

INTERVIEW WITH:	Chris Killingsworth
INTERVIEWER:	Marsha Holland, Southern Utah Oral History Project
INTERVIEW NUMBER:	One
DATE OF INTERVIEW:	January 4, 2011
PLACE OF INTERVIEW:	Durango, Colorado, office
SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW:	History, Grand Staircase- Escalante National Monument
TRANSCRIBER:	Marsha Holland
DATE:	February 15, 2012

Sony IC Recorder, converted to .wav file, transcribed with Start Stop system.

A part of the Southern Utah Oral History Project: Oral histories from people who were involved with the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in the early days – from those who helped with designation of the Monument, to those who were the first to do research on the Monument after it was designated.

MH: It is January 6th and I am in Durango, Colorado. I am with Chris Killingsworth. Thank you for meeting with me Chris. I appreciate your time. If I may first have you introduce yourself, full name, date of birth, where you were born and a bit about the family you were born into.

CK: OK. My full name is Mary Christine Killingsworth. I go by Chris, have since I was a child. I was born June 28th, 1972 in Lakeland, Florida. I grew up in Florida, went to school in Florida. My family is all from Florida, they homesteaded there in the early 1800s. I was in a family that lived in a rural part of Florida for most of my life, most of my growing up. My father is a cattle buyer, in the cattle business and his family before him was in the cattle business. He is still there doing that, my mother is there as well, and my brother.

MH: So, was it a ranch that you grew up on?

CK: Not a ranch, I would characterize it as a small farm. We had cattle growing up, a small herd of cattle, my father still does, but mostly he was a cattle buyer for packing plants and bigger corporations. He still is a cattle buyer for packing houses basically.

2 Chris Killingsworth

MH: What was the land like where you grew up, open or more suburban?

CK: It was open land. There were houses every ten, twenty, or thirty acres.

MH: Did you have horses?

CK: We did. We had several different horses when I was a child. We had cows, lots of different animals over the years.

MH: As a young person, say in your teen age years did you have an inkling of what sort of job or profession you would want to have?

CK: I don't remember as a teen, as a younger person really knowing what I wanted to do, but I did grow up in the outdoors and worked on the farm some, raising cattle. That probably shaped me somewhat wanting to go into agriculture. I ended up going to school for my undergraduate degree in Agricultural Economics. I am not sure what I thought I would do with that...but I ended up getting into the natural resources end of that and went on to get a graduate degree in Environmental Planning and Natural Resources Issues.

MH: Natural resource issues related to public lands, would that include public lands used for grazing?

CK: Well, where I grew up there was very little public land. I didn't know about that part of it when I was in school, figuring out that path in school. In school I learned about that, but natural resource economics like how to value natural resources in the market place, along those lines. It was what my undergraduate degree was in. When I moved on to graduate school it was more about land management and land conservation, that sort of thing.

3 Chris Killingsworth

MH: Interesting. How did you become affiliated with Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument?

What year?

CK: It was 1998. I was working in Washington at the Department of Interior on a Fellowship Program after graduate school. I was working on a bunch of different issues for Interior from the [Minerals Management Service](#) to the Park Service, to BLM, and got involved in the Grand Staircase from that end, because there was a lot of interest in Department of Interior and the BLM Headquarters, obviously with the Monument because it was the first monument that BLM had. I got very involved in working on the DC end of things, trying to help facilitate the review process of the Plan and all that which was coming out of Utah to DC. I [was](#) sent on a detail, a short term, three or four month detail to Utah to live in Cedar City and help out as needed. That was the time, I think; I may have been helping Barb out with finishing the Wild and Scenic River work. Then I went back to Washington for about a year and at that point they were looking for a planning coordinator, someone to do work as a planning coordinator, manage the team working on the plan, finish up the plan, and basically make sure it got done on time. Putting all the pieces together.

MH: Barb did mention that everyone was working hard, lots of pieces out there, but it was important that you were there to see it though.

CK: There was a promise made, maybe in the Proclamation, a deadline of when the Plan needed to be done. It was done in record time for the BLM to get a plan done, in three years. That was part of it, we needed to push hard and get it done on time because there was a promise made that this wouldn't be hanging out there forever, that people would have certainly [care](#) about what the decisions were going to be. That was part of my role, "OK, we have got to get this done."
(laughter) It was a rush in some places.

MH: What takes so much time on big federal projects like that? Is it public meetings, what?

CK: Right. Some of the time consuming part is you want to have enough public meetings and public comment and give people enough time for public comment. A couple of times we extended the public comment periods or the protest periods, so we could have adequate review time, comment time. That in-and-of itself requires enough time in the time line that with a three year process it gets pretty tight. Then, in between those public comments you have a team of specialists, and we had quite a large team of specialists, who each are working on their piece. This person is going to be doing the archeology piece, this person is doing the grazing piece, and so on and how do you put that all together into a coherent plan. It ends up taking time. And of course the BLM has all kinds of steps along the way in terms of review at the State office, review in Washington, and you must build in time for all that as well.

MH: And this was a new mandate for the BLM? And how did you see people responding to that?

CK: Jerry Meredith was my boss at the time, at first, then Kate Cannon after that. It was a new challenge for the BLM; it was a new mandate, a new idea about how the BLM is to manage a piece of land. "Instead of giving it to the Park Service we are going to keep it, it is one of our crown jewels and we are going to manage it as a Monument in the BLM way." Well, what is the BLM way? I think that was the biggest problem challenge of the whole thing was, "We are not going to be just like the Park Service and manage this Monument like the Park Service would", but what does that mean for the BLM that has a broader, in many cases, a broader range of uses on the landscape, what does it mean?

And how does that fit into the BLM culture how does it fit into the local culture, the communities...that was by far the biggest challenge of the whole effort.

We had a planning team that came out of some of the local offices, some people like me who came from far away, some people from the State of Utah, so we had at one point five people from the State of Utah who were on loan to the BLM, to help out with the Plan. You have a lot of people coming together, a lot of different thoughts and ideas, and trying to integrate that into a coherent plan was challenging.

MH: I have heard that from many on the planning team. So, some of the conversations were like...what? How was it facilitated or mediated. Was that your job?

CK: It was for the period I was tasked with getting the Plan done and Jerry's job at the time who was my boss, to make the hard calls, when the team couldn't agree, or public comment was so all over the place and the data wasn't clear on what we propose as a decision. But, it was challenging and tough. The process and the meetings of the planning team, were all very professional. People brought their different backgrounds to the table and we were all very friendly about it and I thought we worked together very well. You had people who came out of the park service who were used to doing it that way, people who had been in the BLM for decades who would say, "We would never do that in the BLM." Then you had people new to it entirely, like me, who thought I don't know which way you do it, but let's do it the way it seems to work best here. Those were really the discussions we had around the table. I remember a discussion one time, I don't remember if it was when I was in the planning coordinator role or earlier when I was out on a detail, "What do you do about fires?" "Do you allow people to have campfires anywhere? Do you require a fire pan?", which is what the Park Service would generally do. There was a wide diversity of opinions about that. I remember that discussion and

some of the longer term BLMers saying, “That is crazy, you can’t expect someone to take a fire pan back into this country, it is laughable.” I remember that discussion but don’t even remember how it came out, I am sure we did not require fire pans.

MH: Fire pans are required. (laughter) I remember when I found that out and thought, wow, are you kidding because there were fire rings everywhere.

CK: That was the concern, right, is proliferation of those. There was a wide diversity of opinions about if you could really require people to bring that along with them. I suppose if you are in a car, it is not that hard, but if you are in the backcountry.

MH: I have found that most of the camping use is accessible by vehicle.

CK: There are a lot of places to car camp.

MH: The core discussion, the common ground discussions, may have occurred before you arrived in 1998.

CK: I came in right about the time when the draft plan was being released; I had been on the DC-end of things up until then. I had been in DC reviewing as parts of the draft came in for comment and approval. I had been involved all along, but from DC until the draft plan and then I came right before we released the draft plan for comment and stayed through the end.

MH: In on it all along. Who were you working with in Washington?

CK: I was on a Fellowship in the Policy Office of Interior working with the BLM and the Secretary’s office, so it was Bruce Babbitt, Mollie McCusick on the Secretary’s office-end

of things, and then on the BLM side it would have been Kit Muller, and a variety of the BLM folks who were specialists, reviewing sections of the Plan.

MH: So, they would bring you a document and say what?

CK: They would send the document, I don't remember if they sent it back in sections or all at once, I think it tended to be, "Here is this piece or that piece." It wasn't as if anyone in DC was reading every word, editing or making that level of detailed comment, it is just not how it is done back there, but there was interest, much more interest in this from the Secretary's office than most BLM plans because it was new, controversial, high-profile. I remember there would be conference calls periodically between the Monument staff and some of us in DC to go over where we were on the Plan; here is when we expect we will have this part of it done, here are the most controversial issues coming up. Those represent the level of discussions. There would be drafts that would come back to make sure it looked like there was compliance with the NEPA process, or the public process...that level of review. If there were particularly controversial calls to be made often the Washington office would get pulled in on that.

MH: I remember Jerry Meredith's comment that he had spent a lot of time in DC and was there to defend the decisions the Planning team made, why they came to those conclusions.

CK: There was a good bit of that. Since I got to see both sides of it, I was one of those people, albeit pretty junior on the DC side, and then at the Monument, I could definitely see him saying that. When you are there and with the team and hear the discussion, you know why they are coming to this conclusion. You are much more invested in the decision and understand the decision than if you are in DC and it is one of ten projects of whatever you are working on. That is part of what I did, as well, when I got out there, defending, "No, no no, you don't understand, this is how, this is the reason why, this is the data that tells us which way to go."

MH: Really interesting. One of the projects that needed to be completed was the Wild and Scenic River Designation. Barb Sharrow mentioned a lot of data had been collected over about a year, a group convened who took comment and reviewed everything, but then it was this mass of information which had to be compiled into form as part of the planning process. Barb conjectured that there was a chance most people had no idea that process was going on.

CK: Right. It needed to be done because in the Plan there are a lot of different pieces in the Management Plan that boxes to be checked. One of them is you have to decide, you don't designate on Scenic Rivers, but you determine if they are eligible or suitable for designation and Congress decides at the end of the day. It is like Wilderness but for Rivers. That is one whole piece of the Management Plan that has to be done, just like in a normal BLM plan, not this one because it was withdrawn from oil and gas leasing, you would decide what is available for leasing and what is not. There all these many processes going on for the larger plan. That was one of them that requires that you have a lot of data about all the rivers, some of it is field work, some of it already exists in the office, doing that whole process and at the same time looking at the bigger picture. And, at the time, fifteen years ago, the data-analysis technology existed, GIS existed and we were using it but it was not as sophisticated as it is now, so we were also trying to figure out how to integrate all the data and display it for the public in a way that it would make sense, understand it ourselves using GIS and mapping and all the technology that was just emerging at the time, but most of the BLM didn't actually have or use. A lot of the field offices were still using paper, , and so we were trying to figure out how to get up to speed with the technology. That was another challenge entirely too.

MH: Then you have the different entities that the rivers cross, Park, Forest, private, BLM, State.

CK: Yes, and the State, and wildlife folks were very heavily engaged because they are managing technically the wildlife on the Monument, so you have overlapping jurisdictions as well.

MH: Yes, biology, vegetation, fish...So, the first few months you helped to finish that up?

CK: That was when I was out on the detail. When I came back was when we just releasing the draft plan. My charge was make sure that gets from draft to final and gets done on time, and a way that works for everyone. The draft plan was released and we went out for public comment, we are getting back in all the public comment, putting out the final plan, and at the final plan stage, it goes out for protests and then the Record of Decision.

MH: You are still at the table in Cedar working on the second job?

CK: Yes, the planning part was all in Cedar and then we moved, a bunch of us, over to Kanab.

MH: And at that time were you a BLM employee?

CK: After my detail, the second time I went out to work on the Plan I was a BLM employee, full-fledged BLM employee at that point.

MH: What did you think about that?

CK: I thought it was great. When I was out the first time, I think, to help Barb on the Wild and Scenic River stuff, I just fell in love with it, I thought it was a wonderful place. I thought the BLM was a great place to work. I was challenged by the newest of everything and how to integrate it all. I loved it and I think my colleagues and bosses in Washington were surprised when I said, "Well, I would go back out and stay and do this." It is a huge thing for the BLM.

MH: So, you got that part of it, wow, this is different, this is unique. But, you are not a westerner. What did you think of those landscapes out there?

CK: Oh, I was awed by them. I thought the landscapes were amazing. I had been west before on vacations, but had not lived in the west until then, except of course for that three month stint. I thought it as wild wide open spaces; it was fascinating which is part of why I wanted to come back. I have stayed in the west ever since.

MH: Were you able to take trips out into the Monument and get to know the ground?

CK: Yes, we were out quite a bit. I probably went out less than most because my role was much more, "Let's get this thing put together", but I went out with each of the specialists over time to get a better understanding of the landscape. On my free time I spent almost all my time out there, hiking, camping, biking. I explored the Monument a lot more on my free time, than on the clock.

MH: Any favorite places?

CK: It is hard to pick a favorite spot, I love the Boulder-Escalante stretch, but the south end of Cottonwood Canyon, is really remarkable, Hackberry, Paria Box. We used to drive over from Kanab and just camp on weekends, a special spot for me. Driving up the Smoky. There is so much of it I still haven't explored even after living there for four and a half year, there are massive parts I have not seen.

MH: How was your time finalizing the draft; have you moved over to Kanab?

CK: About at the end, after the Record of Decision was signed, many of us who had been on the planning team moved to Kanab and worked on regular day to day implementation

of the Plan and management of the Monument. Barb, Marietta, myself, Kate moved over.

MH: Please tell me about the early days of implementation, what did that entail?

CK: We did not implement the whole plan over night, so there were some priority parts of the Plan, as I recall, that we started to get in place. It was not as if the Plan made radical changes in all areas, either. It was not as if we moved over there and everything changed, it was definitely a process. It is still ongoing as I understand it. The Plan has been amended; it is ideally a living document and a thing that changes with the needs. It was trying to align some of the work that was already going on with the Plan, making sure it was aligned with the decisions that were made in the Plan. This was not my piece of it, it was much more Kate, figuring out how the decision that was made about what roads will be open or closed, how to we get there. Which as you know was an ongoing.

MH: Yes, ongoing.

CK: Still ongoing, and luckily not my thing. At that point I was in charge of the biological sciences which included grazing. Part of that was figuring out how do renew grazing permits consistent with the Plan and consistent with all the other directives around grazing. It also meant figuring out how will we work with each permittee to make sure they have access to their allotment under the new Plan because the roads system had exceptions made for grazing permittees, and figuring out how to incorporate that into their permits. It was real nuts and bolts kind of stuff at that point.

MH: I have not heard too much about that, some road issues might impact the existing permits.

CK: Yes, if a road is closed, but the road is still there then the grazing permittee still be able to use that road for special tasks, like maintaining a water trough. Often they were allowed to do that.

- MH: I just had a conversation with someone about water troughs on the Monument, there were a lot and now not so many and those have fallen into disrepair. But, coincidentally, at the time the Monument was implementing there was a drought that seems to exacerbate things, the uncertainty.
- CK: And the worry over what it would mean for ranching. It was a very dry period, frankly.
- MH: If it was just BLM, not a Monument, and BLM said, "You have to get your cows off early with no graze available", it's hard not to speculate on that...perhaps it caused a different reaction because it was called a monument.
- CK: Right, I think that probably happens a lot across the west where the forage has been used to the point where the guidelines say the cattle should be taken off. But in situations where it was this monument, this very controversial thing and we came to that point; there were flash points all around it, plus being in a very dry period, as you pointed out. There were hard judgment calls to make, at what point do you let it go a little bit, and you know it will be tough and will cause all kinds of trouble and make everything harder for the local communities and BLM and everyone. But, at what point is it getting so bad that you have to do something.
- MH: I think it was Jerry Meredith who pointed out on some ranges; the cattle had never really been fully taken off, for years and years.
- CK: Yes, that was true. I would say that was probably an exception and not the rule. By far, most of the allotments that were much more accessible, the cows were off on time. There were certainly arguments to be made about if there were the right stocking levels, that will go on forever wherever you have grazing, if the range land is healthy or

not given the grazing regime. But by far, for the most part, people were getting their cows off. There were a few hard to access places, I am sure you have heard in your interviews, where they were not coming off, and not on a consistent basis creating a year round, and that had been going on for a long time, then we ran into some troubles.

MH: The reason I bring it up is because it was like the perfect storm, creating more impasse and animosity. Which was about time I moved there.

CK: Was that in 2000?

MH: 1999. A great winter for construction. By that time I had acquaintances that had grazing leases and were telling their stories and I was also reading the local paper's rendition of what was going down. A real eye-opener.

Now, back to your main challenges as a BLM employee and how many years did you work with BLM?

CK: I think it was about three and a half all told for BLM and a year at Interior before that. Five years all together including the Federal Government. I left in late 2001. The major challenge was getting the Plan done and integrating a bunch of different views and demands on the landscape. Frankly, it was just getting it done on time, a time pressure, the deadline. And if it meant working around the clock then you worked around the clock for months and months and months to get it done. We all did. I think we all felt really strongly about it and wanted to do it and we were at a place in our lives where we could do that.

So, that was a big challenge. When we got into the Plan implementation, road closures and grazing allotments, that was super challenging. It was a difficult time for everyone, there is no other way to say it. There was a lot of animosity. People were decent and polite, I thought, on all

sides really. But it was tense, you are talking about people's livelihoods and talking about their heritage, you are talking about people who feel they have a job to do and are being told you have to get this job done; you have this whole mix going on and all a big challenge for all of us. We muddled though and figured it out. I think the process is still going on and will be for some time.

MH: And as far as your major successes or results during your tenure, what would you say were those?

CK: I think the Plan is the major success. It is not perfect by any stretch, but I think for a short time frame and for a lot of the pressure that we were all under, and the complications with the whole thing I think we collectively did a good job, that it set a good direction for the place. It will evolve and change, it already has, it immediately started to evolve and change as soon as it was done, frankly. But, I think it has started in a good direction and that is the main thing.

MH: The first major projects that were done were mainly scientific inventories, is that right?

CK: Yes, that's right. And we also did place a lot of emphasis on science and research, Marietta was a big part of that. Right after the Plan was done, trying to make the Monument a place where scientists could come and do research, there was a lot of emphasis on that. And that, as I understand it, continues today.

MH: Yes, it does. Marietta has been great about following through and getting all that research presented. Southern Utah University, Sherratt Library has the Monument research and projects in a digital collection now. Have you seen that site?

CK: I haven't but they were a big partner early on.

MH: The partnership has again strengthened again and everything that has been published is now archived at SUU, digital collections. Everything from fish to social sciences. This interview will go into that archive as well. It is nice because it is all cached in one place.

CK: And it is accessible.

MH: Which is great. Grand Staircase has compiled all this amazing scientific data and so what?

CK: Yes, it was a challenge for us, too. During the planning process there is a ton of information and adaptation's that BLM has collected over the years and the State Department of Wildlife and Fish and Game, [but the question is] how do you make it accessible and use it? In the management plan we placed a big emphasis on adaptive management; we are going to adapt management as we learn and new data come in. Well, how do you do that as well, what is the process by which you consume this data and understand what it means and change your management and also change your management using a public process.

MH: Anything else you would like to add about your time with the Monument, things you learned or a general feeling you had about working on that project?

CK: Gosh, I learned so much. It was a formative part of my career. I was in my late twenties; I was fairly young taking on something fairly hard. It was hugely formative for me, I can't say enough about that. The people I worked with, Jerry and Kate and the whole team. It was very big deal for me. It was also to experience firsthand the controversy, the animosity. It shaped my view moving forward about how things should be done and how land should be managed, all that kind of stuff. It would be hard to describe all the things; it had a good impact on me.

MH: Yes, you would have been young, with everyone else being ten or twenty years older, some grizzled BLM.

CK: For sure, and I was viewed, and well aware of this, the young whippersnapper from the east who didn't know anything about this coming in. Over time, with many people, we of became friends, colleagues, and they understood where I was coming from, what I could bring to the table and they taught me a tremendous amount over that time.

MH: Many people have said, "If we didn't have Chris, we wouldn't have got it done." You are highly regarded. (laughter)

CK: That is nice. Which doesn't always happen when you are telling people, "Come on we have to get this done, no matter what it takes." I have to say, everybody put their nose to the grindstone, we needed to get it done. We were on a mission, we had to get it done.

MH: Did you have contact with Bruce Babbitt at any time?

CK: Sure. Some when I was in Washington. I don't remember if he was out in Utah, he may have been, I can't remember. But, sure, when I was in DC on the Fellowship. Of course, he was the controversial figure in this whole thing but I can say from my experience he was deeply deeply interested in how the planning process was going and that it done right and we follow through on the promises that he made about putting State people on the planning team, that they were a core part of it. He wanted to make sure we followed through on those things.

MH: There still is tension about...

CK: ...how it was done. It did change after that, what the process was going to be moving forward. I wasn't there; I came to Interior after it was designated so I wasn't there for

the real controversial part. I did see over time how their whole thinking and process changed around monuments and designations and public process and all that. It changed quite a bit.

MH: Which is good. You have to have partnerships doing this. You just cannot ignore the people who have lived somewhere for five generations.

CK: No. These are lands that belong to everyone in the country, but they are also lands that are in someone's backyard and you can't ignore that. And you shouldn't. It is the big lesson of all of this.

MH: So, tell me about what are doing now Chris?

CK: I work for a charitable foundation. We do grant making to non-profit organizations. We work on land conservation issues in the U.S. but we are also working on other social issues like health care and poverty, a broad range of social issues.

MH: Last night our group had this discussion, it was with Edd Franz, he said it is too bad that more people don't use their public lands, and take advantage of the lands set aside for them and he thinks that it would make for a better society if people would maintain their connection to the land, using public lands. That sort of runs through the other social issues you mention. Health...

CK: Yes, it is all connected.

MH: Even poverty.

CK: Sure. Whether people make a living in these western places is a lot tied to the public lands, both in traditional ways and recreational ways too. This town we are sitting in now is heavily reliant on having the public landscape around us, now for tourists, but for other reasons as well. The local colleges here, a lot of students come here because they want to recreate in this landscape,

but they are here for the college. That is what I do now. Some it is very much related to the old days of the BLM. We fund land conservation, the organization I work for has funded easements to protect private land or keep it in open space, accessible.

MH: I noticed that movement or sophistication here in Colorado, not as much as in Utah, but I imagine I will see it in the future.

CK: Yes, as the urban and even these little communities grow, the valleys surrounding them are really under pressure for development. So, we do some of that, be also some of the social issues connected.

MH: They are always connected. In 2001 until the current, did you stay with eh BLM or did you go into the private sector?

CK: I left the BLM in 2001 and came to this Foundation.

MH: Any other comments?

CK: I don't think so. I haven't been back to the Monument recently but I have been back a bunch, to camp and recreate.

MH: How do you think it is going?

CK: I don't know enough really to say. I read the papers and hear controversies spike-up over there, and I hear from friends that are still in the area, that a lot of progress has been made. [There is] acceptance of the Monument but also figuring how to management it, this is mostly BLM talking over the years. I think a lot has changed and a lot has stayed the same. (Laughter) I think things are headed in the right direction, it is lovely place, I do like to get back there and recreate when I can.

19 Chris Killingsworth

MH: Please look me up if you come over, I live there in Tropic, and have lodging available at our business in Cannonville.

CK: Ah, so your economic well being is tied very much to the broader public landscape there.

MH: Yes. Barb asked me if there has been an impact on our front-country business. Yes, minor but more noticeable; it has about taken ten years.

Chris, I would like to thank you for your time.

CK: Yes.

End of Interview 00:58:23