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## **ROCK ART IN THE GIBSON DOME AREA**

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The Department of Energy (DOE) has, for several years, been conducting a nationwide search for a permanent geologic repository for high level nuclear radioactive waste. In 1978, the DOE's Office of Nuclear Waste Isolation (ONWI) began studying four areas in Southeastern Utah's Paradox Basin in which to locate this repository. The areas studied were lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The four areas were: Salt Valley, Lisbon Valley, Elk Ridge and Gibson Dome. After completion of these area studies, the ONWI narrowed the site selection activities to one location—the Gibson Dome area, which is adjacent and east of Canyonlands National Park.

In 1982 the DOE applied to the BLM for authorization to conduct more detailed exploratory activities at Gibson Dome. Specifically these areas were: one, in Davis and Lavender Canyons next to the Six-shooter Peaks; two, along Indian Creek just north of Newspaper Rock State Park; three, in Beef Basin next to Ruin Park and four, in the Lockhart Basin. The ONWI then chose Davis Canyon as the preferred site.

The BLM, after considering the request of DOE, prepared a draft environmental assessment (EA). In the EA the BLM arrived at the conclusion that no significant impacts would result from the DOE's studies. The EA stated, "No known archeological, historical, or cultural sites exist on or near the borehole locations." I found that statement extremely difficult to accept because I have been hiking through Indian Creek and Davis and Lavender Canyons for almost 15 years. During that time I have

seen hundreds of archeological sites, i.e., Indian ruins, petroglyphs, pictographs, kivas, granaries, etc.

I discussed the DOE's proposals with several of my friends, including Rick Smith, who was working part time in the evening for Channel Five News (KSL). He told reporter Keith McCord that I was convinced, and had proof, that the BLM and DOE were totally incorrect, that there were significant archaeological resources near the study areas, and that there would be adverse impacts from DOE's activities. Keith McCord then arranged for Channel Five's helicopter, Chopper 5, to fly us down to film some of the archaeological sites. From this trip Keith developed a news story that alerted the public to the impending destruction. At the same time, Layne Miller was working with Channel Two News (KUTV); and a similar story was broadcast on that channel. Our efforts were well rewarded. We received calls from the Governor's office, and the BLM changed the environmental impact assessment.

The most important aspect of the proposed nuclear waste dump, relative to adverse impacts to archaeological sites, is its size. Almost 2,000 employees and their families would be required to work and live in Davis Canyon for a period of five years just to build the repository. For these people, the main access route in and out of Davis Canyon is Indian Creek. These people's main recreation area will also be Indian Creek, as well as Davis and Lavender Canyons, and, of course, Canyonlands National Park. If the nuclear waste dump is built we can expect to see tremendous

increases in vandalism—the same kind of vandalism that has gone on in this area in the past.

There are several locations where bullet holes exist in the pictographs. People use the Indian writings for target practice—deer hunting rifles, handguns, even shotguns have been used to deface the panels. Uniformed people have attempted to make latex molds of the petroglyphs (see photographs). This has left hardened latex spread over some of the petroglyphs. Attempts have been made to scrape off this material, but these attempts have not been successful.

Perhaps the most destructive vandalism that I have observed is where people try to take the rock art home. Probably the classic example is the large well-known boulder that has pecked on it a petroglyph of what likely is a bear. (Some believe this image is a mastodon.) This boulder was carried away from the site and later, under threat of fine, returned. I have seen other examples where people have attempted to break off or saw out these petroglyphs.

Of course, the most common vandalism to the rock art is defacing it with modern names and drawings. Fortunately, there is yet little of this vandalism in Indian Creek. However, with the large numbers of people that would come into this area with the nuclear waste dump we can expect to see a tremendous increase in this type of vandalism.

Along Indian Creek there are also historic and prehistoric dwellings that are eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. Only some of these have suffered from vandalism. However, the collecting of surface artifacts, i.e., pottery, arrowheads, and the other lithic materials, which has been taking place since the late 1800's until the present, have scoured Indian Creek almost clean of arrowheads and pottery.

The adverse impacts that would result from the construction of a nuclear waste dump are of such a proportion that the dump should be located as far from Indian Creek as possible. None of the locations in southeastern Utah chosen by DOE are acceptable for a nuclear waste dump.

In discussing the Draft environmental assessment with Bruce Louthan, the Moab District's BLM Archeologist, I learned that the BLM had almost no archeological sites in their records from the four DOE study areas. No archaeological surveys had ever been done. He was kind enough to provide me with information about the few recorded sites.

In December of 1981, Layne Miller and I completed a brief reconnaissance of the area, and I determined at that time to begin a survey to document the archeological resources. In doing this, I learned that Owen Severance, from Monticello, Utah, who had worked for the National Park Service at Canyonlands, had located many sites. Jesse Warner, as president of URARA, organized several field trips into the area where additional sites were located.

I now have completed most of the survey work along Indian Creek. One hundred and seventy archeological sites have been recorded. The sites have been recorded on the new Intermountain Antiquities Computer System (IMACS) site forms. This was the first archaeological survey project in the State of Utah to use of these forms. They are much more complex than the old site forms, but they have the advantage that the information recorded is more complete.

The purpose of the presentation at the URARA symposium was to illustrate some of the valuable rock art sites that I have recorded—and their numbers—and make people aware of what might happen to these

panels should the Davis Canyon nuclear waste dump site be approved.

The illustrations in the following pages are taken from the 200 slides that were shown during the symposium.