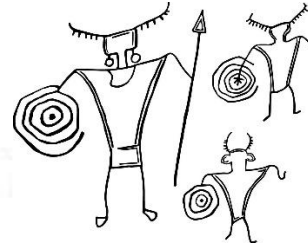


# VESTIGES



June 2026  
Volume 46  
Number 06

*Monthly Newsletter of URARA, the Utah Rock Art Research Association*

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## From the Prez

Rick Mathews

How did it get to be June already? I have to talk a little about my May. It was just what I needed after a busy tax season. The best part was spending time with my family and friends. I was able to hit two bear dances back home. I even danced a little.

I've got a great family. They're such a huge support as I serve as president. My nephews are always sending me pictures of imagery and when I'm home in

Roosevelt, we go and take a look. My nephew showed me some pictographs he and his buddies came upon. We took some time on a Sunday afternoon and got my truck dirty. I'm glad we took the time. I got to spend time with my nephew and see some awesome stuff.

Over Memorial Day, as my parents and I were putting out flowers, we passed an image we see every year. It's still fun to see it. The anthropomorph reminds me a lot of the images at McConkie Ranch but this anthro has a fat dog with him.



## **Prez (continued) -**

And I wouldn't be me if I didn't talk about the Smith Preserve. While the SFAP wasn't doing tours this spring, I did go and check to check on it and report on conditions. Good News! It's still there! Haha! I also got to see images I've never seen before. They're in the same location as one of my favorites so I blame my own excitement for not keeping me aware of what I should be seeing. I am glad I get to be a part of the SFAP. I can't wait until Fall and we will start tours again.

I wish you all well and I hope you can get out and explore.

## **Bluff Symposium Reminders**

**Rein Van West**

### **Accommodations:**

Accommodations for Bluff can be found at: <https://bluffutah.org>

### **URARA Member Vendors:**

Symposium vendors have always been an important part of our annual event. Who hasn't appreciated the amazing art and other items that members have spent hours/days making? Vendor tables will be located within the safe and secure Bluff Community Center and vendors will be able to see and hear the speakers. If interested in being a vendor this year, please email Rein at [arcticwild@gmail.com](mailto:arcticwild@gmail.com) with contact information and necessary table size space.

### **Presenters:**

Presentation abstracts are due July 1

## **Symposium Call for Abstracts**

**Bob Crifasi, Speaker Coordinator**

The symposium committee is inviting potential speakers to submit abstracts for the 2025 URARA symposium to be held Oct 8 - October 12, 2026 in Bluff, Utah.

Presentations will take place on Saturday October 10 and Sunday October 11. Speakers receive free symposium registration and an expense reimbursement allowance. Proposals should have a title and brief abstract of the topic. A wide range of ideas and subjects are acceptable provided they relate to rock art in Utah and the western states.

The deadline for submitting proposals is July 1, 2026. Please email your abstract to Bob Crifasi at [rcrifasi@hotmail.com](mailto:rcrifasi@hotmail.com) or send to 3257 Hawthorn Hollow, Boulder, CO 80304

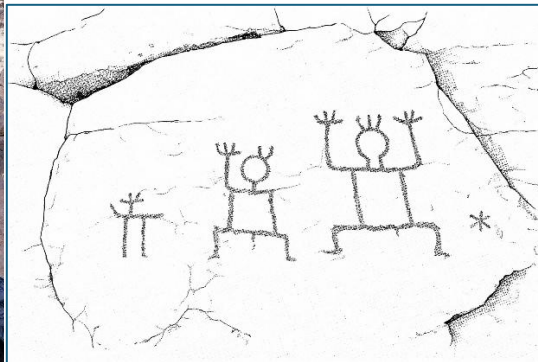
## Help Wanted with Digital Workshop

Carol Patterson

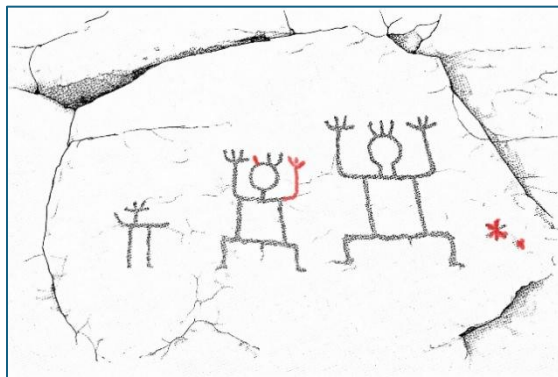
Dear Members.

I am seeking help with creating a workshop on digital reproductions of rock images this year. I have experimented with several graphic programs that can outline a figure and fill it in with dot patterns. But it's a slow process that is easier done by hand. I even have a program for AI that can replicate the image from a photograph and fill-in with dots to the size and density that is specified. But it can't distinguish between cracks and human-made pecking. If sunlight is shining across the panel, AI can't see the peck marks and leaves off an arm or leg. See example:

I'm asking someone to volunteer giving a workshop on using AI to duplicate a petroglyph panel for more accurate documentation of a site, and drawings for the site reports. I really am disappointed at the low quality of drawings (sketches) that are considered acceptable. We as an organization, with members "documenting sites" for SHPO, must submit quality drawings. Not inked-in **black** forms that don't record the pecking, density, superimposition with grey tones, or rock features. The following are the first attempts with AI. I want to hear from those of you out there who are far more knowledgeable than I. Thank you! - Carol



AI results. Pretty Good. But it takes a sharp Human eye to detect the omissions. It can't handle the lighting anomalies.



Corrections in red. But certainly not bad.

# Preserving the Past - One Panel at a Time

## Diana Acerson

Hanksville, Utah, May 11-12, a small group of URARA folks - Steve & Diana Acerson, Mike Petree, and Troy Scotter, UCSS site stewards - Ryan Moreau and Rachel Smith, in cooperation with BLM Crew Leads - Kandi Rutan, archeologist at the BLM Richfield field office, Roy Plank, BLM fuels archaeologist, and Emily Swett, BLM intern, and a few other BLM staff, ventured out to North Wash to update previously documented rock imagery sites, as well as document a few undocumented sites that were on Kandi's list of priority concerns.

You may ask, "Why do you update if it's already been documented and recorded?"

The answer is to ensure the preservation and understanding of petroglyphs and pictographs. It is important to update their documentation regularly because we want to:

- Capture current conditions to monitor deterioration, environmental impacts, and vandalism.
- Record new findings or interpretations to enhance cultural understanding.
- Facilitate research by providing accurate and accessible information.
- Support conservation efforts by identifying areas needing protection.
- Engage the community and raise awareness about cultural heritage.
- Aid in legal protection and management of archaeological sites.

The first morning included a training and orientation session for the volunteers on what is involved in the documentation process. All documentation materials and equipment were provided by the BLM, along with water and Gatorade. The Hanksville Henry Mountains Field Station provided much appreciated overnight housing and campsites for the participants for what was to be a 2 day event.

The crew worked in groups and covered a lot of area, with individual duties that made the process run quickly and smoothly. Starting as early as possible in the mornings before the temperatures got too high, they were able to end the days by early afternoon.

Being willing to participate in these activities is a great opportunity to learn about the processes, experience and learn new things you've been curious about, meet and make new friends, and have a sense of accomplishment. Extra hands make a real difference in safeguarding these irreplaceable cultural resources, and helps URARA continue its mission to protect rock imagery. If you are interested in being notified about these projects in the event you would like to participate, please contact one of URARA's Conservation folks. (See *Vestiges* list of contacts or the URARA website - Contact Us.)

Thank you to all who participated in this event. We appreciate all your continued support!



One of the groups discussing conditions



Kandi giving instructions



Lunch Break in the shade



Learning how to start a campfire the hard way



The cast of characters

## **Call for Board of Directors Nominations**

### **Diana Acerson**

URARA is excited to announce that nominations are open for positions on our Board of Directors. We invite members who are passionate about advocating for, preserving, and studying Utah's rich rock art heritage to consider nominating themselves or others for this important leadership opportunity.

#### **Board Member Responsibilities**

- Participate in regular meetings and actively engage in board discussions.
- Contribute to the development and oversight of URARA's programs, events, and initiatives.
- Promote the mission and values of URARA within the community and beyond.
- Assist with organizational governance, financial stewardship, and member engagement.
- Serve as an ambassador for rock art preservation and research in Utah.

## **Nominations (continued) -**

### Who Should Apply?

We welcome nominations from individuals with diverse backgrounds, including but not limited to:

- Experienced rock art researchers, archaeologists, or historians.
- Community advocates with a passion for cultural preservation.
- Professionals in education, nonprofit management, or related fields.
- Current URARA members in good standing.
- Anyone committed to supporting URARA's mission and vision.

### How to Nominate

1. Submit the nominee's name, contact information, and a brief statement outlining qualifications and interest in serving on the board.
2. Email nominations to **dace1950@gmail.com**.
3. Although nominations can be accepted from the floor during the members meeting, advanced nominations are preferred. Voting will take place on Sunday the 11<sup>th</sup> at the members meeting of the Symposium in Bluff.

### Selection Process

All advanced submitted nominations will be reviewed by the current board. Selected candidates may be invited for an interview or asked to provide additional information. In the event there are no nominations prior to the symposium, nominations will be accepted and voted on from the floor during the Members meeting at the symposium on Sunday.

### Questions?

For more information about the nomination process or board responsibilities, please contact Diana Acerson, [dace1950@gmail.com](mailto:dace1950@gmail.com).

Help shape the future of URARA and make a lasting impact on Utah's extraordinary rock art/imagery legacy – nominate yourself or someone else today!

# Field Trips

Tina Tan

## June

For June, we will have 2 field trips; one is a monitoring trip in the Vernal area, and learning how to use URARA's Survey 123 app. This can be combined with the Solstice field trip the next day, but we are setting it up as separate trips since we seem to get less people interested in monitoring/documentation projects.

A reminder to all that when you are out on trips, to please ensure that your phone's geolocation is turned off, especially if you are taking photos of rock images. This helps keep the location hidden, particularly if you like to share your photos. If you are unsure how to do that, see the following:

For iPhones: <https://support.apple.com/en-us/102647>

For Androids: <https://support.google.com/accounts/answer/3467281?hl=en>

## Bluff Field Trip Leaders Needed

As many of you will agree, field trips are a highlight of our annual URARA Symposium – they're a chance to connect, explore, and learn together in the landscapes we care so deeply about. But they can't happen without your help!

We're looking for volunteers to lead field trips in Bluff during the Symposium. Your support makes a big difference. If you haven't yet, please consider stepping up to help make this year's event a success. If you're willing to volunteer, please email me at [tinatan07@gmail.com](mailto:tinatan07@gmail.com) and let me know.

## First Aid Training Requirement For Field Trip Leaders

We will be operating under a BLM permit for field trips in Bluff, and part of that agreement requires that *all Field Trip Leaders have current basic First Aid training*. If you don't already have a valid certification, we ask that you complete a basic First Aid course before the Symposium.

You can complete this training online or in person, and URARA will reimburse you for the cost. One option is through the American Red Cross (visit [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org) for details).

We know how much everyone looks forward to the field trips, and we want to make sure they're safe and accessible to all. If you're willing to lead a trip, please take this step and get certified. It helps us move forward with planning and ensures we meet our permit requirements.

## First Aid Comments

### Troy Scotter

As someone who has led a lot of field trips for URARA I thought I would comment on the requirement that trip leaders complete a Red Cross first aid course.

I think it is a good idea. When I was much younger, I was a competitive swimmer. I trained two hours a day, six days a week. I leveraged that swimming skill into some part time lifeguarding. And that required some additional training. How do you approach a drowning swimmer safely? What do you do when you get them out of the water? How do you perform CPR if necessary? Those were topics my swimming ability had not prepared me for.

I think the situation is similar with URARA. We have great trip leaders who hike a lot and know how to lead trips well. But there are still important skills that we need to have especially when we are leading a group of people who are starting to show a lot of gray hair.

I took the recommended Red Cross first aid course last year. It is online and took me between three and four hours to complete. That's a long time to sit in front of a computer screen and I took a couple of breaks. But the program is smart and remembered where I was and started up where I left off. The format is effective: teach a concept, show a "real-life" example, quiz on the topics discussed, and repeat topics briefly where you answered incorrectly. Simple, smart, effective.

There are some problems. The course is oriented towards workplace, primarily industrial, examples. We are not likely to have a bulky first aid kit handy, we definitely won't have a portable CPR device, we might not even have a telephone connection. But the basic principles are still helpful.

There is a lot of content and it is easy to forget details. How many chest compressions per minute? I've forgotten already. But you can retake specific parts of the training. And more helpfully, there is a free Red Cross app anyone can download to your phone that will work offline.

I've bought a few things that I carry with me now.

- A few years ago, I switched to an iPhone solely because it had satellite emergency capability. I spend too much time by myself in the field not to have that. Most phone brands now have that capability. If you are buying a new phone check for that feature.
- I purchased a few one-way breathing valves. They are cheap, small, and light weight.
- I have a couple of plastic gloves in my daypack that weigh nothing.
- I have a small phone recharger. Actually, I have two. A small, light weight recharger that I carry in my pack and a bulkier recharger with small solar panels that I can leave on my car dashboard. If my phone battery is low, I can fully recharge it overnight.
- A cheap whistle is more effective than yelling. I still remember a symposium field trip where the "highlight" site was at the end of the day after we had visited four other sites. One participant got tired and overheated on that last hike and needed to stop. I got him into some shade and then turned around watching 10 other people scatter across the landscape. The site was small and not easy to find

and I wasn't sure I'd ever see everyone again. But my whistle helped a lot and we all got back to our vehicles.

I recommend the Red Cross first aid course to all members not just trip leaders. We aren't always on an organized field trip. We should all have some basic skills and gear.

## **Talking to the Rain - Book Review**

**Robert Crifasi**

Book Review: Polly Schaafsma, with photographs by François Gohier. *Talking to the Rain: Paintings and Carvings on Stone in Chihuahuan Desert Landscapes*. University of Utah Press, 2025.

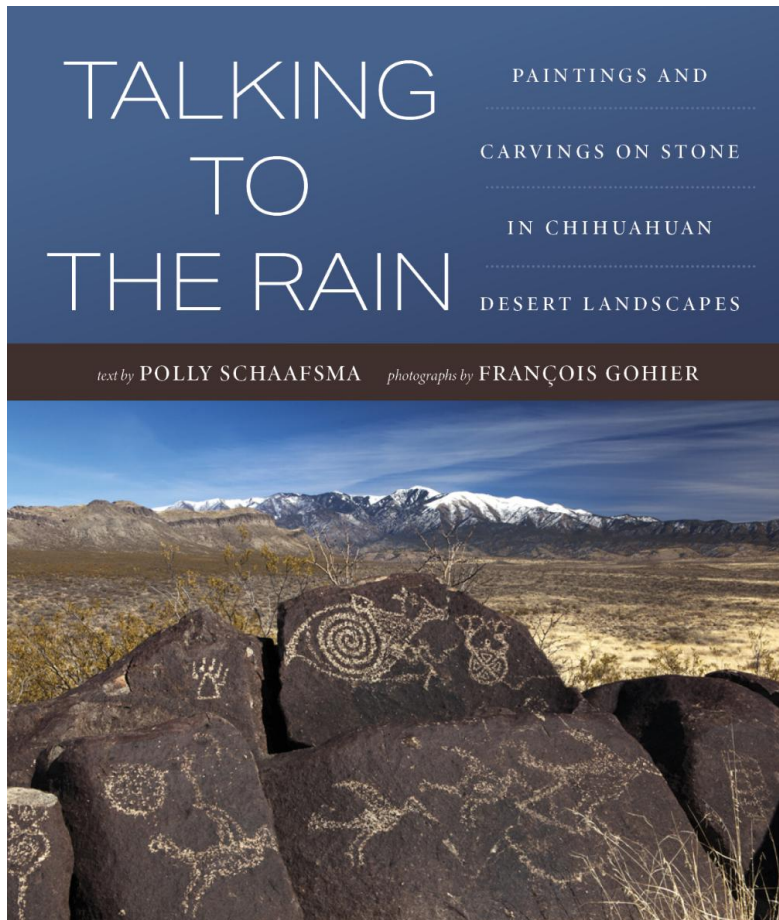
Polly Schaafsma's latest book, *Talking to the Rain: Paintings and Carvings on Stone in Chihuahuan Desert Landscapes*, addresses rain-making rituals and imagery in the US Southwest, in particular the Jornada Mogollon region of southern New Mexico and far west Texas. Although this thin volume clocks in at only 136 pages, it addresses many aspects of rain deity imagery and packs in an impressive collection of imagery by veteran rock art photographer and long-time URARA member François Gohier.

In reviewing this volume, it occurred to me that Schaafsma or Gohier could have published their writing or photography as stand-alone works. However, by combining their talents into a coordinated whole, they have achieved a rare feat in rock art literature, namely, producing a book that is simultaneously readable, informative, and visually striking.

In this work, Schaafsma has revisited and advanced her earlier books and articles on the Jornada rock imagery and the Mimbres culture, including rain deities and katsinas. New information and perspectives emerge about various well-known sites, including Three Rivers and Hueco Tanks. Moreover, it is satisfying to see the multiplicity of rain prayer imagery and beliefs from this region integrated into a single volume.

Schaafsma talks about the so-called "Southwest Tlalocs," katsina masks and rituals, and the "Horned and Feathered Serpent Deity," and Gohier presents many excellent complementary photographs of these entities that enhances the arguments detailed in the text. Schaafsma builds on previous work that makes a solid case for extensive Mesoamerican influence in Mimbres and Puebloan religions. She seems correct in asserting that the Southwest Tlaloc represents a "northern version of the ancient Mexican deity Tlaloc" (chapter 4) and her association of the Horned and Feathered Serpent Deity with the well-known Mesoamerican God Quetzalcoatl (chapter 6). Moreover, she also makes a reasonable argument for linking the various masks or faces appearing in both the Jornada Style and Pueblo kachinas with "the widespread Mesoamerican cosmological foundation and the complex worldview in which rain cosmology is rooted – a cosmology that features masked entities." (p 68.) Notwithstanding her contentions in this new book, I do think that kachina linkages to Mesoamerica merits further investigation and elaboration.

Although I agree with Schaafsma's assertion of a robust Mesoamerican link, I wish she had addressed the work of others, in particular James Farmer (2017, 2001), Tirtha Prasad Mukhopadhyay and Alan Philip Garfinkel (2023), and David Sucec (1996), who assert Archaic origins of rain deity imagery in the Great Basin and Colorado Plateau that significantly predate and likely influenced later Mesoamerican and Southwestern iconography and ideology.<sup>1</sup> This critique aside, both academic and avocational readers will enjoy Polly Schaafsma and François Gohier's new book and welcome it as a valued addition to their bookshelf of rock art literature.



<sup>1</sup> James Farmer Before Corn: "Sotuknangu" and the Origins of the Gods in Archaic America. Utah Rock Art Research Association. October 2017.; James D. Farmer, "Goggle eyes and crested serpents of Barrier Canyon: Early Mesoamerican iconography and the archaic Southwest." *The Road to Aztlan: Art from a mythic homeland*, eds. Virginia M. Fields and Victor Zamudio-Taylor (2001): 124-37.; Tirtha Prasad Mukhopadhyay and Alan Philip Garfinkel. *Iconicity of the Uto-Aztecs: Snake Anthropomorphy in the Great Basin, the American Southwest and Mesoamerica*. Berghahn Books, 2023; David Sucec. *Water At Buckhorn Wash: Symbolism in Barrier Canyon Style Rock Art*. Utah Rock Art Research Association. 1996.

## **Bluff Area Field Trip Report, May 11-12**

**Rein van West**

Clouds of fine dust rolled up from underneath our tires as we drove down Comb Wash with our modern 'wagons' to check in on what had changed with the San Juan Hill the Bluff settlers ascended some 150 years ago – nothing! While it afforded terrific views down towards the Mule Ear, they didn't give our legs anymore 'jump' as we marveled at the tenacity of the Mormon pioneers and their livestock.

Moving on, we were captivated by the Ancestral Puebloan River House habitation site with its striking rock art. Perhaps one of the most perfectly located passive solar alcoves to be found anywhere, its mostly intact three-story structure offers insights to a four hundred year prehistoric existence.

The mile from River House to the Kachina Panel has some of the oldest and most beautiful rock art along the San Juan River. The expanse of this area breathes the cultures of multiple indigenous groups spanning thousands of years.

The Kachina Panel is arguably a seminal Basketmaker Panel that stamps a message of power and spirit to most anyone who sees it. It is not possible to see this panel and not come away with a fascination and respect for the people whose lives were circumscribed by the figures.

Our second day found us in lower Butler Wash thrashing through knee-high jungle grass under a canopy of Russian Olive and Tamarisk trees while birds warned others of the intruders. The five-hundred-foot south-facing wall that greeted us upon exiting did not disappoint – Robert Van Orden gave his well-known discovery cry, 'rock art!' Spirals, serpents, anthropomorphs, zoomorphs, cultivation symbols, unfathomable shapes and forms occupied our energetic group for an entire morning.

Before the heat thinned our ranks, we completed our field trip with a visit to the recently graveled petroglyph walk along upper Sand Island. Amidst an assortment of old panels was a bison and an image that brings to mind a mammoth – Once again, there is more to mystify than to know.





## Ruins, Rock Art, and Rainbows

Diana Acerson

We just took a jet boat trip to see some rock art along the Colorado river out of Moab with a bunch of URARA friends. Had to canoe across the river, after drop off on the other side of the river due to the shallow waters and sandbars that wouldn't allow us to get to shore on the side where the trail to some ruins and rock art was. What an adventure, like a Disneyland ride getting there, meandering all over the river avoiding sandbars at high speed. Camped overnight where we were dropped off by the jet boat on the accessible side of the river. Great campsite. Rained all night and gifted us with rainbows in the morning when we woke up. Jet boat picked us up and took us back to Moab that morning. One day and night of adventure, ruins, rainbows, and rock art!



## Calendar; Trips and Events

June 20	Vernal Area Site Monitoring
June 21 Sunrise	URARA Field Trip Vernal area summer solstice, John McHugh
June 25-29	ARARA Symposium Great Falls, Montana <a href="https://arara.wildapricot.org/Conference-General-Info-2026">https://arara.wildapricot.org/Conference-General-Info-2026</a>
Aug 14-16	URARA Summer Picnic, Fremont Indian State Park.
August 22	URARA Field Trip Head of Sinbad, Layne Miller
September	URARA Field Trip Fremont Indian State Park, John McHugh
September	URARA Field Trip Smith Reserve, Rick Mathews
Oct 02	URARA Field Trip SE Colorado Area
Oct 8-12	URARA Symposium, Bluff, Utah

URARA symposia and field trips (FT) are available to members only. Members will be notified by email when a field trip opens for registration, usually about 3-4 weeks before a trip. If a trip is full when you try to register, your name is added to a wait list. You will get another notification if and when someone drops out and you can be added to the trip. <https://urara.wildapricot.org/>

CRAA and URARA are currently doing monthly ZOOM presentations on alternate months. CRAA will have January, March, and May (Summer months off), and October (December off). URARA will have February, April, Sept, and November. <https://coloradorockart.org/>

American Rock Art Research Association (ARARA) is hosting on-line events. Free access is granted to URARA members. Registration at: <https://arara.wildapricot.org/Lectures>

Desert Archaeological Society (DAS), St George, meets on the second Wednesday of the month. Saturday field trips once a month. Accessible on-line via Utah Tech University ICL . <https://reg125.imperisoft.com/ICL/ProgramDetail/3837333038/Registration.aspx>

San Diego Rock Art Association (SDRAA) meets on line until further notice. <https://sandiegorockart.org/meetings>

Grand Junction Chapter, Colorado Archaeological Society (CAS) meets regularly on the fourth Wednesday of each month <https://www.casgjchapter.org/public-meetings>

The Utah State Historical Preservation Office has occasional events and tours; visit: <https://ushpo.gov/the-events>

## URARA Board and Officers

Utah Rock Art Research Association: Box 511324, Salt Lake City, UT 84151-1324.

[www.utahrockart.org](http://www.utahrockart.org) . Contact information - [utahrockartresearchassoc@gmail.com](mailto:utahrockartresearchassoc@gmail.com)

### 2026 URARA Board and Officers

President	Rick Mathews
Vice President	Carol Patterson
Secretary	Nancy Lombardo
Treasurer	Carol Duecker
	John McHugh
	Darlene Koerner
	Tina Tan
	Margo Mahoney
	Rein van West

### Committee Chairs and Appointees

Tribal Liaison	Carol Patterson
Historian/Archives	Keith Fessenden
Website/Board Advisor	Troy Scotter
Membership Coordinator	Deb Mitchell
Funds Manager	Pat Sullivan
Conservation/Preservation	Kent Williams
Education	John McHugh
Field Trip Coordinator	Tina Tan
Symposium Chair	Carol Patterson
Publications Editor	Dennis DeVore
Vestiges Editor	Ben Everitt
Nominations/Governance	Diana Acerson

### URARA Conservation Coordinators

<u>BLM District</u>	<u>Field Office</u>	<u>Coordinator</u>
Coordinator Lead		
Canyon Country	Moab	Pam & Quent Baker
Canyon Country	Monticello	Werner Duecker, Carol Duecker
Paria River	Kanab	Jeff Frey
Color Country	Cedar City	Diana Acerson
Color Country	St. George	Nina Bowen
Color Country	Richfield	Steve Acerson
Green River	Vernal	Tim Sweeney, Darlene Koerner
Green River	Price	Layne Miller
West Desert	Fillmore	Jeff Roberts
West Desert	Salt Lake	Bill Hirt