



May 2, 2013

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

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 Utah Outdoor Business Network (UOBN) is a group of Utah businesses that have a stake in public lands management in Eastern Utah. Our businesses depend on recreation assets located on our public lands, both for the visitors these assets attract and the quality of life recruits they bring. Both groups bring critical revenue to our companies.

These comments identify the many outstanding *recreation assets* on public lands that currently support Utah's regional economies as well as many of the recreation assets that have significant future potential to contribute to economic development in Eastern Utah. This letter also identifies a range of public land designations that would protect and enhance these recreation assets.

I. EASTERN UTAH'S RECREATIONAL ASSETS ARE KEY TO PROTECTING AND GROWING OUR REGIONAL ECONOMY

Many recreation locations on public lands in Eastern Utah are popular destinations for visitors and are important elements of the local and regional economies. In Utah, outdoor recreation, both motorized and non-motorized, generates \$12 billion in consumer spending, creates 122,000 in direct jobs and provides \$856 million in state and local tax revenues. These numbers do not include quality-of-life recruits who live in Utah because of its incredible outdoor recreation of all types. Currently some 82% of Utahns participate in outdoor recreation. And the state is consistently attracting new residents, who care about the out of doors, and who will continue to bring this number up every year.

The many areas that deserve protection through this process are outlined in **Attachment A** hereto. Numerous additional recreation assets in Eastern Utah also hold promise for the future development of a recreation economy through visitation and outfitter permitting. These recreation assets currently support hundreds of businesses that cater to tourists such as restaurants, hotels and retail shops. The recreation assets also attract permanent "quality of life" recruits who move to Eastern Utah for these unique landscapes and sustain local

economies through property taxes and, frequently, the outside incomes they bring with them and their resultant local spending. These assets are provided in **Attachment B**.

II. LAND DESIGNATIONS TO PROTECT REGIONAL RECREATION ASSETS AND LOCAL ECONOMIES

The UOBN recommends a variety of designations as appropriate to protect and enhance recreation assets that support Eastern Utah's economy. The range of potential designations, which may apply differently according to each asset, includes the following:

- National Recreation Area, National Conservation Area, and/or National Park expansion.
- Wilderness, Wild & Scenic River status (for the Green, Colorado, Dirty Devil, Muddy Creek, and San Rafael rivers).
- SITLA Land Exchange to optimize areas of resource development potential while simultaneously protecting high value recreation lands currently on SITLA lands.
- Historical and cultural resources additions to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Mineral withdrawal of certain high value recreation lands.

For most of these designations, the BLM and USFS should conduct comprehensive Travel Management Planning through NEPA.

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The Utah Outdoor Business Network commends your leadership in bringing together diverse stakeholders, and we request our involvement as you further develop this process. Please contact our representatives at Public Lands Solutions—Ashley Korenblat (Ashley@publiclandsolutions.org; 801-910-3205) or Jason Keith (Jason@publiclandsolutions.org; 435-709-8674)—if you have any questions or comments regarding the contents of this letter or its attachments.

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

Sincerely, the undersigned:

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Representative Jason Chaffetz
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