



National Outdoor Leadership School

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The Leader In Wilderness Education

April 5, 2013

Congressman Rob Bishop
123 Cannon Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Bishop:

Thank you for providing stakeholders, operators, and interested citizens in Utah with an opportunity to engage in a constructive and forward-looking process to resolve long-standing issues on public lands in the state. Like you, we have seen solutions work in the west that strike a balance between diverse interests, focusing on local solutions and offering permanent resolutions to long-standing public lands debates. In places like Washington County, as well as in Idaho and Wyoming, recent resolutions backed by a broad base of public support have paved the way for fresh approaches elsewhere.

With an outdoor education program that has been in operation across Utah's public lands for over 30 years, the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) business model relies on the rich outdoor adventure and education opportunities provided by Utah's canyonlands, rivers and mountains. On courses lasting 21 days or more, NOLS semester students travel on extended backcountry trips learning canyoneering, backcountry travel, river, and leadership skills. Over the years, we have been compelled to adjust our operations, as the integrity of the natural landscape we consider our outdoor classroom has diminished over the years.

Our top picks for protection overlay our operating areas. In order of priority, they are as follows:

1. Wilderness Designation for Desolation Canyon WSA
2. Wilderness Designation for the Grand Gulch WSA Complex and Dark Canyon WSA, as well as a Greater National Conservation Area incorporating these WSAs.
3. Wilderness Designation for the Dirty Devil WSA
4. Wild and Scenic River Designation for the Green River from Pariette Wetlands through Desolation Canyon and Gray Canyon.
5. Wild and Scenic River Designation for the San Juan River from Bluff to the confluence with the Colorado River.
6. Wild and Scenic Designation for the Green River through Labyrinth Canyon.

We offer the above list with some caveats. We would not support a plan that protects our operations at the expense of public lands elsewhere, where we are not stakeholders. We would insist that existing uses, especially commercial operations, should be grandfathered into any designation at existing levels, and should leave the door open for additional use that is deemed to be consistent with the assigned designation.

Having participated in similar negotiations in adjacent states, we recommend that intentionality be built around the process to ensure that it is all-inclusive, that it provides honest, earnest brokers with an opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way, and that it strives to realize broad acceptance and, if possible, consensus. We anticipate that the process is most likely to be successful if it is implemented on a local level, considering a single landscape at a time, or a single county at a time. A local solution is most likely to achieve buy-in by key constituents only if it considers a landscape that exists beyond the borders of existing Wilderness Study Areas, such as the processes already being considered in Emery County and San Juan County.

Again, thank you for your interest in finding local solutions to local issues on Utah's public lands. We look forward to continuing to engage in the process as a business-minded stakeholder. We are hopeful that secure operating areas will create a stable business environment for the outfitting industry in Utah for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Cukjati". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping tail.

Gary Cukjati
NOLS Rocky Mountain Director