

County abandons 19 Class D roads

Vernal Express

January 12, 2006

http://www.vernal.com/cmsimple2_3nnew/?January_11%2C_2006:Front:County_abandons_19_Class_D_roads

Monday the Uintah County Commission erased 19 roads from its Class D road map at the request of property owners.

The roads are dirt two-tracks located west of Pelican Lake and south of Bottle Hollow in the Leland Bench area of Uintah County. Class D roads are used by the public, but are not maintained by the county. In the 1990s Uintah County developed and approved a road map which included every Class B and Class D road in the county. The extent of the map included roads entirely inside private property. Private property owner have filed a lawsuit requesting that the county release 22 of the roads back to private use only.

After a recommendation from the County's Public Lands Committee, Commissioners agreed that 19 roads should be abandoned by the county

"It was determined that these road were not essential to public access to the area," said Uintah County Deputy Attorney Ed Peterson.

Notices were sent out to allow property owners affected by the decision. Peterson notes that oil and gas development companies in the area, did not respond the notifications because they had already obtain access to their property through agreement with private property owners.

"What the county did is take every road on USGS map and filed with the Utah Department of Transportation, which became a problem because there was no pubic notice," said Jim Beckwith, attorney for the landowners.

Many property owners didn't find out what the county had done until they attempted to sell some of their property in 2001, Beckwith told commissioners Monday. Beckwith did not object to the commissioners' action, but he said that action was "not a settlement of the litigation."

Property owner also want the Carpenter Ranch Road, the Smith Ranch Road and another abandoned by the county.

Mike Kettle, Kettle Ranch, said it was important that the county remain involved in some of the road that cross Tribal lands, so that the county can help property owners keep them open.

"It is not our intension to not allow anyone access to their property," said Alan Smith, property owner.

Uintah County will establish a board to consider similar concerns of property owners who want public roads entirely on their private property to be abandoned by the county.