

**PARTING SHOT** FROM DANNY MILLER

A weekly snapshot from The Daily Astorian and Chinook Observer photographers



The afternoon sun breaks through cloud cover on the Pacific Ocean in September as seen from Oswald West State Park.

**ODDITY**

# Sign of the times

Feds change signage on trailhead named after black cowboy

*Associated Press*

**M**OAB, Utah — Though local officials decided not to change the name of eastern Utah's Negro Bill Canyon, federal land managers have decided to mark the trail by less controversial name.

The Bureau of Land Management has replaced the "Negro Bill" trailhead sign with one reading "Grandstaff Trailhead," another name for the popular recreation area, The Deseret News reported. More than two dozen high-way signs have also been switched.

BLM spokeswoman Lisa Bryant said the agency is now speaking out as being in favor of changing the name of the canyon.

"It's been an ongoing discussion in the community," Bryant said. "The way people have looked at it has been evolving, and the way BLM looks at it has evolved. The BLM is now on record of being in favor of renaming the trailhead and the canyon."

The federal agency's decision comes during a period of renewed national scrutiny of statues and other objects honoring the Confederacy and the use of the Confederate flag. The debate, like the one about the name of the canyon, has focused on issues of race and historical accuracy.

Negro Bill Canyon was named after a black cowboy, William Grandstaff, whose cattle grazed there in the 1870s.

The canyon's name has long been debated. Grand County voted in August 2015 to keep the canyon's name. A similar effort to change the canyon's name was defeated in 2013.



Wikimedia Commons

Opinion is divided over a sign named for a black cowboy. The new sign reads "Grandstaff Trailhead."

"Like everything in this county, we always have strong sentiment on both sides of every issue, and this was no different," Grand County Council Chairwoman Elizabeth Tubbs said.

Those advocating for a change have often cited the offensive connotation of the word "negro." But those for the name say it is keeping an important historical figure alive.

"I am ecstatic," said Grand County Councilwoman Mary McGann about the sign change. McGann had spearheaded an effort to change the name

in 2015. "When my husband gets off work, we are going to drive down there, and he is going to take a picture of me at the trailhead," she said Tuesday.

McCann has said that landmarks named for white historical figures aren't generally prefaced by race, and the canyon should bear his last name instead.

Tubbs, who was against changing the name, said keeping the history of the canyon is worth the downside.

"I did not particularly like the word

or name, but I felt like we were trying to sweep something under the rug that could have been a teaching moment in our history," she said. "We had a person who happened to be African American who lived in the area which was fairly unusual about this part of the country at the time."

Last year, Salt Lake City NAACP President Jeanetta Williams drummed up support to keep the name because it because it makes it clear that the canyon is named for a black historical figure.

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