

ASK NOT WHAT ALAA CAN DO FOR YOU,  
ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR ALAA...  
Shirley Leeson, Vice President – ALAA

Instead of asking what the American Lands Access Association can do for you, it's time for all to start asking; “What can I do to help ALAA”? The problems facing rockhounds are too big for one or two people to solve alone; the fact is....we need everyone's help to keep rockhounding alive.

We hear the same question all the time; “What’s ALAA going to do about...”? The answer is...YOU ARE ALAA. It's very simple. If you bring a problem to ALAA, we will help you find the answers, and coordinate a response. But then you have to be responsible and take the lead in that battle. You have to take the lead, and be part of the solution, we can accept nothing less. We're still learning how to fight these battles, the organizations that are trying to end access to our forests and deserts have had at least 40 years to organize their attack, and educate their members. We’re just getting out feet wet in the arena of public opinion, and we need everyone's expertise and everyone's experiences to help win this battle.

These days rockhounds are getting involved in all areas of the government, in all issues that can involve rockhounding activities. We must be aware that issues like clean water and watersheds, pollution, dust and other topics you might not even equate with rockhounding, gold panning, or metal detecting will greatly affect all our members. Make sure to read your local newspapers for these issues, and where they are being discussed. You may see a report on local TV news that will alert you to meetings that might be of concern to you as a rockhound. Watch for public notices from government agencies as well.

Here’s some things you can do to prepare yourself:

- Research the problem! Find those who are responsible, whether it's a government or state agency, and when meetings will be held.
- Use your computer as a research tool. You’d be surprised what you can learn by doing a search on Google.
- Find out why and how this problem developed.
- Look for solutions, or compromises.
- Be articulate.

- Be concise, and spend time refining your message.

Sometimes you'll find help and solutions from organizations and associations outside the rockhound community. There are many organizations who are working on multiple use of public lands. Reach out to them and ask if they are having the same problems, and what they are doing about these issues. Road closures, ambiguous or incorrect interpretations of the regulations at the management level, and many forest and desert issues have organizations that are working hard to combat these problems and can use our help!

Bring your concerns to your City Council or County Board of Supervisors? Be prepared to speak at Forest Service or BLM hearings State Fish and Game Departments, as well as Federal Fish and Game regulations may have an impact on rockhounding, so be armed and prepared to speak on behalf of rockhounds everywhere.

Although it can be intimidating to speak in public...YOU CAN DO IT! Prepare fully, know your subject, and be articulate and concise. Have a handout of your points, and leave it with whomever organized the meeting. Sign up for their mailing list, and get business cards from all important people in the room. Ask to speak to them about the issue at a later date, and the best way to contact their office. Look for people with like concerns, and don't be afraid to ask for help. You don't have to stand alone, instead you can bring friends with you. Let them know there are a large group who care about the issue. But:

- Never go into a meeting with a chip on your shoulder.
- Be friendly and attentive to what others have to say.

YOU'RE the one who's going to make the difference, and ALAA is here to help.

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