

Deal signed to protect ancient art in Utah canyon

By Mike Stark
Associated Press Writer

SALT LAKE CITY — An agreement aims to safeguard thousands of prehistoric American Indian drawings and carvings from truckers' dust in a famed Utah canyon near where a Colorado company wants to dramatically increase energy development.

The pact signed at the Utah Capitol last week is the first major attempt to address concerns over dust in Nine Mile Canyon, whose miles of decorated walls are sometimes called the world's longest art gallery.

The canyon has been the focus of intense debate for several years after Denver-based Bill Barrett Corp. proposed developing 800 natural gas wells on West Tavaputs Plateau, which sits above Nine Mile Canyon. The Bureau of Land Management has not made a final decision on Bill Barrett's proposal.

The primary concern has been concern over dust from the unpaved road being kicked up by an increasing number of trucks ferrying equipment and workers.

Some worry the dust could hurt the ancient art panels depicting bighorn sheep, owls, a two-headed snake, spear-wielding hunters and warriors engaged in hand-to-hand combat.

The agreement is meant to lay out protections for the rock art if Bill Barrett's proposal is approved. It was signed by BLM officials, Utah Gov. Gary

"We sincerely hopes it's going to work."

— Pam Miller, chair of the Nine Mile Canyon Coalition

Herbert, Bill Barrett Corp., as well as environmental and archaeological groups and advocates for the 78-mile-long canyon.

The deal, affecting some 233 square miles, including the canyon and the West Tavaputs Plateau, includes a list of tasks such as more dust suppression and studies to determine if the rock art is being harmed.

Much of the agreement's financial burden will be shouldered by Bill Barrett.

Duane Zavakil, the company's vice president for government affairs, said the company could end up spending nearly \$1 million a year for dust suppression, contractors to research and monitor rock art and other steps.

"We want to document and be sure we're leaving that rock art in as good a shape as we found it," he said.

The plan for 800 more would likely mean about 200 trucks per day using the canyon's winding road during the peak of development, Zavakil said, adding that estimates of 1,000 trucks a day were used primarily for government's analysis of the project.

The agreement gives the company some regulatory certainty if their project moves ahead, he said.

"Hopefully we have the big-

gest stumbling block out of the way," Zavakil said.

Herbert praised the agreement, which was a year in the making by a long list of politically diverse participants, as a triumph of the "reasonable and rationale."

Selma Sierra, BLM's director for Utah, said it would ensure that Nine Mile's artifacts "will be protected for generations to come."

Canyon advocates called it an important first step but said its success will be measured in how it's implemented.

Pam Miller, chair of the Nine Mile Canyon Coalition, said she's happy to see efforts to tamp down dust and study its potentially adverse effects. Whether the BLM cracks down when problems crop up will be something her group will be watching for.

"We haven't always been listened to before when we've reported problems," Miller said. "But we're hopeful. We sincerely hopes it's going to work."

In Carbon County, which includes a portion of the canyon, officials are hopeful the deal not only protects the rock art but also allows the energy project to move ahead.

Commissioner John Jones said about 60 percent of the county's property taxes come from energy development.

Turner bid for Yellowstone bison draws protest

BOZEMAN, Montana (AP) — Ted Turner's bid to get 74 wild bison from Yellowstone National Park is drawing stiff opposition from those who say the animals are being given up for private profit instead of conservation.

Turner has offered to take the animals at the request of Montana's Democratic Gov. Brian Schweitzer.

The media mogul would keep the bison five years and then return them to the state. As compensation, Turner would keep 90 percent of the animals' offspring, meaning he would gain an estimated 190 bison from a herd prized for its genetic purity.

Turner is a longtime cham-

pion of bison conservation and owns an estimated 50,000 of the animals across the West. But rising criticism over his latest plan is putting the media mogul in an awkward position. His representatives insist he cannot take the animals without getting something in return.

Some conservationists and federal officials — plus a group representing dozens of Native American tribes — say the animals should not be commercialized. At a public hearing over the Turner proposal, they said the bison belong on public or tribal lands. That's what state and federal officials had promised during the past several years.

"You're not being true to your commitment not to com-

mercialize these animals," said Glenn Hockett with the Gallatin Wildlife Association.

The animals are now in disease quarantine just outside Yellowstone. They are part of a 5-year program to divert some park bison from the periodic slaughter the animals face, part of efforts to prevent the spread of the disease brucellosis to cattle.

After prior attempts to relocate quarantined bison failed, state officials had warned they could soon be slaughtered.

Russell Miller with Turner Enterprises said keeping most of their offspring would be necessary to offset the cost of keeping 74 animals for the state for five years.



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Gilbert Brown

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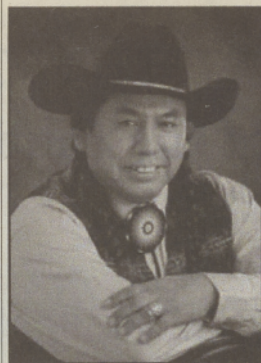
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Sioux Falls program targets obesity in youth

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls man is starting a nonprofit venture to battle youth obesity.

Aaron Maguire says Dakota Kids Inc. will help overweight and obese children from kindergarten through grade 12.

The 12-week program will

involve nutrition education and exercise, as well as body composition and strength tests.

Maguire is working with the United Way, Volunteers of America Dakotas, Native American tribes and after-school programs.

A recent survey in South

Dakota schools found that 33.6 percent of children are either overweight or obese. State nutritionist Kristin Biskeborn says the state is working to combat childhood obesity.

The Sioux Falls school district also is working to battle the problem.

Police

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According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, an area that qualifies for HIDTA status "must be a major center of illegal drug production, manufacturing, importation or distribution; have state and local law enforcement agencies already engaged; have a harmful impact on other areas of the U.S.; and, require a significant increase in federal resources."

There have been 31 of these areas designated across the U.S. since the program began in 1990. Warm Springs would be the first HIDTA in Indian Country, Smith emphasized.

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