

Hole in the Rock Trail Update

December 2008
By Monte Wells



During the Thanksgiving Holiday I went out to Lake Canyon and checked the washout on the Hole in the Rock Trail. Every time I see the massive washed out area I'm awe struck at how much of the canyon washed away during that one storm. It still amazes me how much power Mother Nature has and how much the desert can change in one season, or one storm, despite man's foot print on the land. The old location of Lake Pagahrit in Lake



Canyon is a great example of the ongoing change over time that takes place in nature.

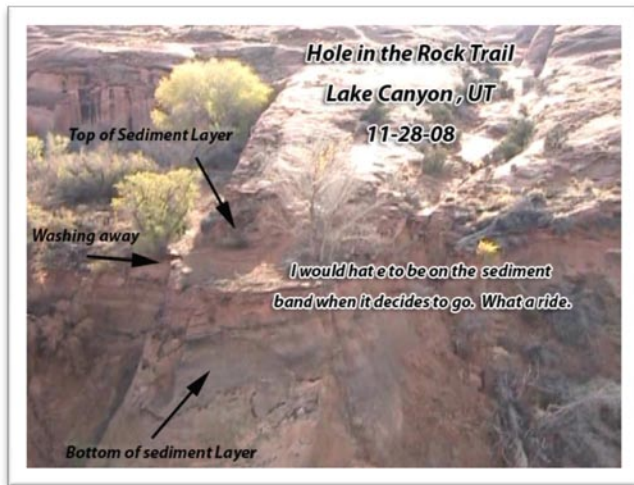
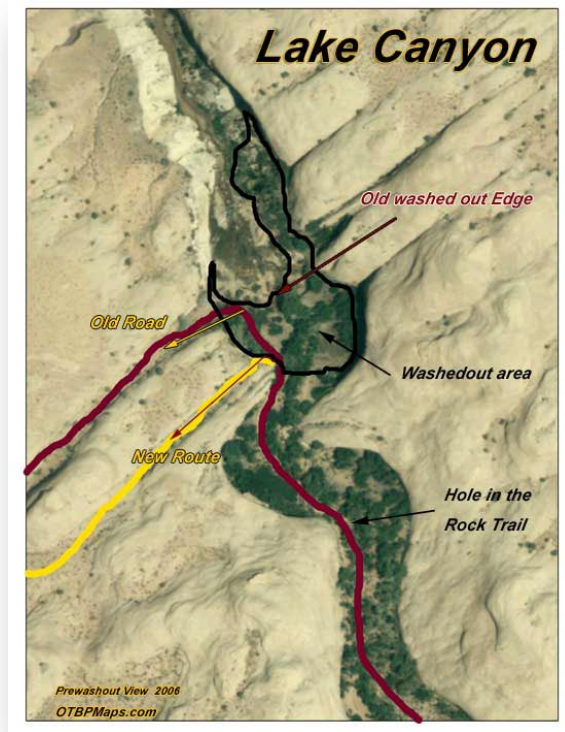
Prior to the abandonment of the Lake Canyon area between 1100 and 1200 A.D., the Lake Pagahrit earth dam was created which turned the desert canyon into a lake. I'm sure this lake was an oasis for the indigenous people. This canyon was later called Lake Canyon by early settlers. Over the years of hiking this canyon I have found indications that there were possibly several different dams

over time in different locations in the canyon, but for sure there was the dam that the pioneers crossed on in 1880 that created Lake Pagahrit.

The shore line of this ancient lake is scattered with archeological sites and evidence of the inhabitants that utilized this natural resource. There is clear evidence of an overlapping influence of the Anasazi and Fremont cultures in the area. This dam lasted until a storm in 1915 which washed it out and with it went the lake. All that was left was the thick layer of sediment that had been deposited over the years by storms and run off.

Over the last 93 years the canyon has been reclaiming its self by washing the thick layer of sediment away a little at a time. Nature has reclaimed about 1 mile of the canyon so far. It will soon reclaim the area of the canyon that the Hole in the Rock trail travels through. At this time the trail is still open to motorized travel but it won't be long before it will be impassable.

As indicated in the photos there is a section of the trail that is continuing to wash out and has made the trail very narrow. The bigger issue is that there is a very small sediment band that makes up the last section of trail before pulling out of Lake Canyon. As you can see in the photos this band of sediment has nothing holding it in place and will eventually sluff off and drop the 50 + feet to the bottom of the canyon. The much safer route is the new route over Nokai Dome. San Juan County will soon be putting up some signs to encourage trail users to use the Nokai Dome route and that the Lake Canyon section is dangerous.





Bibliography

Both Black and white photos: Hindley, Earl - Bowns, James - Scherick, Edward - Curtis, Paul - Forrest Jimmie. A Photographic History of Vegetation and Stream Channel Changes in San Juan County, Utah. San Juan County: Utah State University Extension, 2000, pp 33.

All other Photos Copyright©OTBPMAPS.com