



**Call for help with completing a two-year (2014-2015) biological soil crust survey in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.**

**What:** Three volunteer trips in August and September will assess Monument biological soil crust sites as part of a two-year project to reassess certain sites last assessed in 2001-3 by the BLM as part of a Monument-wide Rangeland Health assessment.

Each trip will involve four field days. Getting to the soil crust sites requires high-clearance 4WD driving and some sites involve extensive walking, but the survey methods can be learned (or refreshed) the first morning of each trip.

**When:**

Trip 1: August 24-28. Meeting site: Cannonville

Trip 2: September 8-12. Meeting site: Escalante

Trip 3: September 21-25. Meeting site: Kanab

**Why:** The Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) was established in 1996 by President Bill Clinton. At almost 2 million acres in area, the monument is among the largest ever established. While visitors often marvel at the monument's exotic rock formations and intricate landscapes, an often-overlooked aspect is the microtopography just under foot. The proclamation establishing the monument cites the "...fragile cryptobiotic [aka biological soil] crusts, themselves of significant biological interest, [which] play a critical role throughout the monument, stabilizing the highly erodible desert soils and providing nutrients for plants."

These crusts are a critical part of desert ecosystems but they are threatened and broken by trampling (e.g., by livestock grazing), off-highway vehicles, and careless hiking. In coordination with a number of organizations and individuals (including some of you), the

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Trust is conducting a 2014-2015 study of biocrusts in (a) soils that would be expected to support crusts; and (b) soils particularly vulnerable to erosion. The sites are among those sampled in 2002-2003 by the BLM in a monument-wide rangeland health survey.

This biocrusts study will be used to inform the BLM's monument grazing plan Environmental Impact Process and final decisions.

**Who:** Volunteers will be working with Collin Smith, Utah Forests Program Associate for July-September. This is Collin's third summer working for the Utah Forests Program of Grand Canyon Trust.

**How:** Volunteers will either need to provide their own 4WD vehicle or travel with other trip members (for example, Collin Smith).

**Resources:** Participants will bring their food, utensils, cooking and camping gear; the Trust will have stoves available, a first-aid kit and a satellite beacon.

**Contact:** Contact Collin by email at [csmith@grandcanyontrust.org](mailto:csmith@grandcanyontrust.org) with any questions or to sign up for a trip.