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**In Memoriam**

Bill Levitt, 1917 – 2009

**Friends of Alta**

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Cover Photo by Sam Askins



## Preserving the Nature of Alta

Alta, the place is captivating. Soon, the fields that were verdant with wildflowers and hikers will be replaced with many feet of powder snow and skiers. The experiences that we have at Alta connect us with nature and for many provide a feeling that we are home.

As we reflect on our summer, we are reminded of what is possible when community members come together to protect our open spaces. The purchase and protection of Bonanza Flat is nothing short of an incredible achievement that brought generous individuals, forward thinking governments, and passionate non-profits together. With support from our community, FOA contributed over \$90,000 towards the purchase of Bonanza Flat. We were humbled by your support and encouragement to be involved with Bonanza Flat. This effort reinforced the vital role that FOA plays for Alta's community and the Wasatch.

From the Central Wasatch Commission to UDOT's Recreation Hotspots funding and updates to the Salt Lake County General Plan and SLC's Watershed Management Plan there is constant threat to Alta's character and environmental health. We are committed to being at the forefront of decisions that are being made that will effect Alta's future.

In this newsletter you will find program updates as well as our 2017 annual report. This fiscal year we invite you to help us raise \$232,000 in donations to continue to support FOA's mission. We ask that you make a donation today to protect Alta. Your contributions help conserve Alta's open spaces, protect our local watershed, and preserve cherished recreation opportunities.

Sincerely,  
Mimi Levitt & Jen Clancy



## Albion Fen & Supreme Lift Reroute

The Albion Fen is perched just east of Alf's Restaurant. It's the largest wetland in Albion Basin and provides filtration for drinking water in a protected watershed. The fen is a peat forming wetland, where peat accumulates slowly over thousands of years because the production of organic matter is greater than the rate of decomposition. Fens are characterized as having mineral rich groundwater discharge, that in turn determines their hydrology, chemistry, and vegetation. Wetlands deliver ecosystem functions and services such as providing wildlife habitat, natural water filtration, nutrient cycling, primary production, carbon sequestration and export, sediment transport, and channel stabilization<sup>1</sup>. In 2002, the USFS Rocky Mountain Region issued a statement to Forest Supervisors requesting they avoid impacts to fens on National Forest Lands due to their irreplaceability. FOA also recognizes the importance of the fen and other wetland areas in Albion Basin, which is why we have funded hydrological studies since 2005.

In February 2017, the USFS approved the deconstruction of the Cecret Lift and a reroute of the Supreme Lift to extend it to Alf's Restaurant. The lift reroute was originally proposed in Alta's Master Development Plan, but Alta asked for it to be removed and considered under a Categorical Exclusion to speed up the preview process. The Supreme Lift's cable needed replacing, therefore a faster review would avoid maintenance on a lift they were proposing to retire. During USFS public scoping, FOA twice asked for a wetland delineation so that the project could be planned to avoid the fen. It is standard practice to complete a wetland delineation in areas known to have significant wetland resources, even for ski areas.



The first round of comments received by the USFS prompted Alta to modify the lift's alignment with the intent of avoiding the fen, but that intent was not followed up with ground-truthing of the wetland's boundaries. Subsequently, the USFS's approval was based on designing the lift so that surface disturbance from terminals and towers was restricted to upland sites. When the ski season ended, the lift's alignment was cleared and trees were hauled out over the snow to limit disturbance.

After the snow melted and the base terminal area had been excavated, a June stakeholder site visit reignited our concerns that portions of the Albion Fen would be lost. These concerns prompted the USFS to bring in the Army Corps of Engineers to determine if wetlands existed in the lift alignment. The presence of wetlands was confirmed, but the cumulative footprint of wetlands to be destroyed was too small to trigger the Corps' mitigation requirements.

Albion Basin forms the headwaters of the Little Cottonwood Watershed and by State Statute Salt Lake City has authority to protect its municipal watershed. There is a long history of SLC and the Salt Lake Ranger District working collaboratively to protect the watershed. The ski area is complying with SLC's mitigation request for a 3:1 ratio of constructed wetlands to natural wetlands lost from this lift. The mitigation will occur at the base of the new Supreme Lift on the western edge of the Albion Fen and will be constructed to help manage hydrology including groundwater seepage around the base terminal.

With such obvious concerns about losing wetlands being raised early on by stakeholders, the planning, review, and oversight of the Supreme Lift reroute are in question. This project was not held to the conditions of its approval under the Categorical Exclusion, and then the decision to mitigate was rushed to, after construction had already started. Constructed wetlands provide less productive ecosystem functions and services than naturally occurring wetlands<sup>2</sup> and fens specifically are considered irreplaceable. There is significant effort needed to protect Albion Basin's wetlands and we are encouraged that our involvement



*castilleja spp*

will lead to more thorough planning of future projects.

In summary, any project that has the potential to disturb the ground surface in Alta, or any other mountainous area must undergo a rigorous evaluation of the potential to impact sensitive and irreplaceable resources. We look forward to work collaboratively with Alta and the USFS for the benefit of humans and the wildlife and water that the Canyon provides.

1. Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. 2005. Ecosystems & Human Well-being: Wetlands & Water Synthesis. World Resources Institute, Washington, D.C.  
2 Español, C., Gallardo, B., Pino, M.R. et al. Aquat Sci (2013) 75: 385. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00027-012-0284-1>

### Central Wasatch Commission

On June 29th, the Utah Lieutenant Governor's Office approved the agreement to form the Central Wasatch Commission. This interlocal agency, which came from Mountain Accord, will work to create more formalized and streamlined decision making among multiple jurisdictions in regards to the future of the Central Wasatch Canyons development, recreation, and transportation. The Commission met for the first time in July and has since been working on organizational setup and budgetary needs. We expect the commission to resume its monthly meeting schedule in December.

### Recreation Hotspots Program

The Utah legislature approved SB 277 which designated funding to be used by UDOT for transportation improvements that have a significant economic impact associated with recreation and tourism. Little Cottonwood was one of four sites selected and has received \$2 million in funding for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). We are told that consultants will be hired by January 2018 to facilitate the EIS. At that point, the purpose and need statements will be developed along with proposed actions. Recent transportation studies are likely to streamline this process.

### Paul Stanford Bernhard Foundation

This past year, the Paul Stanford Bernhard Foundation made a heartfelt grant to FOA sponsoring all three Bill Levitt Fellows from July 2016 through July 2017. The grant also

included adding trees to the Memorial Tree Program in memory of Paul. As do many of you, Paul had a special connection with Alta and his family saw it only fitting to honor his life by investing in Alta and the next generation of Alta stewards. Paul loved Alta. He spent considerable time on the Alta slopes honing his technique and enjoying the beauty of the Wasatch. His passion for skiing led him to an annual ski trip through Colorado and Utah. He would always end in Alta... he said it was like coming home. We wanted to share this thoughtful contribution with you and extend an extra special thank you to the Paul Stanford Bernhard Foundation for their support!



Paul at the top of Collins Lift

### Bonanza Flat

Together, as a community, we saved Bonanza Flat and helped protect a culinary water source for SLC! Park City officially made the \$38 million land purchase on June 16<sup>th</sup>. FOA was one of 11 nonprofits working towards raising the remaining \$13 million after Park City residents approved a \$25 million dollar open space bond. With your help, we raised over \$57,000 in donations to help purchase Bonanza Flat. That sum, combined with our \$35,000 conservation fund match, made for a \$92,000 contribution to help Park City with the purchase. We would like to thank everyone who helped make this happen. Since the purchase, Utah Open Lands has been diligently compiling a natural resource inventory of the property.



Photo of Bonanza Flat by Brad Lewis

## Board Spotlight: Becky Johnson

I was born and raised in Salt Lake City and so was lucky to grow up hiking, skiing, and camping in Little Cottonwood Canyon and the surrounding Wasatch Mountains. After attending college in upstate New York, I came back to Utah to work winters in and around Alta for several seasons, before returning full time to attend the S.J. Quinney College of Law at the University of Utah. I got to know my fellow classmate, and now husband, Cameron, over ski runs at Alta and beers at the Sitzmark at the Alta Lodge. Cameron and I now live and work in downtown Salt Lake City, where I practice with a small boutique natural resources law firm, Lear & Lear.

This summer, Cameron and I welcomed our first born, Wallace, into our family. What has been one of the most delightfully refreshing surprises about being a parent is seeing the world around us through a different lens and with a renewed appreciation. Wallace's first hike this summer was up to Cecret Lake during the height of the wildflower bloom. It may have taken us a least an hour to get out the door, we were running on only a few hours of sleep, and we weren't breaking any time records, but that's what made even a short hike feel extremely satisfying and rewarding.



We are so fortunate as Salt Lake residents to have quick access to national forest lands like those surrounding Alta. This has allowed us the opportunity to easily introduce Wallace to the beauty of the natural world, while also allowing us the chance to rediscover and experience that world along with him from a fresh perspective. Suddenly places in the Cottonwood Canyons that had seemed familiar and that we'd already explored seem like new adventures again.

I look forward to Wallace getting to experience Little Cottonwood Canyon as I did growing up and getting to create his own memories along the way. I am particularly grateful to organizations like Friends of Alta that actively work to protect a little wildness and open space for us to share with our children, and so am very proud to serve on the board.

## Bill Levitt Fellow: Dan Vise

The past two months have been a truly incredible experience. Growing up in southern California, my family was using almost every opportunity to get out into the great outdoors. Whether it was quick weekend trips to Big Bear Mountain, kayaking in Newport harbor, or backpacking trips to Yosemite, I developed a passion and appreciation for my surrounding environment. Naturally, it didn't take long at all after arriving in Alta for me to develop the same type of passion and appreciation. Alta is an incredible place that has to be experienced; words simply don't do it enough justice.

I have been extremely fortunate to have been the Bill Levitt Fellow this past summer. In my time here with Friends of Alta, I've been able to learn, see, and do plenty. I have gained invaluable experience interacting with the public, educating and encouraging them to take ownership of this great place. I've been able to learn and familiarize myself with native plant and wildflower species on vegetation surveys, as well as being able to identify non-native plants from invasive weed pulls. I especially enjoyed getting to know the wildlife that calls Alta home, including birds and seeing a moose



for the first time.

More importantly, during my time here I have also had the privilege of meeting and working with people who are hugely passionate about the preservation and conservation of Alta. Similarly, in my short time with Friends of Alta I have had experiences that will undoubtedly serve to benefit me in the future. Being able to work with and learn from Jen Clancy, as well as meeting the board members of Friends of Alta, has been an invaluable experience. Working and interacting with these passionate individuals has only served to strengthen and reaffirm my own personal beliefs and attitudes regarding the environment as well as inspiring me with new ideas.

As the culmination of the time I have spent in Alta this summer, I have stronger sense of self and the ways in which I want to pursue a career in environmental law and policy. Similarly, as I head back to California to finish my degree in environmental management and protection with a concentration in environmental policy at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, I'll be bringing back plenty of memories from the best summer of my life, experiences, and ideas that will serve me well not only in the upcoming school year, but far beyond that as well.

## Alta Bird Study

This summer, we completed our third year of breeding bird surveys! This study is a collaborative effort between Tracy Aviary, Alta

Environmental Center, and FOA with the purpose of creating baseline data for bird species present in Alta. The partners recently confirmed funding the study for a full five years in order to create a robust baseline. Understanding bird populations of an area is extremely important because it can tell us a lot about the overall health the ecosystem. This year we added four new species to our presence list: Purple Martin, Song Sparrow, Gray Flycatcher, and Eastern Kingbird. This brings our total species richness to 104! Although breeding surveys have finished for the year, there are still many ways to be involved throughout the winter. We invite you to join us for our non-breeding bird surveys on skis the second Monday of the month from December to April. Join us as we ski around Alta looking for our feathered friends! For more information visit: [friendsofalta.org/bird-surveys](http://friendsofalta.org/bird-surveys).

## Alta Amphibian Survey

Staff from FOA and the Alta Environmental Center teamed up to participate in the Statewide Amphibian Surveys and Habitat Assessment program this August. Our surveys were conducted in areas around Alta that could be potential breeding grounds for a variety of amphibian species including; tiger salamanders, boreal chorus frogs, and boreal toads. This project is a collaboration between the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, U.S. Forest Service, Utah Geologic Survey, Wild Utah Project, and Utah's Hogle Zoo.

## Summer 2017 Program Stats

We organized and aided community partners with 21 summer events.

Environmental Education:

- > 930 adults and 474 youth volunteered
- > 3,854 volunteer hours

Stewardship Opportunities:

- > 478 acres worked and 60 miles of trail stewardship conducted
- > 1,769 volunteer hours
- > 131 trees planted by FOA on Sept 8, 2017
- > 1,329 trees planted at community events

Visit our website calendar for upcoming events.

## Treasurer Report - Richard Thomas

This year one of our biggest fundraising efforts included helping a local coalition of organizations purchase Bonanza Flat. With your help, Friends of Alta contributed over \$90,000 toward that success, while taking a small hit (\$20k) to the contributions raised to fund our other programs. This year we need to make up that difference so we can follow through on land acquisition in Albion Basin. Fortunately for our budget, the lengthy litigation against the State Engineer was decided in our favor. However, the issue seems likely to be appealed to the Utah Supreme Court or resurface in another manner as has been the pattern for the last 30 years.

Forces are still pressing to resolve the canyon transportation problems and Friends of Alta will be actively involved in the discussion. There are many choices yet to be made about the Central Wasatch Commission concept and the conclusions reached by the Mountain Accord process. We are hopeful about the creation of a Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area and of an Albion Basin Botanical Area. Our Conservation Fund is our professionally managed reserve, enabling us to purchase Albion Basin land for protection when it should become available. Our newly announced planned giving program, the Bill and Mimi Levitt Legacy Circle is our latest effort to increase the fund to a balance of one million dollars.



Photo By Janice Gardner

## June 30, 2017 Annual Report

Contributions <sup>1</sup>	\$169,968
Directed Alta Defense Fund / Litigation Contributions	\$8,810
Directed Bill Levitt Fellowship Contribution	\$10,620
Directed for Purchase of Bonanza Flat	\$57,149
Directed Conservation Fund Contributions	\$6,112
Business Sponsors	\$14,311
Fundraising Programs <sup>2</sup>	\$8,194
Grants <sup>3</sup>	\$10,000
Investment Income	\$26,870
Special Events	\$30,632
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$342,666</b>
Operations	\$60,154
Alta Community and Governmental Relations	\$26,279
Environmental Education, Studies & Sustainability <sup>4</sup>	\$49,675
Land Conservation <sup>5</sup>	\$19,065
Contribution to Purchase Bonanza Flat	\$91,799
Litigation Against the State Engineer	\$14,500
Fundraising <sup>6</sup>	\$56,910
Conservation Fund Management Fees	\$2,846
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$321,228</b>
<b>Conservation Fund Market Value on 6/30/2017</b>	<b>\$897,649</b>

1. Individual Contributions, Love Utah Give Utah, Memorial Tree Program
2. Merchandise, Alta Mid-Winter Study Group
3. LLWW, Patagonia and Alta Ski Shop
4. Alta Summer Booth Grant, Summer Stewardship Programs, Wetland Study, GIS Mapping
5. Conservation Easement Monitoring, Insurance, GIS Mapping, Conservation Resources & Planning
6. Revenue generating Expenses: Events, Marketing, Merchandise, Newsletters

### Milestones Reached

- > Launched our planned giving program, the Bill & Mimi Levitt Legacy Circle, and now have 9 members
- > Contributed \$91,799 to the purchase of Bonanza Flat
- > Won case against State Engineer which kept a point of diversion (for water) from being transferred from Sandy to Albion Basin

### Goals for 2018

- > Raise \$232,000 in contributions
- > Increase Conservation Fund balance to \$935k
- > Increase conserved parcels in Albion Basin
- > Promote transportation solutions in LLC that are safe, reliable, responsible, fiscally responsible, phase able to evolve with demand and paired with convenient parking near the base of canyon

# Thank You For Your Support

Friends' Donations: Fiscal Year July 2016 through June 2017

We deeply appreciate the support of all our contributors. It is our policy to only list people who have provided permission.

Please accept our sincere apology for any errors or omissions. To be added to this list or make corrections email [info@friendsofalta.org](mailto:info@friendsofalta.org).

## Columbine \$1,000+

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100% of the Board of Directors support FOA with donations in addition to their volunteer service

\* Indicates donors that contributed to the purchase of Bonanza Flat.

The Mission of Friends of Alta is to protect the environment of Alta, including watershed and wildlife habitat areas; to preserve Alta's unique character and heritage; and to encourage stewardship and sustainability of Alta's environment and community.

## Ways to Support FOA

We have a variety of FOA merchandise ready for the holiday season! Check out our 2018 Calendar, Erni the Ermine, and more!



Alta Shuttle donates 2% of all services to/from the Town of Alta during the winter season to FOA. Special thanks to Alta Shuttle, Tom, the shuttle drivers, and Alta Shuttle's patrons for supporting FOA.  
[Altashuttle.com](http://Altashuttle.com)



Mention the Friends of Alta Real Estate Advantage Program program to broker Jim Williams and he will donate \$1,000 to FOA from his commission with the closure of a real estate transaction.  
[WilliamsRealtyUtah.com](http://WilliamsRealtyUtah.com)



Visit [Friendsofalta.org/donate](http://Friendsofalta.org/donate) for more details and links to donate through AmazonSmile or Smith's Community Rewards where your regular purchases support FOA.



## FOA Memorial Tree Planting

On September 8th, family members, friends, and volunteers as well as staff from TreeUtah and FOA got together to plant memorial trees and seedlings in honor of loved ones. Memorial trees were planted for Merrill Matzinger, Don Brantley, and Adam Naisbitt. Please contact us if you would like to join us for our 2018 planting.

## SAVE THE DATE

12th Annual Alta Gala  
Friday, April 6th at La Caille  
[altagalala.org](http://altagalala.org)

Friends of Alta is a 501(c)(3) organization, donations are 100% tax-deductible.

Donate today at  
[friendsofalta.org](http://friendsofalta.org)

## FOA Partners



Salt Lake Ranger District of the UWC  
NFS

Alta Historical Society

