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Blatant land grab

Salt Lake Tribune

Sheldon Kinsel's letter (Jan. 2) is dead wrong on R.S. 2477 and Kane County's claimed "highways" across public lands. This law simply says, "the right of way for the construction of highways across public lands . . . is hereby granted." It does not give *carte blanche* to counties to trample the public's rights, or open national parks and wilderness to ATVs on a spider web of dubious "roads."

Kane County does not get a property right just because it draws lines on a map and claims them as "highways." Instead, like any person who claims a right to someone else's property, the county must demonstrate that it meets the requirements of the law - here, "construction" of a "highway." Until then, the Bureau of Land Management must protect these places for everyone.

Whether Kane County can meet their burden remains to be seen. One look at some of the "highways" the county is claiming - faint two-tracks that disappear into the desert - is enough to convince reasonable minds that the county is undertaking a blatant land grab of public property.

Now, Kane County is negotiating behind closed doors with the BLM about the validity of these claimed "highways." Such secrecy leads to error, and violates the public trust as well as federal statutes which open the door to public involvement on public lands issues. *The Tribune* rightly urged the BLM to open this process to the light of day (Dec. 28).

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