creek near the Ivie Creek Rest Stop on I-70, the nearby mouth of Red Creek, off of SR-25 in the Johnson Valley area, at the Doctor Creek Trailhead, the SR-24 Rest Stop by the Koosharem short cut, and at the Paiute ATV Trailhead in Kingston Canyon.

At the above points visitors will be able to read about John C. Charles Fremont, Capt. John Gunnison, Kit Carson, Lt. George Brewerton and the Ute Chief, Walkara. Silhouette, life-sized pack trains can be found at the Johnson Valley and Doctor Creek interpretive panels.

Interpretive materials will tell that between 1829 and 1848, traders from New Mexico stitched together a series of trails left by Native Americans and Spanish priests. The route, from Santa Fe to Los Angeles, was later named by John Charles Fremont as the “Great Spanish Trail”. It stretched 1,200 miles through what are now the states of New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Nevada and California. It entered nearly waterless lands scorched by unceasing heat and then climbed rocky, rugged mountains.

According to Fish Lake National Forest Archeologist Bob Leonard, the Old Spanish Trail has been described as the “longest, crookedest, toughest pack trail in North America.” The mule was the hands-down choice for the beast of burden and as riding animal. Simply put, mules are stronger, tougher and more intelligent than horses. Their hooves are incredibly dense and they never needed to be shod. Kit Carson, famous American scout, soldier and Indian agent, never rode anything but a mule.

So what did the pack mules carry? Typically, they carried woolen goods from New Mexico to California where they were traded for Spanish mules and horses. One to two blankets would get you a horse while three to five blankets were demanded for a good mule. On the return trip, caravans could employ 200 to 300 men who drove thousands of animals back to New Mexico. One caravan or “caballado” had over 4,000 animals when it left California. (End USFS text)
The Old Spanish Trail
(1829-1848)
This historic trail was a 1,200-mile-long trading route linking Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the Pueblo de Los Angeles (L.A.), California. The trail passed through this area along a route called the Fish Lake Cut-off. During this period it went through the grassy meadows of Johnson Valley and skirted the western shores of Washatch Lake, now called Fish Lake.

Payment for Safe Travel
Wakara (1815-1855) a powerful Ute Indian chief and champion horse thief, drove thousands of California horses and mules along the Trail. Wakara was greatly feared by the traders who passed through his domain. In return for their safe passage, they paid the chief a tribute, usually consisting of manufactured items such as knives, guns, mirrors, or red cloth.

From the Journal of a Traveler
In 1848, Lt. George Brewerton and his guide, Kit Carson, entered a gorge along the Old Spanish Trail on the Fish Lake Cut-off and came upon seven human skeletons. Six of the skeletons lay on the ground, probably scattered by hungry wolves. The remains of the seventh person were undisturbed, being sheltered by rocks and a fallen tree. Arrows embedded in the trees around this unfortunate party suggested a one-sided battle.

Is it possible that the Fremont River gorge below you is the site of this massacre?

*Skeletons—Near Fish Lake. (In sketch), G. D. Brewerton, 1853.*
Addendum:
The National Forests and the Public Lands

An important issue that could potentially impact the management of our public lands has been in the news recently, that is, the transfer of public lands from Federal control to State control. Below is a basic treatise of the management of public lands and how it may affect those of us who enjoy our wild lands outdoor hobby and passion. This certainly deviates from the trail report, but should be important to those of us who visit, appreciate and respect our public lands.

Background

The 191 million acres National Forest System administered by the Forest Service, an agency of the Department of Agriculture, and the 265 million acres of Public Lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), an agency of the Department of the Interior, are concentrated in the Western third of the lower 48 and Alaska. The United States Congress recognized a growing problem of protecting all uses of American forests and passed federal Public Law 86-517 on June 12, 1960. Congress then passed The Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act which mandated all uses of forests be equal in importance.

While the statutory regimes differ -- the National Forests are administered under the National Forest Management Act, and the BLM lands under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act - both statutes borrow from the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act in their
original emphasis on striking a balance in land use planning among the competing values of recreation, grazing, timber, watershed protection, wildlife and fish, and wilderness. They thus, as was famously observed, “are not parks.”

For historical reasons, the statutorily sanctioned timber and grazing uses of these lands have resulted not only in the expectation by ranchers and the timber industry that these uses will continue unabated, with similar expectations in communities whose livelihood depends on the persistence of these uses. However, grazing use on public lands has declined from 18.2 million Animal Unit Months (AUMs) in 1954 to 8.6 million AUMs in FY 2015 (a 53 percent decrease). An AUM is defined as one month use by a cow/calf unit, one horse unit, or 5 sheep or goats. At the same time, the National Forests and the other Public Lands represent significant, and in some cases, the only large scale refuges for certain wildlife, (turtle preserve, sage grouse, wolves, etc.) and have nationally recognized ecological and cultural significance—geologic, Native American and early pioneer sites and artifacts as examples. Recreational uses may, but not necessarily, conflict with the above interests and there may be conflict within the neighboring community between the economic value of consumptive and recreational uses and preservation values. As can be expected, the use allocations made by the agencies often do not sit well with one or the other of these constituents. Seemingly arbitrary trail closings are an example. The result is often litigation.

Several western states, led by Utah, are currently attempting to wrest the public lands from Federal management and place them under State, or local control. This argument is that local jurisdiction could better manage the lands with local input and that the economic potential
(renewable resources, logging and grazing; non-renewable extractive operations-mining, drilling, etc, and sale of developable parcels) could generate more revenue and allow more population and consequent economic growth. Some also advocate that through local control, users may be more likely to retain recreational access. Also, that under State control, the lands will not be subject to the same laws, regulations and restrictions as under Federal control. The example of the overpopulation problem of wild horses in the west is an example of a problem, albeit one that likely needs Congressional action to help resolve. Conversely, some also believe that as the former public lands are sold into private holdings, those parcels containing now accessible roads and trails, streams and lakes will become posted against public access and use.

Some of the arguments for maintaining Federal control are that the Federal government is better equipped to manage these huge acreages including fire management and control-economies of scale; pest control; protection of sensitive sites, partly through their large staffing pool of professionals; continuity of policy between states; States and local communities will lose the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) funded by the Federal government. PILT compensates more than 1,900 counties in 49 states and territories for property taxes they cannot collect on tax-exempt federal lands. These federal lands are administered by the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service, federal water projects and some military installations. PILT helps rural counties pay for vital services such as environmental compliance, law enforcement, health care and education.

Advocates for maintaining Federal control also believe that retaining open space in public lands is a hedge against increasing air pollution, traffic congestion and infrastructure costs and
other social concerns related to increasing and undermanaged or mismanaged population growth. Also, increasing development into the currently open spaces, especially forested areas, increases the urban fire interface.

In Fiscal Year 2015, the Federal BLM was allocated $79 million for its rangeland management program. Of that figure, the agency spent $36.2 million (46 percent) on livestock grazing administration. The other funds covered such activities as weed management, rangeland monitoring (not related to grazing administration), planning, water development, vegetation restoration, and habitat improvement. In 2015, the BLM collected $14.5 million in grazing fees. The receipts from these annual fees, in accordance with legislative requirements, are shared with state and local governments. This fiscal shortfall, the argument supported largely by various environmental groups, is used in part to advocate for the end of livestock grazing on BLM lands.

When the National Forest System was established and forestland was set aside from settlement and development, many local rural communities experienced hardships due to the large amounts of land withdrawn from economic development. In response, Congress created a revenue sharing program from activities on national forest lands to help offset these effects. These payments primarily funded public schools and roads. In 2000, in response to declining logging and sawmilling operations, Congress created the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) to replace and modernize the old timber receipt revenue-sharing program. For many rural counties once dependent on timber revenue, these funds are vital. Without inclusion in the budget, 4,400 schools would lose funding, and many counties across America could face fiscal insolvency.
Traditionally, forestry professionals in the United States have believed that forest management is a scientific discipline that should be undertaken by value-neutral experts. This understanding originated in the progressive era, typically dated from 1890 to 1920, as part of a wider progressive belief in the “scientific management” of American society. The U.S. Forest Service was created in 1905 (under the advocacy of Gifford Pinchot, a European trained forester) to advance this mission, including on the national forests directly managed by the Forest Service itself. In the last few decades of the twentieth century, however, such core tenets of professional forestry came under increasing challenge from the "environmental" movement. (John Muir, et. al., earlier advocacy). (This is not to imply that "environmentalism" is a bad thing, as in actuality, most all of us are environmentally concerned, especially those of us in the West who visit and recreate on the public lands.)

Instead of seeing a forest as a “natural resource” to be used to advance the economic progress of American society, a large segment of the public now saw forests as having an “intrinsic or basic value” somewhat independent of human welfare. By the early twenty-first century, reflecting such new thinking in American society, the old idea of “multiple-use management” of the national forests (and other natural systems) had begun to lose out to “ecosystem management.” This shift in forest management philosophy reflected new (secular) religious directions in American society, as the progressive “gospel of efficiency” increasingly lost out to a new environmental “gospel of naturalness.” This is evidenced in part by the
movement to more national monuments and other reserved areas in the country, not just in the forests of America, but other public lands as well.

**What's a (partial) solution?**

Two local southwestern Utah nonprofit Off-Highway-Vehicle and public lands advocacy groups, Desert Roads and Trails Society (Desert RATS) and Utah Public Lands Alliance (UPLA) have, together with the regional BLM office in St. George, developed an example of cooperation and coordination that could be a model for the rest of the western US where there are contentious relationships between the federal government and segments of the public. For example, at the January, 2016, Winter 4X4 Jamboree fundraiser in Hurricane, Utah, the BLM presented to UPLA a $110,000 grant to be used for new trail construction, trail maintenance and education programs over the next 5 years. The money came from locally generated user fees on BLM managed lands in this region. In appreciation of the privilege of accessing and enjoying our public lands, the Desert RATS organizes and conducts several trash cleanups on BLM lands each year. The BLM provides trash bags and dumpsters. Obviously, resolution takes a commitment to cooperation, participation and problem solving from all parties—including environmental groups, public lands users and especially the local, state and federal elected officials. See also:

http://www.publiclandsranching.org/htmlres/PDF/FS_Overview_Benefits.PDF  or


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