



Honorable Rob Bishop
United States House of Representatives
123 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Fred.Ferguson@mail.house.gov

April 23, 2013

RE: Eastern Utah Public Lands Legislation

Dear Representative Bishop,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the development of a comprehensive lands bill for Eastern Utah.

The BlueRibbon Coalition's (BRC) staff and volunteers have experience in similar public lands legislation efforts in Utah and other western states. We very much appreciate the opportunity to continue our involvement in your efforts to look at a comprehensive lands bill for Central and Eastern Utah.

One cannot ignore the threat posed by a Presidential national monument designation. In our last letter to you we noted; *"The OIA [Outdoor Industry Association] letter requests that President Obama unilaterally impose the wishes of only one stakeholder group. To pull the rug out from under those who will be most likely to be impacted by land use decisions – local citizens – as they hammer out compromises is unwise."*

The latest request for the President to designate a Greater Canyonlands monument has, perhaps unwittingly, brought attention to the fact that it is wildly out of line with what the people who live there want.

This is why we deeply appreciate your efforts to oppose unilateral national monument designations. Your work to bring together the knowledge of all of the state and national groups involved, as well as the local counties, is a welcome breath of fresh air.

We understand the need for prompt response. Therefore, we have put together some general thoughts for your consideration as you move forward. We hope to provide additional information when appropriate.

Thank you for considering our interests in the outcomes of this important public lands initiative.
Very sincerely,

Brian Hawthorne
Public Lands Policy Director
BlueRibbon Coalition
208-237-1008 ext 102

Cc: Senator Orrin Hatch
Senator Mike Lee
Representative Jason Chaffetz
Representative Chris Stewart

Regarding a “process”

- A regional approach, as opposed to a county by county process, seems appropriate. At some point counties must coordinate to avoid conflicting management across county boundaries.
- Normally BRC encourages a formal collaborative process. However, there are many reasonable arguments for expediting any necessary collaborative efforts. A shortened process has been successful in other areas and is probably appropriate here.
- Most of the counties affected have considered various components of a land bill. One has a detailed legislative proposal, while some counties have just recently begun. If an expedited process is appropriate it should not be so expedited that the product lacks the full support of the county(ies).

Things to consider when developing a proposal for the Greater Canyonlands area

- Any legislation must address Utah's need for “regulatory security.”
- A regional land use bill may not be the vehicle to address litigation. Still, it should be acknowledged that litigation acts like an anchor on land management. Litigation empowers well funded trusts and foundations to apply undue influence on federal land management.
- In November 2008, the BLM completed six management plans in Utah. Although progress is being made, none of the plans have been fully implemented yet. Imposing a new planning process before the last plan has been completed is not wise or necessary. Any new designation (NCA, NRA, etc) should include specific management direction for federal land managers so valuable resources are not wasted with another round of planning.
- The BLM's new management plans contain a lot of accurate information regarding the lands and resources at issues, and they are also well understood by all involved. The management plans should prove useful, at a minimum, to provide information. They may also be useful for specific management direction in legislation.
- The proponents of the Monument cite a recreation impact study that shows “\$646 billion in national sales and services in 2011 and supporting 6.1 million jobs...” They are telling only part of the story. The same study shows that approximately \$257 billion, or nearly 40% of the total \$646 billion in economic impact, is derived from motorized recreation.
- The BLM's latest plans closed just less than half of the existing roads and roughly three-quarters of existing, non-road OHV trails. Implementation of the travel plans, has not yet been completed. As travel plans are implemented, it is common for land managers to make adjustments and even add routes to make the transportation system better and reduce impacts. If anything, all efforts should look at ways to add motorized and mountain bike trails, not reduce them.
- Previous oil and gas development in this area has been shown to be compatible with semi-primitive recreation and good wildlife habitat. Recreation and resource development should not be considered mutually exclusive.

Potential Legislative Pillars

- No net loss for motorized and mountain bike recreation
Motorized recreationists also seek “regulatory security.” The BLM has closed tens of thousands of miles of roads and trails since the first round of “emergency closures” in 2001. We don't yet know if the transportation system that remains can support the current, let alone the future need. Moreover, wealthy trusts and foundations regularly fund appeals and litigation on even basic motorized travel plans.
- Categorically exclude from NEPA analysis casual recreation event permits and require the BLM develop a streamlined process for commercial recreation permits.
- “Codification” of existing BLM Management Plans
There seems to be consensus among many local stakeholders that BLM's new management plans are, with a few exceptions, acceptable. To BLM's credit, a lot local groups believe they can “make it work,” or “we can live with it.” There seems an equal consensus that any future reductions in access, recreation and other commercial uses is something they can not live with. Legislation, even a designation such as an NCA, can and should “codify” the current management as a baseline. Additional uses could be authorized via planning and NEPA.
- Specific Management Direction
Congress often passes legislation giving federal agencies specific management direction for a specific resource. Specific management needs should be 'legislated in' to the federal land manager's plans.
- Wilderness
We are open to considering any designation, including NRA, NCA, Wilderness and any others.
- Minimum Transportation System
Although it isn't complete, there seems to be some support for the existing transportation system. In line with the theme of regulatory certainty, each potential designation should include the concept of codifying the existing travel plan so it serves as a minimum travel system. Recreational trails, both motorized and non motorized, could then be added consistent with NEPA and other applicable laws.
- State Park
Some lands may be better managed as a State Park(s)
- Trust or other community partnership
Another concept that has been proposed as a way to provide regulatory certainty is forming a collaborative trust for managing one or all of BLM and USFS programs.