

# Arrests on the Tavaputs Plateau During a Nature Walk with Children



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Seepridge Road, Uintah County, UT – Ten participants of Utah Tar Sands Resistance's family camp out on the Tavaputs Plateau have been arrested after completing biodiversity studies close to the country's first tar sands mine. A number of children and adults walked to the wooded area next to the Children's Legacy Mine to count plants and identify different species, returning to an area that several members of the group had camped at freely in previous years. Upon returning to their vehicles they were met by Ronald Barton, police officer salaried on the public buck to police the area for fossil fuel companies. Mr. Barton proceeded to detain the group for trespassing and even threatened parents with reckless child endangerment. He also instructed a news reporter who had wanted to follow the group that she would be arrested if she attempted to do so.

Canadian company US Oil Sands is hoping to extract tar sands – a fossil fuel even more polluting than oil and coal – at the Children's Legacy Mine, and leasing SITLA land (which is public land). Protesters have been holding a vigil by the mine for several years, and documenting the ongoing destruction to land and wildlife.

Shea Wickelson, who led the biodiversity lesson, is a science teacher in Salt Lake City: "I have been camping here with my family for the past four years. Last year, we took some biodiversity data with my son and others. This year we wanted to see how the mining expansion has impacted the area and take new data. We were surprised to see the area so razed because we had read that US Oil Sands was ending development, but it looks like a significant expansion to us. I am disappointed to find out that my family and I are no longer allowed to be on the public land that we have been visiting for the past four years."

Natascha Deininger of Wasatch Rising Tide: "It's ironic that local law enforcement is so concerned with protecting industry interests, when the land in question is actually public, and was ultimately stolen from the first nations of this area. It is outrageous that a science teacher is being detained for teaching kids about biodiversity on public land, when US Oil Sands is destroying hopes of a livable future."

Raphael Cordray of Utah Tar Sands Resistance: "We have a responsibility to the public to document and witness the damage to the area. We are investigating a crime scene and making records of what is happening here, as the decision makers and regulators are ignoring the real concerns about this project."

Update as of 9PM: 10 people Have been taken to Vernal County jail.

For Media, Please call: Lauren Wood (801) 647-1540