

GRAND JUNCTION GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

MARCH MEETING

Joint meeting with the Colorado Mesa U Geology Club

**Wednesday March 21, 2012
7:30 P.M.—Saccomanno Lecture Hall
(In the Wubben Science Building)**

Bill Hood will speak on

**“Unaweep Canyon, Cactus Park Lake and the Origin of East Creek
Some new ideas about an old canyon”**

ABSTRACT

Unaweep Canyon has been the subject of many controversies since it was first described by members of the Hayden Survey of 1875. Many puzzles remain unexplained. How could a Pleistocene lake occupy Cactus Park? Why does East Creek makes a 30 degree angle to the eastern slope of the Uncompahgre Plateau when nearby streams follow the steepest path? When was the canyon abandoned? With the discovery of physical evidence that the combined Colorado – Gunnison Rivers occupied the canyon for much of its history, followed by the subsequent capture of first the Colorado and later the Gunnison River, we can now put together a plausible explanation for the origin of Cactus Park Lake and the origin of East Creek. Evidence will be presented to show that a wall of rock must have existed where East Creek now begins its steep descent off of the Plateau, that the lake beds of Cactus Park Lake were not sourced by the Gunnison River, and that the Gunnison River was diverted to the east at a point just south of Cactus Park. Evidence of landslides in that area suggests that a landslide could have blocked what is now the southern drainage out of Cactus Park, allowing the lake to form. Overflow from the lake along the abandoned bed of the ancestral Colorado River where it approached Unaweep Canyon created the path for the modern East Creek as well as influenced the course of modern Gunnison River. Causes and timing of events remain controversial even among those of us who work on the area, but a scenario for the timing of events will be presented for your consideration.

Guests Are Always Welcome