



March 20, 2013

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chair, House Subcommittee on
Public Lands & Environmental Regulation
123 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Attn: Fred.Ferguson@mail.house.gov

Dear Congressman Bishop:

Thank you for your letter and the opportunity to comment on new ideas for public land management in Utah.

As you know, OIA and our members believe protecting our public lands, trails and waters is much more than just about the land. It is about protecting the economy, communities, companies and people whose lives depend on having access to high quality outdoor recreation experiences.

Outdoor recreation is a large and growing economic driver in the U.S., representing \$646 billion in direct spending each year and more than 6.1 million American jobs. In Utah alone, consumers spend more than \$12 billion; support more than 122,000 jobs that generate more than \$3.6 billion in wages and \$856 million in state and local taxes.

OIA believes that it is crucial to find a balance between the needs of extractive industries and sustainable outdoor recreation. Conflict will continue until outdoor recreation is an equal and important consideration alongside energy development planning. We agree with your observations that conservation and multiple-use can coexist; and the notion that we are in the midst of a paradigm shift. I submit that seeing that paradigm shift through to a positive outcome will require compromise and consensus. Hard choices will need to be made; but as your letter implied, they are being made now by inaction, leading to contention, conflict, distrust and acrimony. A better way is possible.

OIA looks forward to working collaboratively with you and the entire Utah congressional delegation to craft a process and eventual federal legislation that addresses the many issues that have plagued public land management in Utah. We hope that this will be an open and transparent process leading to a balanced approach to managing Utah's public lands and resources.

OIA believes it is important to outline the values that may drive the decisions contemplated by the process you've initiated. We encourage you to embrace the following guiding principles relating to outdoor recreation in the state of Utah, as outlined in the State of Utah Outdoor Recreation Vision, issued by Governor Gary Herbert in January 2013:

Guiding Principles:

Quality of Life—Utah's natural beauty and outdoor opportunities enhance our rich quality of life, promoting health, adventure, community connections, and personal well-being.

Heritage—Outdoor recreation is a significant part of Utah's culture and heritage which we want to protect and pass on to future generations. We will sustain and enhance recreational opportunities and heritage sites.

Healthy Landscapes—The health and quality of our wildlife, land, air, and water are the foundations of a sound recreational infrastructure.

Strong and Diversified Economy—We recognize outdoor recreation, tourism and outdoor-related businesses as key pillars of Utah's growing and diversified economy, and promote them along with other important economic sectors.

Long-Term Perspective; Timely Action—Decisions about outdoor recreation will affect our lands and livelihoods for generations. We make those decisions with a long-term view of impacts to communities, health, the environment, and Utah's economy. As our population continues to grow, the demand for both development and outdoor recreation will increase. Decisions are best made thoughtfully before pressures and conflicts intensify.

Diverse Opportunities—Outdoor recreation takes many forms, from backyard to backcountry. We provide opportunities and appropriate places for the full spectrum of recreational activities, interests, and abilities, including those that involve little or no cost to enjoy. We support responsible access to our recreational amenities.

Innovation— Our recreation industries, policy-makers, participants and managers continually innovate to offer quality outdoor experiences, overcome current conflicts, and embrace new outdoor activities.

Good Information—We base our decisions on sound data and share good information with the public to promote safe and rewarding recreational experiences.

Balanced Solutions— Utah accommodates a spectrum of activities, while recognizing that not all are compatible in the same location. When conflicts arise, we pursue practical, lasting, win-win solutions in an atmosphere of open communication, broad participation, and respect.

Education—We recognize the value of outdoor activities in the development of children and youth, and through education and hands-on experience, encourage their active participation.

With these values in mind, OIA offers the following recommendations in response to your letter.

Critical Recreation Areas

Utah is known for world-class outdoor recreation – from climbing and canyoneering to whitewater to off-road touring and mountain biking and more. These activities take place throughout the state and depend on the conservation and preservation of areas with spectacular natural, biological and cultural resources; as well as the improvement of recreational access for the spectrum of recreational enthusiasts. A host of areas around the state are important to the outdoor industry and recreation community, including (but not limited to) the following:

- Greater Canyonlands Region
- Moab/Colorado River/Labyrinth Canyon Region
- Book Cliffs/ Desolation Canyon Region
- San Rafael Swell Region
- Glen Canyon/San Juan River Basin Region
- Fremont River Headwaters/Wayne Wonderland Region
- Uinta Mountains: Dinosaur Region, North Slope

Unfortunately, a full inventory of the state's recreational assets would not have been possible in the time frame allotted by your request. Consequently, these items are not presented in any priority order or with any recommendations for specific public land or water designations. As outlined below, OIA recommends you engage in a consensus and data-driven process to define the full scope of recreational opportunities in the state, along with access, conservation and historic preservation needs; and assemble those into a meaningful legislative package. We anticipate that important work would take the bulk of this year, perhaps culminating before the end of the year in a sufficiently comprehensive analysis to support legislation.

Data-Driven Approach

Addressing the many outstanding and complex public land management issues facing Utah will require solid analysis build on strong data and reliable maps of the current recreation opportunities and activities on public lands and waters and an assessment of future potential. Such data-driven decision-making will require pouring over BLM data, crowd sourcing from various groups, and synthesizing the results to make the data both accessible and comprehensive. This is both possible and necessary. Comprehensive data on the locations and intensity of recreation and other uses could become a benchmark by which this bill will be measured. We encourage you to engage the research capacity of the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the Departments of Interior and Agriculture generally. At the same time, OIA will assist this research and attempt to complement official research efforts with detailed information and knowledge about recreation assets, access, and use in Utah. We reserve the right to provide further detail of on-the-ground specifics as this process unfolds.

Consensus Decision-Making and Neutral Facilitation

We believe that consensus on these issues is possible. Reaching consensus among the stakeholders in the public lands debate will require deliberate steps toward that end. OIA recommends the following guidelines for such a process:

1. Skilled Neutral Facilitation: Retain a professional, neutral facilitator – someone with no stake in the issues at hand and a track record of having successfully led consensus collaborations – ideally in Utah.
2. Issue (Conflict) Assessment: Implement a thorough assessment of interests and issues; and areas of agreement and disagreement.
3. Representation and Ground Rules: Involve all key stakeholders (a critical step you've already begun with your letter), and charge them to consider whether any remaining stakeholders need to be present. All stakeholders should help to define a mutually agreeable set of ground rules for participation at the front end of any process.
4. Consensus: Use consensus to produce a durable outcome.
5. Timetable and Benchmarks: Hold frequent and regular meetings with benchmarks for progress.

Finally, let me assure you that OIA enters this dialogue in good faith and with anticipation of success. We believe a deliberative process as outlined above will be the most efficient way to reach a meaningful outcome that accounts for the scope of the discussions, complexity of the issues; and time required to draft and pass legislation. We look forward to working with you and thank you again for the opportunity.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kirk Bailey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kirk Bailey
Vice President – Government Affairs

Cc: Rep. Jason Chaffetz
Rep. Jim Matheson
Rep. Chris Stewart
Office of Gary Herbert, Governor of Utah