

April, 2004

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(Partial Listing)

It has been a remarkable and productive time for the Friends of Alta. Please take a moment to read our news, including land acquisitions, scientific research, education, community support, and our anticipated challenges.

Land Aquisitions: This year, Friends of Alta purchased one lot in the Albion Basin. But the big news is that Salt Lake City, the major owner of water in Albion Basin, purchased nearly all of the Albion Basin lots formerly owned by Friends of Alta (FOA still holds title to two lots to maintain future standing in possible legal cases). Salt Lake City used earmarked Albion Basin land acquisition funds from the Federal Mitigation Commission, creating a 3-way agreement between the Friends of Alta, the Mitigation Commission, and Salt Lake City. As part of that Agreement, Friends of Alta **retained the conservation easements** on each lot, while Salt Lake City holds title. The sale of the lots to Salt Lake City has given us additional funding for more acquisitions.

Scientific Research: The Albion Basin Eco-Geographical Study is nearing completion, and will be available online this summer at www.friendsofalta.org. The results of this study are fascinating, and will provide a baseline of scientific documentation for future studies. Friends of Alta approved two additional studies to be started this summer; these will focus on the presence of invasive plants in the Albion Basin, as well as the unique role of mosses in the Albion Basin ecosystem. The Nature Conservancy, as well as Federal, State, and local land and wildlife management agencies have expressed interest in our research.

Education: The Albion Basin will serve as a teaching laboratory for 16 school teachers from Alta and the Salt Lake Valley attending a Geographic Information System (GIS) inservice. GIS is now a core curriculum requirement for secondary school teachers in Utah. The teachers will learn to use global positioning systems (GPS) and GIS software to collect and manipulate information, ultimately applying GIS technology to their core curriculum. Friends of Alta has, along with others, provided financial support for this inservice, and has been working with State education and GIS administrators to coordinate the inservice. Teachers attending the inservice will be able to bring GIS data of the Albion Basin back to their classrooms as a learning tool for their students.

Community Support: We continue to help the Town of Alta with studies, the popular Summer Booth Program, tree-planting, and the Memorial Grove. We also continue to support local organizations such as the Alta Arts Council, Friends of the Utah Avalanche Center, the Alta school, and the Alta Historical Society.

Local and Regional News: There is an effort afoot to combine the pocket wilderness areas in Little Cottonwood Canyon, and re-name them the Wayne Owens Wilderness area, in recognition of Congressman Wayne Owens, who played a primary role in assigning wilderness designations for these areas, and who also, in the 1980's spearheaded the efforts to protect Albion Basin with earmarked funding from the U.S. Congress through the Mitigation Commission. Friends of Alta has asked one of our Directors to coordinate with these efforts.

Town of Alta Mayor Bill Levitt reported that the Salt Lake County Council of Governments asked him to chair the Canyon Advisory Committee, which will study issues affecting the Wasatch Canyons. The primary emphasis on Little Cottonwood Canyon and Alta will be watershed protection, environmental protection, and public safety. This committee will follow up the 1983 Wasatch Canyons Goals and Recommendations report, in which Mayor Levitt played a strong participatory role.

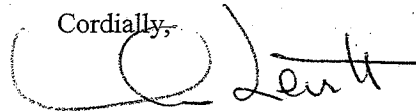
At our annual meeting on April 3rd, Alta Ski Lifts reported on plans to replace two lifts (Collins and Germania) with one long lift. They are also attempting, along with others, to improve Little Cottonwood Canyon Road, either through realignment of the road, snow sheds, or other means, to reduce the road dangers.

Challenges: The Albion Basin still provides a lucrative temptation to real estate speculators, if they could find a way to bring enough water to the Basin to support development. Recently, a group of property owners in the Albion Basin applied to the State Engineer to move irrigation water rights purchased in the Salt Lake Valley to dozens of points of diversion in the Albion Basin to facilitate development. This application has been protested by Friends of Alta, Salt Lake City, Murray City, Sandy City, the Town of Alta, the U.S. Forest Service, Alta Ski Lifts Co., and the Snowbird Service District. A hearing before the State Engineer is expected to take place this summer, and it is anticipated that litigation will follow. Should this type of water transfer be approved, it would not only negatively affect the watershed and alpine wetland environment of the Albion Basin, but set precedence for other important watershed areas in the Wasatch.

Appeal: Since our incorporation in 1982, we have accomplished much. In addition to our annual support of community organizations, we have contributed to tree planting by the Scouts over the years; helped fund the first Mountain Wetland study; helped fund the Alta Summer Trails program, along with the Summer Booth and educational brochures; helped fund the 1991-92 Master Plan; in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service and the Town of Alta, we helped establish Alta's Memorial Grove; completed the Albion Basin Eco-Geographical Study; our new brochure is included; we are in the process of building our website; and we produced a wonderful calendar for 2004, with photos of Albion Basin donated by some of the best Utah photographers.

Our main #1 priority continues, as always, to be the acquisition of the undeveloped lots in Albion Basin in order to protect the watershed and preserve open space. We own the conservation easements on all 16 lots that have been acquired over the years, which assures that they will never be used for other than open space and watershed protection. We appreciate your help over the years, and hope that you will again consider a donation.

Cordially,



Mimi Levitt
President