

**Bob Jones, Owner  
Tag-A-Long Expeditions**

Interviewer-Jeff Elstad  
How has Moab changed?

Bob Jones  
Moab's changed over the years that I've been here since 1982 in that it's changed its economy from mining to tourism. A lot more visitation. We use to have Europeans visit us quite a bit. Now we have Americans and Europeans visit us. Moab's economy is almost entirely a tourism economy now.

Interviewer-Jeff Elstad  
What does proximity to the National Parks mean to your business?

Bob Jones  
The National Parks are very important to Moab and to our business. They're the item that people know of. They're sort of the crown jewels is what's being said, but they're the reason to come to Moab when you don't have another reason. They're the big-name items, and I would even include the name Colorado River. Those are known world-wide, National Parks and Colorado River, and they sort of sell themselves to a great degree.

Interviewer-Jeff Elstad  
What are the issues with Grand Staircase? Is it that some locals feel that they haven't benefitted? How and why is Moab different?

Bob Jones  
Moab, when the mining economy--Moab has benefitted from tourism because it didn't have any other place to go, and without hotels in these national parks, and Canyonlands actually being considered a wilderness national park, we've become the bedroom and the service community, and so we couldn't have a better situation occur for a small community. And I think Moab's embraced that role, and is, you know, we've got good lodging. We've got good restaurants now. We've got quite a few outfitters doing a variety of things that could be done both inside the parks and outside of the parks.

Interviewer-Jeff Elstad  
Do you think the towns around Grand Staircase are any different?

Bob Jones  
They could--they are now, because I don't think they've necessarily embraced that being a park, and I think a lot of those were farming communities, and I think they're still relying on that farming, where Moab had to change. It didn't have another economy once mining left, so there

might be some more resistance and the economy might support that resistance a little bit. But tourism is not a bad industry to get into.

Interviewer-Jeff Elstad

What does tourism mean to Moab? And, describe the change in economy from mining.

Bob Jones

Tourism to Moab is its bread and butter right now, and it's really the only major game in town for jobs and for the economy. Mining, when it was here, it was actually a very well-rounded town then in that there were year-round jobs, good benefits, and it kept a lot of the local people here. So we sort of left that very secure situation, where tourism, it's annual. We have a boom and bust period every year. The more people we employ, the more people are unemployed, and yet, when it's the only thing you have, you really find a way to make it work; and Moab has really embraced it quite well, and embraced the National Parks, and I think that we've made about the most of what we can from tourism. We still have another season to convince people that it's worth a visit, and that's the winter time.

Interviewer-Jeff Elstad

How would approval of oil and gas leases near the National Parks affect your business?

Bob Jones

Oil and gas leases around the National Parks are of concern to me both from a personal basis and a business basis. Maybe they're not too bad in the long term, but we want to have the views coming out of national parks look nice. However, you can also say if you drill for oil today, you'll have a derrick. They you'll have a pipe stand, and then, in several years, you'll have nothing, so it is recoverable, but right now, I think trying to maintain what they used to call integral vistas to national parks is an important item; and I think it's important to the visitors also.

Interviewer-Jeff Elstad

Would tourists still come if the views included drilling rigs?

Bob Jones

If there were drilling rigs in view of the areas we take people in national parks, I think that would be something that would upset some people. I don't know if it would stop a lot from coming, but I think it would disappoint a lot of their visits. I just don't think there's a place to see a drilling rig from a national park.

Interviewer-Jeff Elstad

How should off-road use and access be mitigated with wilderness preservation?

Bob Jones

When you consider off-road use and four-wheel drive-type trips, and wilderness, I think you have to consider that you need to have lanes, or corridors, to visit that wilderness where there are

some roads. There doesn't have to be a road everywhere. And then even have a few places where there aren't roads and you would actually do some hiking to get in to; but I think that it's compatible, to a point, as long as you just don't say every place has to be accessed by a road. Everyone likes to get out of their car and do a little bit of walking to.

Interviewer-Jeff Elstad

How is the environmental community to work with?

Bob Jones

When working with the environmental community I think that we're working with almost everyone. Everyone's an environmentalist, but there are extremes, and we find organizations, such as, and I'll use the organization of SUWA, they sort of carry the extreme end of things, but we find there's issues we agree on and there's some issues that we don't agree upon. I feel like we've got a pretty healthy respect for each other. We talk to each other. We listen to each other's points of view, and we help each other where we can. And, every once in a while, we'll lock horns, but I think there's some good respect there. I think we all understand what the big objective is and that's to try to keep a lot of this wilderness nice.

Interviewer-Jeff Elstad

How are governmental agencies to work with? Is there excess regulation?

Bob Jones

We work with a lot of governmental agencies and when I say a lot, a lot of different ones, and there are a lot of regulations. Some of them, a few of them even contradict each other and we have to sort of mitigate those problems, but for the most part, here in Moab, I've found the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management, and we have a Forest Service permit, are quite accommodating. They listen to our ideas and, quite honestly, the outfitters help present a lot of the ideas that they finally make into regulations. So, I think there's a good accommodation there. I don't have a big problem with that.

Interviewer-Jeff Elstad

Is there too much wilderness, and how should it be preserved?

Bob Jones

The issue of if there's too much wilderness, once again, I think trying to define wilderness, there's a lot of different definitions. I like backcountry and I like remote areas. I, personally, have changed a philosophy of mine. I grew up in northern Utah, up in the, way up in the hills above Bountiful on the east bench, and I thought that was great. Personally, I think people should live in communities and congregate their living in areas so that that leaves more open space that we can all visit, and it does discourage me to see developments out in country that is away from cities. I don't know. I think wilderness, we'll hang onto it as long as we can. I think the population's going to push into it a bit, but I think it's something worth cherishing as much as

you can, but you've also got to take the human element and places to live into account too; but it doesn't have to just be wholesale spread out and cover everything for inhabitants.

Interviewer-Jeff Elstad

Is there common ground? And what do you see for the future?

Bob Jones

You know, I think that more and more, the people of the United States, especially, are getting educated that there's a value in backcountry, and I think that they're enjoying it more. I think that there will be an equilibrium that takes place, but it's gonna change as population changes, as demands change, and I think as long as we have some reasonableness on all ends of this thing, there's going to be an accommodation that's going to be satisfying for most. What I consider crowded, people from New York will say, "Well, is it going to be crowded on a trip?" and I say, "Well, we'll see maybe three other people in ten days." You know, to them a crowd is if there's a million people that they have to walk by, so there's different perspectives of what crowded is and what wilderness is.

Interviewer-Jeff Elstad

Why is wilderness important?

Bob Jones

Wilderness is important for several reasons. For me, it's just relaxation, and it's mental relief from a hectic world at times. It's also great for the environment, and it's good to see that other creatures and trees, and everything else, can grow in their natural environment. I think, for the general population that I get to see, they're craving it because it's something very different from where they live and it sort of takes them back to the way things were. So, I think mentally is probably the strongest reason to preserve wilderness. I think it helps us and our outlook on life.

Interviewer-John Howe

Let me ask you something about Grand Staircase. What did you think about the creation of that? Did you think it was proper in how it came about? Do you think the residents of those areas have legitimate concerns?

Bob Jones

When we talk about Grand Staircase, we were running trips into that area before it was a monument, and it was a great area then and it's probably every bit as good now. I think the way it was made into a monument, it doesn't endear the monument to the local folks and to even some of us around here that wonder why there isn't more discussion about it. I think that the local people around Grand Staircase, if they can't see the value of it, they're always going to resent it, but there is good value in having that as a preserved area. But the way it was done was a little upsetting.