

Congressman Bishop,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback relative to land use in key areas of Utah. As sportsmen, conservationists and members of the multiple-use community, we understand the importance of stewardship of Utah's lands, plants and wildlife populations. Understanding that there are numerous voices urging for use and protection schemes of land in the state of Utah, we feel it is important to share some of the values that are important for balanced and productive habitats in the state of Utah.

We feel strongly that proactive management is a critical aspect of conservation of both plants and wildlife in the state of Utah. Correct application of proven management tools and techniques can develop, maintain and ensure vibrant and healthy ecosystems across the state of Utah. Healthy habitat is critical for healthy wildlife populations. Sportsmen have invested hundreds of millions into conservation. In cooperation with the state of Utah, over 750,000 acres of habitat work has been done during the last several years. Methods of managing for natural mosaics ensure availability of productive ecosystems for food and cover for all wildlife species. In many areas, responsible forestry and range management is imperative to ensure habitats work for wildlife. These techniques can improve structural diversity and utilization rates for wildlife of these habitats. Sportsmen understand that proactive management is fundamental to ensure healthy and abundant wildlife in the state of Utah.

We are concerned by efforts to prohibit or restrict important habitat and range improvements in the state of Utah. Multiple use recognizes that responsible utilization of resources is consistent with the conservation of Utah's landscapes and also ensures our landscapes remain healthy, vibrant and productive. Excessive restriction, regulatory obstacles and unnecessary delays have become an impediment to our shared goals of responsible ecosystem management. Also concerning are efforts to restrict access, recreation, hunting and shooting on Utah's state and federal lands. Utahns know best on how our lands and resources should be restored, conserved and utilized.

Invasive vegetative and animal species is becoming an issue of increasing concern in conservation. Cedar and juniper encroachment across much of Utah has dramatically impacted the suitability of habitat for natural wildlife populations. Invasive species control is emerging as a critical component of efforts to protect and preserve indigenous wildlife and habitats. Management practices can restore natural mosaics in ways that help minimize catastrophic wildfires. Prescribed "cool-season" fires and targeted mechanical removals can revitalize wild habitats improving productivity and vibrancy of ecosystems. Combined with targeted reseedling and planting of native vegetations, managed burns not only replicates the natural fire cycles, it can be an important tool to control invasive species while also allowing desired revegetation of treated areas.

Efforts to block these conservation measures can lead to loss of natural mosaics, decreased food production for wildlife, impacts to watersheds, proliferation of invasive vegetative species and catastrophic wildfires. It is time to recognize that excessive red tape and overt efforts to prevent proactive habitat improvements can result in neglect and decline of wildlife habitat in the state of Utah. Additionally, these tactics often involve repeated, superfluous and expensive studies, repeated cycles of litigation and other tactics that not only cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, but also divert funding from on the ground conservation needs. Sportsmen believe in investing these resources in the future by doing more for habitats and wildlife. These on-the-ground conservation efforts provide succession management and improve the structural diversity of plant communities in these habitats. Proactive management can ensure healthy habitats can support both game and non-game species.

Decisions on land use and access in the state of Utah should be made by Utah voters not federal officials in Washington D.C. Principles of self-determination are a fundamental theme in both the United States Constitution and the founding principles that make America great. Out-of-state special interest groups have encouraged powerful federal administrative agencies to ignore the voice of Utahns in land-use decisions in the past. We strongly encourage Utah's congressional delegation to ensure that Utah's uses, traditions, values, tradition, and honest efforts are not only respected, but also remain the basis for decision making of land use in the state.

We look forward to working with you on specific proposals for land use in the state of Utah. Involvement of Utahns and local communities is the best way to improve productive, healthy and balanced wildlife and ecosystems in our state.

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