

OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES ON STATE, LOCAL AND FEDERAL LANDS

OVERSIGHT HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS
AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

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OVERSIGHT HEARING ON OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES ON STATE, LOCAL AND FEDERAL LANDS

Thursday, June 27, 2013
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:04 p.m., in room 1334, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Rob Bishop [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Bishop, Tipton and Horsford.

Mr. BISHOP. The hearing will come to order. The Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation is holding an oversight hearing today on Outdoor Recreation Opportunities on State, Local and Federal Lands. Under the rules, the opening statements are limited to the Chairman and Ranking Member. However, I ask unanimous consent to include any other Members' opening statement in the hearing record if they are submitted to the clerk by close of business today. And obviously, hearing myself not object to that, it is so ordered.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. ROB BISHOP, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF UTAH**

Mr. BISHOP. I want to start with an element of appreciation for those who happen to be here, and also explaining some of the process problems we have. We usually do not try to have afternoon Committee hearings, but when we do, we realize we run into the problem of votes that will take place. So it actually will happen in about 7 minutes from now. So I hope we can go through the opening statements, at least get that out of the way, and then, with apologies to those who are witnesses, I ask you to simply enjoy the ambiance of this room until we quit voting, which could be anywhere between 15 minutes and 2 or 3 hours.

So, I appreciate all that effort. But I do thank you for attending today's hearing on outdoor recreation. I understand that this week various groups have visited Washington, D.C., to promote outdoor recreation, so I am pleased the Subcommittee can be a part of that week.

Today's hearing is a continuation of our efforts to examine outdoor recreation on public Lands. In the first of our hearings back in May, we heard the guide and outfitting community highlight various Department of Interior created impediments to outdoor recreation. The focus today is going to be a little bit different. It will be mostly non-Federal recreation management.

State, local, and nongovernment entities are managing outdoor recreation assets all over the country, and it is important for the

Subcommittee to learn about these techniques and the best management practices, especially in light of yesterday's announcement by the National Park Service that they intend to ban paddling in various western national parks; not the kind of paddling for which I remember done by elementary principals, but those kinds that are done in rowboats.

So I would especially like to welcome those who are here. And when we call you up to the panel, I have a few other things I would like to say about each of you who has come this far.

America has vast expanses of public lands, and these lands give almost unlimited space for outdoor recreation, along with an abundance of food, and fiber, and minerals and wildlife resources. When wisely managed, our lands can provide all these benefits. We have the knowledge, the talent, the technology to have both conservation and economic growth, and truly we are not forced to choose between them.

Obviously, local people who are surrounded by open space tend to understand this better than those who live in congested urban centers, who feel hemmed in by the lack of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. If public lands were distributed evenly around the country, perceptions definitely would be different.

So I want to emphasize the importance of allowing the genuinely local representatives to set a course that balances and accommodates legitimate competing interests. Although we may use terms like it is "collaborative" and "partnership," sometimes Federal agents and allied groups actually decide on restrictive public land use plans, and then only allow some limited local comments before proceeding to impose their predetermined plan.

Today's hearing we are going to hear from these witnesses who have created and expanded opportunities for outdoor recreation on public lands. They will point out how locally initiated recreation programs are likely and more likely to garner public acceptance, and allow diversity of uses, and avoid tragic errors that occur when plans are imposed from afar by some kind of imperial decree.

So we welcome you for being here. We are looking forward to your testimony. Eventually we are looking forward to your testimony.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bishop follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROB BISHOP, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

America has a vast expanse of public lands and these lands give us almost unlimited space for outdoor recreation along with an abundance of food, fiber, mineral and wildlife resources. When wisely managed, our land can provide all these benefits. We have the knowledge, talent and technology to have both conservation and economic growth. Truly, we are not forced to choose between them.

Obviously, local people who are surrounded by open space tend to understand this better than those who live in congested urban centers and feel hemmed in and lacking in opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. If public land were distributed evenly around the country, perceptions would be different.

I want to emphasize the importance of allowing the genuinely local and representative folks to set a course that balances and accommodates legitimate competing interests. Although they may use the terms, it is neither "collaboration" nor a "partnership" for Federal agents and allied environmental groups to decide on a restrictive land use plan and then allow some limited local comments before proceeding to impose their pre-determined plan.

At today's hearing we will hear from witnesses who have created and expanded opportunities for outdoor recreation on public lands. They will point out how locally

initiated recreation programs are more likely to garner public acceptance, allow diversity of uses and avoid the tragic errors that occur when plans are imposed from afar by imperial decree.

Mr. BISHOP. With that, I would like to turn to Mr. Horsford, who is sitting in for the Ranking Member, and if he has any opening statement he would like to make.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. STEVEN A. HORSFORD, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEVADA

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you very much, Chairman Bishop, for holding this hearing today. I appreciate having opportunities to have open, nonpartisan discussions about pressing issues, particularly on our Federal lands. Nevada is a lot like Utah. The majority of our lands are Federal lands, and many of our rural economies depend on these lands.

We have had a long history of balancing conservation initiatives with the needs of rural economies. Initially, wilderness purists resisted making local compromises to ensure that things like wildlife guzzlers and water rights were protected.

Just recently I was in my district meeting with constituents about a plan for the Virgin Valley. Our local community echoed themes many of our witnesses are sharing with us today. Those included road access issues for recreation, which is very important. My constituents, for example, are very focused on maintaining beach access to Lake Mead through the Overton Road. I have already brought this issue to the attention of the Park Service, and will continue to advocate for access to our recreation assets.

I also heard from our local community that maintaining hunting opportunities and access is critical to gaining support for any conservation initiative. In particular, we need to ensure that people can get into and care for and maintain wildlife guzzlers. Nevada wilderness bills have addressed this in the past, and I hope we can continue to do that with future proposals.

My constituents were also clear that all types of recreation pursuits need to be considered. We have plenty of land in Nevada, and managing places for motorized recreation should be pursued with the same enthusiasm as managing lands for mountain biking and hiking. We also need to pay attention to our unique cultural interests by maintaining access for responsible recreational mining and rock hunting.

The other really interesting thing I heard is that detailed maps are important. No one knows the lay of the land better than the people living on the land. High-quality maps help to address these potential conflicts.

I enjoyed hearing about the experience of my colleague Congressman Luján in New Mexico. They were able to resolve a mountain biking access issue by simply getting a better map. Technology is good, and we should make the most out of the mapping tools that we have.

Finally, there is nothing more important when you live in a desert than water. Water rights on Federal land are increasingly valued. I learned from my constituents that protecting water rights is key to their support on these critical measures. So we need more

local advisory councils in Nevada to help the Federal Government find the right balance for managing our public lands. We were successful finding that sweet spot with our Lyon County legislation that I hope will move to the Full Committee soon. Through ongoing discussions with people like Mayor Wier of Mesquite, we are able to start learning more about what is appropriate in other areas as well.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to hearing more from our witnesses and working together on these important topics.

Mr. BISHOP. All right. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Horsford follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE STEVEN A. HORSFORD, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEVADA

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(3) My constituents were also clear that all types of recreation pursuits needed to be considered. We have plenty of land in Nevada and managing places for motorized recreation should be pursued with the same enthusiasm as managing lands for mountain biking and hiking. We also need to pay attention to our unique cultural interests by maintaining access for responsible recreational mining and rock hunting.

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(5) Finally, there is nothing more important when you live in a desert than water. Water rights on Federal land are increasingly valued. I learned from my constituents that protecting water rights is key to their support.

We need more local advisory councils in Nevada to help the Federal Government find the right balance for our public lands. We were successful finding that sweet spot with our Lyons County legislation that I hope will move to the Full Committee soon. Through ongoing discussions with people like Mayor Weir of Mesquite, we are able to start learning more about what is appropriate in other areas as well.

Thank you again, Chairman Bishop, and I look forward to hearing more from our witnesses.

Mr. BISHOP. What I would like to do is introduce the panel that we have. If you don't want to actually come up and take your seats yet, we will introduce you, and then when we reconvene, which will

probably be in around a half hour to 45 minutes from now, just have you come up to the areas and be ready to start at that time.

I do want, though, to recognize who is here, the witnesses. Specifically, if I can, I have two who are from my area—actually not my area, they are from another district in Utah, in the Moab area that has become an outdoor recreation capital of basically the West. So first Lynn Jackson, who serves as the vice chair of the Grand County Council. He is an outdoor recreation enthusiast, brings over 30 years of experience in the Bureau of Land Management, has the field office experience at the table. And we appreciate his views both from his past as well as his present situation in which he is on the county council in Grand County.

Ashley Korenblat is also from Moab, who brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the hearing. She served in various capacities over the last few years in ensuring that the bike industry is not drawn into wilderness boundaries. That is supposed to be a joke. And instead, let us say representing the bike industry's perspective during congressional land use planning processes. So Ashley also owns a guiding and touring business and is renowned in that particular area.

I would like to just also recognize Wade Garrett here. Wade Garrett is with Congressman—there you are, yes. Wade Garrett is with Congressman Jason Chaffetz's district. He is the State Director—the District Director there for Congressman Chaffetz, who is an integral part of this system. Representative Chaffetz represents Moab, and if it was not that he was involved in a Judiciary Committee hearing markup right now, he would also have been joining us for this particular interest area.

I also want to recognize Greg Martin, who is here from the Wood River Bicycle Coalition to give that emphasis and expertise; Alexis Nelson, who is the executive director of the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers; Ron Potter, who is the Recreation Systems Manager, retired, from the Parks and Trails Division of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. And if I didn't have as much to say about the last three witnesses, it is only because you don't live in Utah, so I don't care.

But when we do start, I would like you to just come up to the front, and we will start in that particular process.

Do you have anything else about the witnesses who are here?

In all sincerity, even though we have a few minutes before the actual have to go for votes, it would not be wise to start the testimony right now. I would rather have it when we have a chance to come back here. So like I say, I apologize for this. This is not the way we like to run things, but this happens sometimes when we schedule an afternoon Committee hearing. But we are still looking forward, for the record, to receive your comments as we try and come to a better understanding of how we can improve what we are doing, and especially how local government can help improve what we are doing. So I appreciate that.

With that, the Committee will stand in recess until such time as we return, and once again giving you a rough estimate, a half hour, 45 minutes, in that timeframe. Thank you. We are in recess.

[Recess.]

Mr. BISHOP. We appreciate your kindness and your patience in waiting for us to come back here. We are about to start the testimony. Your written testimony is part of the record, so we ask you to give your oral remarks here and confine them to 5 minutes.

For those of you who have never been here before, that is the timing machine there. It starts with the color green. As soon as it is yellow, talk really fast, and finish when it goes red, and everyone will be happy.

But we do want to express our appreciation for you coming the distances you have and for the testimony that you are about to give.

So we will start, if possible—we tried to introduce everyone earlier—with Lynn Jackson, who is the county council Vice Chair, I believe, in Grand County. And pull that thing right up to your face. Make sure you can be heard.

**STATEMENT OF A. LYNN JACKSON, GRAND COUNTY COUNCIL,
GRAND COUNTY, UTAH**

Mr. JACKSON. Good afternoon, honorable members of the Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation. My name is Lynn Jackson, and I am an elected official of Grand County Council in Grand County, Utah. It is my honor to speak to you today.

Grand County is a rural county in southeast Utah, 2.4 million acres in size, with a population of 9,300. We are home to Arches National Park and Dead Horse Point State Park. Seventy-three percent of Grand County is federally owned, with 66 percent of that ownership belonging to the Bureau of Land Management. Only 6 percent of our county is private land.

I would like to speak to you briefly today about three topics. First are some observations regarding current demographics and economics focused around the recreation industry in Grand County and a few of the challenges that our recreation economy presents.

Second, I will speak briefly about the Sand Flats Recreation Area located adjacent to the city of Moab, which is Grand County seat, which demonstrates the counties can successfully manage Federal resources in partnership with the Federal Government.

And third, I would like to speak briefly about the challenges Grand County and other western rural counties face with the impact of significant Federal land ownership and our support for Congressman Bishop's public lands bill and the process that engenders.

First of all, Grand County has, as I said, 9,300 residents, but we host 2 million-plus visitors per year. The recreation industry has certainly created businesses and jobs in our county; however, 35 percent of the jobs are in the hospitality/leisure service sector and pay an average monthly wage of \$1,450. These jobs are seasonal and seldom provide benefits, although many of the larger recreation businesses in our county are addressing that issue. Suffice it to say one cannot raise a family or buy homes on those wages.

Additionally, in light of the level of visitation to our area, one of the challenges for our local government is to finance the supplemental capacity needed for things such as water and sewer services, landfills and waste handling, public safety, in our case par-

ticularly related to search and rescue and emergency medical services.

Our recreation tourism economy has many benefits, and Grand County and Moab are grateful to have that economy, but we would also like the ability and the capacity to develop other natural resource industries in our county and diversify our economy. Sound financial planning, whether personal or public, does not recommend putting your entire long-term investments into one account.

I would also make a quick observation regarding PILT funding from a high-recreation, high-public-lands county perspective. That observation seems to be a great disconnect between the value of public lands on one hand. The Outdoor Industry Association has provided evidence that their industry provides \$646 billion a year into our economy, yet last year PILT payments in Grand County from the Federal Government amounted to 75 cents an acre. They will be 65 cents an acre. So if the President or other special-interest groups feel the need to designate public lands in ways that preclude other forms of natural resource use and development, then perhaps rural counties need to be more equitably compensated in the PILT system to more accurately reflect the value of these Federal lands to the recreation industry.

Speaking to Sand Flats, Sand Flats Recreation Area is a cooperative federally owned partnership formed in 1995 between the BLM and Grand County for management of the 9,000-acre Sand Flats area located adjacent to Moab. The lands remain in Federal ownership, but the management agreement allows Grand County to fully manage the recreation area by collecting and utilizing entrance fees to provide staffing, equipment, and other necessary infrastructure to manage the motorized, nonmotorized, and camping uses.

The recreation area receives approximately 100,000 visitors per year and generates approximately \$300,000 a year in revenues. The partnership provides an excellent model that demonstrates local governments can manage Federal lands. And there are likely many more areas on public lands where this model can be successfully employed, and I would suggest that it does not necessarily need to be limited to recreation.

Last, the recent special-interest group proposal for designation of the 1.4 million-acre Greater Canyonlands National Monument, with 150,000 of those acres in Grand County, is an example of the negative challenges western rural counties face in areas of significant Federal land ownership. There was no discussion. There was no involvement with local or State elected officials by the supporters of this designation. The Presidential Antiquities Act designations are a counterproductive process to establish long-term designations for Federal lands.

I am trying to hurry here.

In the case of the proposed Greater Canyonlands Monument, it would preclude other forms of use, significantly damaging Grand County's abilities to diversify our economy. The elected officials of Grand County are on record with the President with our opposition to the creation of this monument, and we strongly support and endorse Congressman Bishop's efforts to develop consensus legislation for the long-term use of these lands.

Thank you.
Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. You could have left the last sentence out of there.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Jackson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF A. LYNN JACKSON, GRAND COUNTY COUNCIL, GRAND COUNTY, UTAH

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

My name is Lynn Jackson. I am a County Councilman in Grand County, Utah. I worked as a geologist and manager for the Bureau of Land Management in Moab and southeastern Utah for 32 years, before retiring in July of 2010. I have been a county councilman for 6 months, elected to the position in November 2012. My experience in public land management and 31 years living in Moab gives me a detailed understanding of the issues facing Grand County, and in particular, those involving public lands.

The following testimony will discuss:

- (1) Demographics and economics focused around the recreation industry and Grand County in particular. My discussion will demonstrate that while there are many positive aspects to a recreation only economy, there are also negative issues and challenges,
- (2) Grand County's cooperative management program with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) at the Sand Flats Recreation Area (SFRA) located adjacent to the town of Moab. The discussion will show the ability of local governments to manage public lands, and
- (3) Challenges in Grand County, and other western rural counties associated with negative impacts of significant land ownership by the Federal Government, the negative results of 1906 Antiquities national monument designations, and an endorsement for the proposed public lands legislation proposed by Congressman Bishop.

1. CURRENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMICS FOCUSED AROUND THE RECREATION INDUSTRY IN GRAND COUNTY

Grand County is rural, with 2.4 million acres (approximately 3,300 square miles), and a population of 9,300. The county seat is located in the town of Moab, Utah, with roughly 90 percent of the county's population residing within the incorporated and unincorporated sections of Moab. 73 percent of the county is owned by the Federal Government, 17 percent is owned by the State of Utah, 4 percent are American Indian tribal lands, and 6 percent is privately held. The Bureau of Land Management manages 66 percent of the Federal land in Grand County. The National Park Service and the National Forest Service manage approximately 5 percent collectively.

From the early 1950s through the mid-1980s, the economy of Moab and Grand County was primarily based on one industry, uranium mining and milling. When the worldwide collapse of the uranium market occurred in the mid-1980s, after the accident at Three Mile Island, Moab struggled with a significant loss of jobs, businesses and population. With a focused agenda, hard work, and collective efforts of community leaders in the late 1980s, Moab focused on building a recreation economy. Taking advantage of our outstanding scenery, our adjacent national parks (Arches and Canyonlands), and our backcountry roads (built from mining and mineral development), that allow our visitors to see our back country, we have now built ourselves into a leader in the outdoor recreation industry. Moab and Grand County are known far and wide for our array of outstanding motorized, non-motorized and river recreation opportunities.

Recently there have been multiple articles and publications heralding the value of the recreation industry throughout our country and, indeed, the world. In the April 2013 edition of Smithsonian magazine, the editor indicates that "Tourism has become one of the most powerful, most influential and least-examined forces in the world. It produces \$6.5 trillion of the global economy and employs one out of every 12 people on earth." In 2012, the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) published a booklet entitled "The Outdoor Recreation Economy." In that publication OIA indicates outdoor recreation generates \$646 billion a year in the U.S. economy and generates 6.1 million American jobs.

This is all very positive for local, regional and national economies. However, the messages in these articles touting the economic benefits of the new recreation econ-

omy typically focus only on the number of new businesses and jobs created. They seldom discuss the nature of a significant portion of the jobs that are created, the service sector jobs. Many of the new recreation industry jobs result in personal prosperity, for the owners and shareholders in equipment manufacturing businesses, lodging and restaurant owners, tour company owners, retail business owners, etc. However jobs created in the service sector to support the recreation industry, the waiters, cooks, guides, maids, etc., do not share in this prosperity. Service sector jobs typically pay minimal wages, seldom have any benefits such as health or life insurance, and are most often seasonal. Perhaps information presented in the table below, regarding Grand County's economy would help illustrate the recreation/tourism industry in a more broad assessment.

Grand County Utah Job Assessment
(data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010)

	Job Sector	Total Employment (percent)	Average Monthly Wage
Service Related	Trade, transportation and utilities	19.0	\$2,270
	Information	0.7	\$2,515
	Financial activities	3.6	\$2,303
	Professional and business services	4.9	\$2,600
	Education and health services	6.4	\$2,760
	Leisure and hospitality	35.3	\$1,445
	Other	1.3	\$2,510
Total Service Related		71.2	\$1,935
Non-Service Related	Natural resources and mining	2.5	\$4,995
	Construction	5.4	\$2,985
	Manufacturing	0.6	\$2,220
Non-Service Related Total		8.5	\$3,520
Government	Federal	5.5	\$4,195
	State	1.7	\$3,825
	Local (county/city)	13.0	\$2,460
Government Total		20.3	\$3,025

I believe the recreation industry, at least in Grand County, is aware of this disparity of economic benefits and are doing everything they can to address this issue. But when 35 percent of Grand County's jobs pay \$1,445 per month, there is clearly a long way to go. So does the recreation industry create jobs and businesses? Yes, but not all are created equally.

Another often misleading data set referred to in touting the economic benefits of the new recreation economy is gain in personal income. Data over time for Grand County clearly indicate an increase in personal income, ostensibly derived from our recreation/tourism focus. This data, I believe, is most notably presented by recreation economy advocates pushing the new "amenities" economy of the American southwest. An amenities economy where people of affluence and means move to rural settings with their accumulated assets, often able to conduct their business from the Internet, or to retire or build vacation homes. A need is often cited that to build or sustain an amenities economy requires areas of limited congestion, clear skies and access to recreational amenities that are to be protected above all other uses of the land.

Data from Grand County show a relatively high level of personal income gain over the past four decades. But again, a deeper look indicates personal income is high because of the residents that move in for the amenities economy or to create tourism related businesses. A significant portion of the income these residents have is tracked by economists as non-labor income, consisting of dividends, pensions, interest payments, etc. Data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis shows that in 1970 labor earnings in Grand County were 85 percent of total personal income and non-labor income was 15 percent. By 2009 these numbers shifted dramatically to 53 percent labor income and 47 percent non-labor income. So the assertion is that building a recreation economy will result in a higher personal income for residents. A recreation/amenities economy certainly provides wealth to a community, but not nec-

essarily for the local non-skilled labor workforce who work in the service sector. Their personal income has typically not risen.

The message I would emphasize from the above discussion is that if a community or county has the resources to diversify their economic portfolio, they should do so. They should be allowed to do so. Not all facets of a recreation economy area as positive as proponents would have one believe. While Grand County and its residents are happy to have the assets to support a strong recreation economy, a more diverse economy would likely result in more opportunity for non-skilled labor to work in other industries. To work in jobs that pay more than an average of \$1,445 per month, and provide for year round employment and benefits. In a landscape as large as Grand County's there is room to accommodate multiple forms of resource development in addition to recreation, without unduly impacting our recreation asset base.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS OF A RECREATION ECONOMY

Increased Infrastructural Requirements

There are additional concerns with recreation only economies in providing infrastructure not only for residents, but also the tourists coming to enjoy the recreational assets. Grand County has 9,300 residents and 2 million visitors per year. Recreational visitors have many of the same types of needs for infrastructure as residents. Increased infrastructural needs due to tourism include:

- Enhanced water distribution systems
- Enhanced solid waste handling and disposal systems
- Enhanced sewage and human waste treatment systems
- Enhanced search and rescue and law enforcement teams
- Enhanced emergency medical services

Property Tax Issues

Most rural communities and counties pay for resident infrastructure primarily with property taxes. These taxes pay for schools, hospitals, libraries, public buildings, police, fire, sewage, water distribution, roads, etc. Recreation-only economies do not necessarily bring in large numbers of permanent residents buying property and building homes. Grand County has 9,300 residents, but hosts 2 million visitors a year. People come to visit and recreate, not to move here. While Grand County's population has grown 16 percent in the past 30 years, this growth has been marginal when compared to other areas with more economic diversity. New business owners typically buy or build homes, but people relying on seasonal, service industry jobs often cannot afford to buy homes. So in Grand County, our ability to utilize property tax to pay for infrastructure is limited without raising property taxes substantially and perhaps unduly.

As such, we have to rely on sales tax from lodging, food, transportation, and retail sales to meet these extraneous needs for infrastructure and services. We hope the price of worldwide mineral commodity, gasoline, stays low, because any increase in the price of a gallon of gasoline concerns us. At what price does gasoline have to rise before tourists start traveling less? And if a recreation economy occurs in an area like Moab, which isn't near any urban areas, and requires substantial travel to get to, the price of gasoline is even more concern.

Moab learned a lesson from our first one industry economy, which was dependent on a mineral commodity price beyond our control—uranium. That lesson was, don't rely on one industry. If something happens to dramatically impact worldwide oil prices, our area and its economy and residents are in for a rough time. Our goal in Grand County, the goal of the majority of our residents, our elected officials, and the majority of our business owners, is to diversify our economy before we may have to face another economic crisis.

PILT Funding (Payments In Lieu of Taxes)

The outdoor recreation industry has developed data indicating a nationwide \$646 billion dollar a year industry. There is no question of the importance of the recreation industry to our national and local economies. It seems plausible to assume much of this economic activity is derived from the desire of recreationists to utilize public lands for experiences associated with camping, rafting, biking, hiking, jeeping and four wheeling, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, etc.

In contrast, the amount the Federal Government reimburses local counties for the public lands in a county, lands that cannot be used by the County to increase property tax base, are pennies on the acre. In Grand County, our recent PILT payments are \$.75 per acre on the 1.7 million acres of Federal land in our country. On lands that ostensibly play such an important role in generating billions of dollars in econ-

omy; the Federal Government pays us 75 cents per acre. There seems to be a significant disconnect in the value of these lands.

If Congress, the President, or special interest groups want to designate public lands in ways that preclude other forms of natural resource development, then perhaps rural counties need to be more fairly compensated for the lands set aside for such recreational purposes. These values need to be more in line with the values generated in the recreation industry as a direct result of use of these lands. This would deliver the needed revenue to local governments to provide for the infrastructural needs of its residents and recreational visitors.

2. GRAND COUNTY'S COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM WITH THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM) AT THE SAND FLATS RECREATION AREA (SFRA) ADJACENT TO THE TOWN OF MOAB

As a result of this successful cooperative management partnership, Sand Flats is recognized as a local, national, and international, recreation destination due to its combination of recreation opportunities, scenic values and exemplary management. It provides a successful working model for collaborative land management partnerships between Federal and local governments. It clearly demonstrates that a county can manage Federal lands when the revenue producing financial resources are allowed to be collected and utilized by the local management entity.

The Sand Flats Recreation Area (SFRA) is a county-Federal partnership created to manage a high-use recreation area just outside of Moab. The partnership was created in 1995 between the Bureau of Land Management and Grand County, to allow enhanced on-the-ground daily management of the recreation use. This use had been increasing at an alarming rate and was resulting in overcrowding, user conflict, vandalism and resource degradation. Section 307 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 provides the BLM with the authority to enter into these types of cooperative agreements with local governments.

Even though the land is owned by the BLM and State of Utah, the recreation area is managed by Grand County. Fees charged for use of the recreation area pay for that management. The agreement provides for a Sand Flats Cooperative Management Team, composed of representatives of BLM and the Grand County Council, which is advised by a five member Sand Flats Stewardship Committee consisting of community members and representatives of the user groups in the area.

The recreation area focus is on non-motorized and motorized recreation and camping. The area was made famous by the Slickrock mountain bike trail in the early 1990s. The SFRA completed its seventeenth year of operation and 15th year of self-sustained operation in 2012.

- Total fees collected and grants: \$329,152
- Total expenditures: \$305,521
- Carry over fund for operation in the 2013 season approximately \$102,000
- Estimated total visitation: 97,720 persons

Services provided by the SFRA include:

- Staffing entrance booth spring through fall
- Perform daily patrols of the recreation area
- Maintain trails and trailheads
- Schedule and complete general maintenance of all campsites
- Pump, clean and stock toilets and provide trash removal
- Maintain information kiosks and replace vandalized, worn or deteriorated facilities
- Provide brochures and maps to visitors and up-to-date web site information on Sand Flats area
- Present accurate interpretive information to visitors and community members
- Provide volunteer opportunities to our visitors and members of the community
- Provide employment for high school apprentices, seasonal workers and year round staff

The Sand Flats partnership provides a successful model that could be used throughout the Western States on public lands, and could be expanded to management of other types of natural resources beyond recreation. The primary key in the model is that revenues generated from the resource managed must be collected and managed by the local entity. Without that stipulation it would not work.

3. CHALLENGES IN GRAND COUNTY, AND OTHER WESTERN RURAL COUNTIES, ASSOCIATED WITH THE IMPACT OF SIGNIFICANT LAND OWNERSHIP BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

If a community is surrounded by Federal lands, as many rural, western communities are, there are an array of challenges presented and a necessity to work with Federal officials and organizations from distant areas. Often Federal management is at odds with solutions that would work best for a local population. And often, national special-interest groups have completely different ideas about how these Federal lands should be managed. These external ideas often directly affect a local economy, and often these effects are adverse.

In southeastern Utah, the recent proposal by the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) and a consortium of wilderness organizations for creation of the greater Canyonlands National Monument (utilizing Presidential authority of the 1906 Antiquities Act), will have significant impact on our economy. 150,000 acres of the proposed 1.4 million acre monument are located in Grand County. There were no conversations with any elected officials in any of the counties involved in this proposal prior to the submission to the President. None whatsoever.

The monument proposal literally came out of nowhere, replete with an array of easily refutable misinformation about the need for protection from mineral development. Although OIA and the environmental organizations tout signatures by an array of business supporting this proposal, a review of those businesses indicate they do not represent a very broad array of local business. The signatories consisting primarily of national outdoor equipment manufacturers and retailers (about half of the 100 signatures), non-motorized recreation tour operators (about 25 to 30 signatures) and a smattering of other businesses.

This certainly does not represent a cross section of businesses in Moab that benefit from the recreation industry such as motorized sport rental and tour groups, restaurants and lodging establishments, and retail stores, or even the Chamber of Commerce. In Grand County, many businesses thrive not only from the recreation industry, but from all other types of industry we have been able to bring to the area. So those considering this proposal need to be aware that all the businesses in Grand County are not clamoring for this monument. Many see it as potentially harmful to their businesses in the long-term by limiting our areas ability to diversify our economy, and by limiting motorized recreation in an area that forms the primary area for use of this type of recreation.

Also, contrary to assertions by the proponents of this monument, that this will be a panacea for the region's economy, it will likely have negative impacts to the motorized recreation business and devastating effects on other forms of natural resource development in Grand County. A significant portion of our recreation economy is driven by motorized recreation. Although proponents of the monument refute this, the inevitable evolution of management in a national monument leads to more and more restrictions on the use of motorized vehicles. Additionally, Moab, unlike other rural southern Utah towns, is not likely to see any marked increase in tourism as a result of a monument. Moab already has a recreation "brand". Designation of a new national monument is very unlikely to play any role in advancing this "brand".

The monument would occur in an area of Grand County that has a relatively modest, but locally important, potential for development of several dozen productive oil and gas wells and the potential development of additional potash resources. With an annual county budget of approximately \$20-25 million dollars in Grand County, mineral revenues from a few dozen of oil wells and a new potash mine would be significant. Right now the single largest tax payer in Grand County is an existing potash mine on private and State lands that generates over \$1 million dollars per year in property taxes. The mine has been in operation for over 60 years, and the increase in tourism on lands surrounding this mine has exploded. The 1,000 acre mine site has not destroyed the recreation experience for people coming to our area. Oil and gas wells have been drilled in this area since the early 1990s. Again, this does not seem to have affected our tourism industry. Recreationists keep coming.

Our county, and our surrounding counties, are fully on board and endorse Congressman Bishop's proposal for collaborative legislation to address the long-term allocation of Federal lands and resources in southeast Utah. This is absolutely how a process with such serious long-term consequences should be undertaken, with all stakeholders at the table, in the spirit of cooperation and a willingness to negotiate. Our counties have a vested interest in the lands within our borders. Our citizens have a vested interest also. This area of southeastern Utah has been settled and developed for 150 years and the land has not been destroyed. It certainly is not on the verge of some fictitious development frenzy that will result in its destruction

and the loss of our recreation/tourism industry. Our landscape is large and there is ample room to accommodate the use and development of all our natural resources when intelligent, caring, common sense people work together in the spirit of cooperation and negotiation.

The proposed national monument would result in our economy becoming completely reliant on a single resource, the way it was up until the uranium industry disappeared in the early 1980s. Is tourism and recreation more sustainable than the mineral/commodity industry? Can it avoid boom and bust cycles? Perhaps. For Grand County, designation of this national monument and foreclosure of other revenue generating natural resource bases would once again put us at the mercy of a worldwide commodity we have absolutely no control over, the price of a barrel of oil.

SUMMARY

A recreation economy is a great thing, but it is not a perfect solution if it is the only economic engine available to provide jobs and infrastructure revenue. Any rural community or county should look to diversify its economic base with whatever array of resources it has available. The farther away from urban population centers and the more difficult the area is to access, the more tenuous a recreation economy becomes when gasoline prices start to rise. In addition to all the personal wealth a recreation economy increases, and all the new businesses and jobs it generates, we cannot lose sight of the fact that a significant portion of the jobs, the service sector jobs, are substandard by most measures of economic prosperity. A rapidly increasing tourism economy also puts strains on the ability of local governments to provide the necessary infrastructure for visitors.

Collaborative management partnerships with the Federal Government can be highly successful, and give local governments a direct decisionmaking and revenue generating capacity, if done correctly. The Grand County experience at the Sand Flats Recreation Area could serve as a model for many additional opportunities across the west, in areas with a high percentage of federally owned lands. There is no reason to believe this model should only apply to recreation management. It could conceivably be applied to an array of natural resource management scenarios. Counties and states can sustainably, rationally and intelligently manage Federal lands within their boundaries.

Proposed restrictive designations of Federal lands by special interest groups, who represent the minority of citizens, utilizing Presidential powers of the oft-misused provisions of the 1906 Antiquities Act is a poor way of decisionmaking. It does nothing but create distrust, anger and resentment for all other stakeholders with vested interest in those lands. The best decisionmaking scenarios for public lands involve collaborative partnerships and participation, involving all stakeholders, and particularly that of local citizens and their elected leaders. Local populations have much invested in their communities and the lands that surround them. Contrary to popular belief by some, they are not likely to destroy their backyards, or the resources that provide for sustainable and diverse economies in their towns and cities.

Congressman Bishop's proposed southeastern Utah public lands bill legislation is the correct way to proceed with matters and decisions of such far reaching consequences for southeastern Utah residents.

Mr. BISHOP. Ms. Korenblat, we will turn to you. The same concept there. When you see it go yellow, as George Radanovich said, it is like when you are driving, speed up really fast. Thank you. We will recognize you for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF ASHLEY KORENBLAT, WESTERN SPIRIT CYCLING ADVENTURES

Ms. KORENBLAT. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My company, Western Spirit Cycling, is an outfitter that provides multiday road and mountain bike trips on public lands throughout the country. We are one of the largest holders of special use permits on the public lands system.

I am a member of the Outdoor Industry Association, and I am a past president of the International Mountain Bicycling Association. More recently I represented the mountain bike community in

over 30 different public lands bills and proposals, and that work led to the creation of public lands solutions.

So the good news about making a living off the land is that traditionally making a living off the land required resource extraction. Today many communities have shown that it is also possible to make a living on our public lands in a sustainable way through a vibrant recreation economy.

Back when the recreation economy began, many hikers, mountain bikers, climbers, and river runners came to town with one pair of shorts and one \$20 bill, and they didn't change either the whole week. Those days are over. The recreation community has not only grown, but it has grown up.

The Outdoor Industry Association reports that the outdoor industry contributes \$646 billion to the U.S. economy, surpassing both pharmaceuticals and oil and gas. The outdoor industry provides 6.1 million jobs, many of which are in rural communities located close to public lands.

People continue to value the quality of life that outdoor recreation brings. As more and more of these quality-of-life recruits choose to live in outdoor-focused communities, they also continue to expand their local economies beyond tourism through the need for additional professionals, from healthcare providers to accountants, which, in turn, create higher-paying nonseasonal jobs of all types for the people who live there.

The bad news. The threat to these exciting developments lies in the public land management system itself. Historically the system favors resource extraction. This made sense when it was in everyone's interest to facilitate and encourage resource extraction above all other uses. But in the 21st century we have learned that the consumption of these resources sometimes causes more problems than it solves.

One of these problems is the serious degradation of recreation assets upon which many communities have come to depend, and on which businesses have invested. While the land managers of all the agencies do work very hard to sort out these issues, they are often limited by inadequate funding and outdated laws and regulations.

While we all need energy and the associated jobs, the current system often allows extractive use without regard for other local and regional resources with value, economic and otherwise.

Land protection is often perceived as a loss of access; however, it does not have to be. Congress has frequently crafted land designations to accommodate the unique needs of a given landscape. When done through a well-constructed community process, legislation can allow for appropriate resource development while preserving important recreational experiences.

Optimization is the answer. We need to shift the debate away from the either/or choice of access or protection and work toward optimization. While local residents are lucky enough to live there, public lands belong to all Americans. Successful land bills that optimize multiple use on public lands come from the blood, sweat, and tears of the locals alongside the judicious advice of experienced regional and local organizations like IMBA. Success always requires compromise. Well-crafted bills involve locals who have dug deep to compromise with their neighbors and fellow citizens to find

a way to optimize the landscape and meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Legislation created with robust public involvement is the best tool for optimizing our landscapes and permanently updating the management systems. Legislation can provide critical assurances to all types of public investors, yet public land legislation has been rare in recent years.

Many of us who live in communities that depend on public lands have come together to create well-thought-out, practical compromises that optimize our treasured landscapes and bring great benefits to our lives and the lives of all Americans. We are counting on you, our elected officials, to pass these bills and allow us to implement these much-needed improvements in the management and stewardship of our well-loved public lands.

Thank you.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Korenblat follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ASHLEY KORENBLAT, WESTERN SPIRIT CYCLING
ADVENTURES

PUBLIC LAND SOLUTIONS

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. My company Western Spirit Cycling is an outfitter that provides multi-day road and mountain bike trips on public lands throughout the country. We are one of the largest holders of recreation permits in the public land system and work in over 50 different Forest Service Ranger Districts, BLM Resource Areas, and State and National Parks. My company is a member of the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) and I am a past president of the International Mountain Bicycling Association. In my capacity with IMBA, I worked with all of the Federal public land agencies to create Memorandums of Understanding focused on collaborative recreation management. More recently I represented the mountain bike industry on over 30 different public land bills and proposals. This work led to the creation of Public Land Solutions, a non-profit organization, dedicated to providing comprehensive recreation planning and stakeholder coordination to support effective and sustainable public land solutions.

This testimony underscores the need to promote and protect recreation on public lands as a critical, growing, and sustainable economic driver for communities across the country.

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT MAKING A LIVING OFF THE LAND

Traditionally, making a living off the land required resource extraction through logging, mining or drilling. Today, many communities have shown that it is also possible to make a living on our public lands in a sustainable way through a vibrant recreation economy. Back when the recreation economy began, many hikers, mountain bikers, climbers, and river runners came to town with one pair of shorts and one \$20 bill and didn't change either all week. Those days are over. The recreation community has not only grown, but it has also grown up.

The Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) reports that the outdoor industry contributes \$646 billion dollars annually to the U.S. economy, surpassing both the pharmaceutical and oil and gas sectors, and provides 6.1 million jobs, many of which are in rural communities located close to public lands.

As outdoor recreation has become more mainstream, outdoor vacationers are hiring guides and outfitters, renting hotel rooms, going out to eat, purchasing merchandise from local shops, and using the nearby town's amenities. In addition, the recreation economy does not just create jobs in the service industry, it creates a tiered hierarchy of skilled professional jobs in both the communities near where recreation occurs and where the gear is manufactured, marketed and sold.

Additionally, the Internet Age, has enabled people to live wherever they want, and more and more of them are choosing communities close to public lands who have invested in high quality recreation opportunities. For example, the Mayor of Hood River, Oregon, which is a small town rich in recreation assets from the river to the mountains, told me that a subsidiary of Boeing had just relocated 300 engineers to Hood River because that is where the engineers want to live.

Examples abound of powerful recreation investments. Consider Dead Horse Point State Park in Utah. The Intrepid Potash Company donated \$20,000 for the construction of a 9-mile mountain bike trail at the park. These funds were matched by a second \$20,000 from Utah State Parks, and in two short years, revenue from the park went from around \$400,000 annually to nearly \$800,000. Making this park a net contributor to the State Parks System.

And in Wyoming, at Curt Gowdy State Park, a trail project was started in 2006 when there were about 55,000 annual visitors. By 2011 there were 117,000 annual visitors, and the trails are the only major change during this period. Revenue generation at the park doubled from 2006—2011 and the projected economic impact on the surrounding region has also doubled from an estimated \$3,000,000 in 2009 to \$6,000,000 in 2012. Several shops in Cheyenne have changed their business models and expanded to account for the impact from trail use, and almost every residence that has sold near the park has cited the property's proximity to the trails as a major selling point.

People continue to value the quality of life that outdoor recreation brings. In cities and towns near public lands, the air and water are clean and the great outdoors is easily accessible. As more and more of these quality-of-life recruits choose to live in outdoor focused communities, they also continue to expand their local economies beyond tourism, through the need for additional professionals from healthcare providers to accountants, which in turn create higher paying non-seasonal jobs of all types for the people who live there.

THE BAD NEWS IS LURKING WITHIN THE PUBLIC LAND SYSTEM ITSELF

The threat to these exciting developments lies in the public land management system. Historically the system favors resource extraction. This made sense when it was in everyone's interest to facilitate and encourage resource extraction above all other uses. But in the 21st century we have learned that the consumption of these resources from the earth, can cause more problems that it solves.

One of these problems is the serious degradation of recreation assets upon which many communities have come to depend and on which businesses have invested. While the land managers at all the agencies work hard to sort out these issues, they are often limited by inadequate funding, outdated laws and regulations, and poor or absent inter-department coordination. For example, my company has a permit on the Kokopelli Trail near Grand Junction, Colorado, and technically the BLM does not even have an obligation to contact me if they issue a drilling permit in one of my campsites along the trail. The BLM should be required to notify my company as a permit-holder if they intend or anticipate any change in use.

While we need energy development and the associated jobs, the current system often allows drilling without regard for other local and regional resources with value, economic and otherwise. For example at Dead Horse State Park, the same place where the trails have been such a success, campers at this iconic location can actually hear the drone of oil and gas rigs from their tents. Will campers return year after year to this campsite? Was it absolutely necessary to drill a well right next to the State park campground?

Land protection is often perceived as a loss of access. However, it does not have to be. Congress has frequently crafted land designations to accommodate the unique needs of a given landscape. When done through a well-constructed community process, legislation can allow for appropriate resource development while preserving important recreational experiences.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act embodies many characteristics worthy of emulation in management for recreation landscapes. Wild and Scenic designation involves identification of the experiential values worthy of protection on a segment of river. Designation then ensures that those values are protected and enhanced through appropriate management planning and administration. Other uses may be allowed and are generally only restricted if they substantially interfere with the values that lead to designation. A similar legislative designation for recreation—constructed by all stakeholders—could assist with the optimization of the landscape.

OPTIMIZATION IS THE ANSWER

We need to shift the debate away from the either/or choice of access or protection and work toward optimization. While local residents are lucky enough to live there, public lands belong to all Americans. Successful land bills that optimize multiple uses on public lands come from the blood, sweat, and tears of the locals along side the judicious advice of experienced regional and local organizations, like IMBA. Success always requires compromise. Well-crafted bills involve locals who have dug deep to compromise with their neighbors and fellow citizens—from BASE jumpers

to cow punchers to oil and gas companies to wildlife biologists—to find a way to optimize the landscape and meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Legislation created with robust public involvement is the best tool for optimizing our landscapes and permanently updating management plans. Legislation can provide critical assurances to all type of public investors. Yet, public land legislation has been extremely rare in recent years; the last Congress was the first in over 50 years to not pass a single public lands bill. And meanwhile, the Obama Administration leased 6.3 million acres for oil and gas, which is over double what it protected for conservation or recreation.

Many of us who live in communities that depend on public lands have come together to create well thought out, practical compromises that optimize our treasured landscapes and bring great benefits to our lives and the lives of all Americans. We are counting on you, our representatives, to pass these bills, and allow us to implement these much needed improvements in the management and stewardship of our well loved public lands.

Mr. BISHOP. I will now turn to Mr. Martin, I believe, from Idaho, correct? You are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF GREG MARTIN, WOOD RIVER BICYCLE
COALITION**

Mr. MARTIN. That is correct.

Thank you, Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Horsford, and distinguished members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today. It is an honor and a privilege to speak with you on issues that are so critical to the development of our Nation's outdoor economy.

I am Greg Martin, and as my day job, I am a full-time firefighter for the city of Ketchum, Idaho. However, I sit before you today in my capacity on the board of directors of the Wood River Bicycle Coalition, a chapter of the International Mountain Bicycling Association. In addition to WRBC and IMBA, I also serve as the Wood River Trails Coordinator for the Blaine County Recreation District.

The Sun Valley area of Idaho has long been recognized as a destination for downhill skiing and winter sports enthusiasts. In recent years we have seen a significant increase in summer tourist visits to the area. Local businesses are generating revenue year round. Hotels, restaurants, shops, and outfitters are thriving. In fact, in 2012, our trail system had 725,000 user visits, while all skier days were around 400,000.

Tourists come from across the country in search of these high-quality trail and outdoor experiences. Creating the experiences of this caliber requires deliberate trail planning, which necessitates calculated collaboration between the local government, Federal land management agencies, local industry, and the recreation community.

Land management agencies commit a considerable amount of time and resources to forest and resource planning and travel management; however, there is little guidance on how to plan a trail system that interacts with the landscape or is managed to provide a specific experience.

Significant quantities of the trails currently in use on Federal public lands were not designed or constructed to be sustainable recreation trails. They were developed as temporary extraction roads, firebreaks, hunting routes, or game trails that have been repurposed as long-term public access routes. A purposefully designed trail system is light on the land, showcases the landscape,

steers visitors away from sensitive areas, and provides a broad range of experiences.

WRBC has been able to build strong partnerships with land managers through our volunteer trail work program and other trail projects that we undertake. Since 2010, WRBC has donated over 1,000 hours of volunteer trail labor on our local trail system and invested nearly \$50,000 in trail projects and equipment in our area.

Through my position as the Wood River Trails Coordinator with the Blaine County Recreation District, I have the opportunity to work with land managers from Blaine County, the State of Idaho, BLM, and two districts of the Sawtooth National Forest. Our local trail system crosses through lands managed by all of these entities. Our goal is to provide a consistent experience for trail users across this patchwork of land ownership and management.

Land management designations can contribute to the patchwork if they are not developed with a broad range of stakeholders and consideration of the trails on the landscape. Where they had been developed collaboratively, designations have protected both the landscape and its recreation experiences. The local collaborative process is essential to ensure broad community support.

In the Wood River Valley of Idaho, there are two projects under way that showcase the U.S. Forest Service working to meet the experiential needs of mountain bikers. The first is the approval of a trails plan for Bald Mountain that will provide lift-accessible trails for riders looking for a downhill experience. Lift-serviced mountain biking opportunities make use of existing infrastructure and help provide year-round support for local businesses that frequently struggle when tourists leave at the end of the ski season.

The second project is the Galena Summer Trails Project. This project will add much-needed beginner and entry-level trails to the existing trail system that is mostly advanced and expert level. Mountain biking is one of the outdoor activities included in the Galena Lodge's youth program, but the lack of suitable trails for beginning mountain bicyclists at the lodge makes putting on quality youth mountain bike programs challenging. Providing outdoor experiences for kids helps support healthy life habits and can encourage a profound appreciation of nature.

Mountain biking is an ever-growing means of exploration and excitement. Collaborative efforts by the Forest Service, BLM, Blaine County, local mountain bike and trail enthusiasts, and Sun Valley Company are developing the recreation assets necessary to ensure a healthy outdoor recreation and tourism economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony, and I look forward to any questions. Thank you.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. I appreciate that.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Martin follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GREG MARTIN, WOOD RIVER BICYCLE COALITION

Thank you Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and distinguished members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today. It is an honor and a privilege to speak with you on issues that are so critical to the development of our Nation's outdoor economy.

I am Greg Martin and as my day job, I am a full-time firefighter for the city of Ketchum, Idaho. However, I sit before you today in my capacity on the Board of Di-

rectors of the Wood River Bicycle Coalition (WRBC). WRBC is a Chapter of the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) and an organization for which I served voluntarily as the Director from 2010–2012.

In addition to the WRBC and IMBA, I also serve as the Wood River Trails Coordinator for the Blaine County Recreation District. I like to believe there is no one in the Wood River Valley who is more passionate and active in developing and maintaining trail recreation opportunities.

The Sun Valley area of Idaho has long been recognized as a destination for downhill skiing and winter sports enthusiasts. In recent years, word has spread that recreation opportunities in the Wood River Valley are pretty incredible even after the snow melts. We have seen a significant increase in summer tourist visits to the area. Local businesses are generating revenue year-round; hotels, restaurants, shops and outfitters are thriving. In 2012 our trail system had 725,000 user visits while all skier days (alpine and Nordic) was 400,000.

High quality trail experiences for mountain bicycling and other trail user groups are a *critical* component of successful outdoor recreation destinations such as Sun Valley. It is in search of these unique outdoor experiences that tourists—and the associated economic benefits from their visit—travel to the area from outside the region. Creating these high quality experiences requires deliberate trail planning, which necessitates calculated collaboration between the local government, Federal land management agencies, local industry and the recreation community.

Land management agencies commit a considerable amount of resources to managing the entire landscape (Forest and Resource Planning) and they put substantial efforts into deciding which roads and trails can be used by motorized vehicles (Travel Management). However, it is rare that we see a deliberate effort to plan how a trail system interacts with the landscape or how uses are managed to provide a specific experience. Managing trails based on desired experiences, sustainable construction and maintenance, and suitability for the desired conditions of the area rather than simply by mode of travel would allow the agencies to actually manage a trail system rather than a spider web of legacy routes.

Significant quantities of the trails currently in use on Federal public lands were not designed or constructed to be sustainable recreation trails. They were developed as temporary extraction roads, firebreaks, hunting routes, or game trails and have been repurposed as long term public access routes. A purposefully designed trail system is light on the land, showcases the landscape, steers visitors away from sensitive areas, and provides a broad range of experiences.

By designing and developing trails that provide visitor experiences that are in demand, visitors will assist as volunteers, donors, partners, and advocates for those projects and possibly the larger mission of the Federal land management agencies.

Acknowledging the need for community involvement in the trail planning process, the WRBC was formed in 2008. WRBC has been able to build strong relationships with land managers through our volunteer trail work program and other trail projects that we undertake. Our goal is to always “over deliver” and proudly, I can say that we consistently achieve that goal. Since 2010, WRBC has donated over 1,000 hours of volunteer labor and invested nearly \$50,000 in trail projects and equipment in the area.

Through my position as the Wood River Trails Coordinator with the Blaine County Recreation District (BCRD), I have the opportunity to work with land managers from Blaine County, State of Idaho, BLM, and two districts of the Sawtooth National Forest (SNRA & KR). We work cooperatively to share resources and streamline our operations as much as possible. Many parts of our trail system in the Wood River Valley cross a “patchwork” of land ownership. Our goal is to provide a consistent experience for trail users and not have noticeable differences in how the various agencies care for their portion of the trail system.

However, because recreation trends outpace policy there is often a lack of clear guidance on how to effectively manage many recreational pursuits, particularly the subtle differences of the different disciplines within a given sport. Thus, without substantial coordination there is potential for land management prescriptions to become inconsistent and unpredictable.

Further complicating the process are the polarized stand offs between extractive use and pure conservation that often leads to recreational uses being overlooked during planning processes. Integrating consistent and thoughtful management of the ecological, social and economic value of recreation into the multiple use mandates and processes is crucial to ensuring the sustainability of outdoor recreation and providing an accessible connection to the outdoors.

Despite the challenges, we have seen improvements that lead us to believe the agencies may turn a corner. The Forest Service Planning Rule Directives hold substantial promise for recreation groups, including mountain bicyclists, that are will-

ing to engage and educate agency field officers about the places and experiences they want to enhance and protect.

Recent efforts by the BLM to gather comprehensive recreation use data and engage a multitude of stakeholders in the planning process have encouraged mountain bicyclists that our voice will be heard and opportunities will expand.

Legislative land management designations can also contribute to the “patchwork” if they are not developed through a collaborative process with a broad range of stakeholders. Where they have been developed collaboratively, legislative designations have protected both the landscape and the recreation experiences that it provides.

Some designations, such as Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers, have organic acts that set the framework for how all such areas will be managed. Other designations such as National Recreation Areas or National Conservation Areas, do not. Because of the lack of an organic act some advocates from the traditional conservation community and Members of Congress view them with suspicion, believing that loopholes will be discovered and allow for unintended uses.

The commands of these other legislative designations varies from detailed management prescriptions to slightly more directed versions of multiple use. While the majority of these designations include recreation as a purpose in their enabling legislation, relatively few are specifically targeted at protecting and enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities. Managing these places to preserve and enhance the recreation experience provides substantial benefits for local residents and make crucial contributions to local economies. They are a crucial component of the outdoor recreation landscape, yet they remain substantially under represented with regard to protection and management for the unique benefits they provide.

Recreation exists throughout the spectrum of land designations and management prescriptions. Many outdoor recreation experiences demand landscapes that are predominantly natural with little human influence. Others require more developed facilities that are designed to handle impacts and manage or mitigate impacts. Mountain biking in various forms has a presence across this spectrum as well.

From backcountry epic rides that expose one to their natural surroundings, to lift-serviced resort riding that provides endless thrills; mountain bicycling is an ever-growing means of exploration and excitement. Ensuring that the mountain bicycling experiences offered in a given landscape are consistent with the rest of the uses and desired conditions of that landscape requires well informed land management designations and deliberate trail planning that address mountain bicycling on it's own merits.

Collaboration can also lead to the development of pragmatic management tools that serve to enhance the recreation experience and protect resources. A great example of this is the creation and administration of the Trailink.org (<http://trailink.org>) Web site. This Web site was created as a place where trail users could come to find current trail information ranging from Spring trail reports to sheep herd locations throughout the season. The site was created and is maintained through a partnership between the USFS, BLM, BCRD, and WRBC.

Also, in the Wood River Valley of Idaho there are two projects underway at this time that showcase the USFS working to meet the needs of mountain bikers seeking experiences from different parts of the spectrum. One will provide a lift-serviced resort riding trail network that will provide unparalleled thrills, and the other will provide a backcountry experience that will immerse one in their natural surroundings.

The first is the approval of a trails plan for Bald Mountain that will provide lift-accessible trails for riders looking for a downhill experience. Lift-serviced mountain biking fulfills an important recreational niche in an appropriate location where environmental impacts are mitigated by the existing development. These enhanced opportunities make use of existing infrastructure and help provide year-round support for local businesses that frequently struggle when tourists leave at the end of the ski season.

The second is the Galena Summer Trails Project. This project will add much needed beginner and entry level trails to the existing trail system that is mostly advanced and expert level. It will also enhance the riding experience by providing better signage for both navigation and trail etiquette. If completed, this project will also add a viable mountain bicycling component to Galena Lodge's youth natural history education and youth outdoor skills training. Mountain biking is one of the outdoor activities included in the curriculum, but the lack of suitable trails for beginning mountain bicyclists at the lodge makes putting on quality youth mountain bike programs challenging. The trail network described in the preferred alternative would best provide the type of experiences on which successful mountain biking pro-

grams can be built. These types of experiences help support healthy life habits and can encourage a profound appreciation of nature.

These collaborative efforts by the Forest Service, the BLM, Blaine County, local mountain bike and trail enthusiasts, and Sun Valley Co. are developing the recreation assets necessary to ensure a healthy outdoor recreation and tourism economy.

Mr. BISHOP. Next we will turn to Alexis Nelson from Vermont, who will talk about a different kind of outdoor recreation than we have been speaking about so far.

Ms. Nelson.

**STATEMENT OF ALEXIS C. NELSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
VERMONT ASSOCIATION OF SNOW TRAVELERS, INC.**

Ms. NELSON. Thank you, Chairman Bishop. On behalf of the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers, I am honored to be here today to provide testimony on outdoor recreation opportunities.

The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers, also known as VAST, is a nonprofit private organization that has been in existence for over 46 years. Establishing a statewide organization based on motorized recreation wasn't an easy feat. It took years of coordination, cooperation, and legislation to establish accountability among the snowmobiling community, the supporting landowners, and recognition and support from the State of Vermont.

VAST is one of three private organizations in the United States that administers a statewide snowmobile program for its respective State. This arrangement was established in 1978 through the Vermont Legislature, naming VAST as the entity to manage the Statewide Snowmobile Trails Program for the Agency of Natural Resources through a cooperative agreement. Thirty-five years later, VAST has gained recognition and support from the Vermont Legislature, partnering agencies, and the outdoor recreation community through the advocacy of snowmobile safety, superb trail grooming and signing, and successful partnerships.

VAST is built on a foundation of dynamic volunteers, a thriving membership, and supportive landowners from the private and public sectors. The 128 local snowmobile clubs are responsible for the development and maintenance of the statewide snowmobile trails system. This trail system offers an extensive network of 4,700 miles of interconnected snowmobile trails throughout Vermont. VAST volunteer base association has become a model for other trail user groups and enthusiasts across the State and the region.

The VAST network of winter-use snowmobile trails is located on State, Federal, municipal, and privately owned lands that connects Vermont's communities in an environmentally sustainable manner. Approximately 75 percent of the trail system is located on private property, ranging from small landowners to large parcels owned by private entities and timber-management companies. The remaining 25 percent of the trail system is located on public lands owned by the State of Vermont and Federal lands managed by various agencies.

The State and Federal landowners serve as a critical component of the program, providing sustainable access to areas across the system. While this does not imply permanent access, the longevity and sensitivity of the trail locations are at a much lower risk than operating on private land. This is especially applicable with new

land acquisitions in the changing landscape of the private interface resulting in many costly trail closures.

Snowmobile access on public land is a significant priority for VAST as long as the partnerships between the organization and the State and Federal entities continue to thrive and remain viable. VAST is reliant on cooperative partnerships with participating State and Federal agencies. While each agreement with the corresponding departments have their unique attributes, the underlying principle is to maintain open lines of communication to ensure that the trail system is safe, properly groomed and maintained, and environmentally compliant.

VAST and the Department of Transportation have been working closely over the past decade in the development of a four-season, multiple-use recreational trail known as the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail. This 93-mile-long trail will host an array of outdoor recreation ranging from snowmobiling, dog sledding, cross-country skiing in the winter months, to bicycling, walking, and equestrian use during in the other seasons. Construction of the trail is scheduled to begin in August of 2013.

VAST clubs are responsible for the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of the extensive trail network. They are also responsible for obtaining private landowner permission based on the terms of the agreement. This is also applicable to municipalities.

Of the 128 VAST clubs, there are approximately 1,500 active volunteers that perform the year-round duties and carry out the responsibilities of trail maintenance. The snowmobile season in Vermont begins on December 16 and ends on April 15 every year, dependent on snow and trail conditions. This level of dedication from a volunteer-based club for seasonal recreational activity is an incredible form of commitment to the VAST membership and to the State of Vermont.

According to a 2003 economic impact study conducted by Johnson State College, snowmobiling generates approximately \$355 million annually for the State.

There are many challenges that the organization and the international snowmobile community continue to address and will face in the future; however, with a solid base of volunteers, members, landowners, and a continuation of supporting partnerships from public and private entities, snowmobiling will continue to be a traditional fun and family recreational activity for many generations.

Thank you.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Nelson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ALEXIS C. NELSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE VERMONT ASSOCIATION OF SNOW TRAVELERS, INC. (VAST)

INTRODUCTION

The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers, Inc (VAST) is a non-profit private member based organization. Mandated by the Vermont legislature in 1978, VAST is responsible for administering the Statewide Snowmobile Trails Program for the State of Vermont. The organization was founded in 1967 and is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable snowmobile experience for all ages and skill levels. VAST became the first State snowmobile association responsible for administering

its own snowmobile trails program through a cooperative agreement with the Agency of Natural Resources. Only two other snow-belt States of this kind exist today.

VAST and its affiliated snowmobile clubs provide an array of quality programs and services to its membership and is organized exclusively for charitable and education purposes. VAST is built on a foundation of dynamic volunteers, a thriving membership and supportive landowners from the private and public sector. The 128 local snowmobile clubs belong to 14 county associations and are responsible for the development and maintenance of the Statewide Snowmobile Trails System (SSTS). The SSTS offers an extensive network of 4,700 miles of interconnected snowmobile trails throughout Vermont. VAST's volunteer-based association has become a national model for trail user groups and enthusiasts across the country.

VAST has established credibility and has sustained long-standing positive relationships with local communities, landowners, VAST members, the Vermont recreational community and the Vermont legislature. Through this effort of organization and cooperation, VAST promotes land stewardship by protecting water resources, establishing and following specific standards in trail design and maintenance by minimizing environmental impacts. This is accomplished by effective trail design standards, education of users, and providing maintenance efforts throughout the year. Through an aggressive construction and maintenance regime during the off season, VAST is able to accomplish the goal of providing a safe and superb snowmobile trail system during the winter months.

VAST headquarters is located in central Vermont and is professionally staffed by six full time employees responsible for the strategic, financial and operational programs of the organization. VAST is run by a 19 member volunteer Board consisting of 4 elected officer positions, a Past President, and 14 county Directors each representing a county in the State. The VAST clubs belong to the county association which is an affiliate club of VAST.

Vermont's snowmobile season begins on December 16 and ends on April 15 annually. The average snowfall in Vermont ranges from 100"-350" inches of snow.

There are several statutory requirements in order to snowmobile on the SSTS:

- A valid and current snowmobile registration (the State of Vermont recognizes non-resident snowmobile registrations from other jurisdictions).
- A valid TMA—Trails Maintenance Assessment, also known as a trails pass. This is issued to every snowmobile and by purchasing a TMA—one becomes a member of VAST.
- Mandatory Liability Insurance.
- Anyone born after July 1, 1983 is required to take a snowmobile safety course and carry the certification at all time while operating on the SSTS.

VAST is financially supported through the revenue of TMAs (ranging from 45,000 members in 2003 to 23,000 members in 2012), the return revenue of snowmobile registrations, the Vermont Gas Tax (not to exceed \$148,000), funding through the motorized portion of the National Recreational Trails Program (RTP), VAST News advertising (monthly publication printed seven times per year), and cooperative funding through various donations, grants, partnerships including the USDA Forest Service, and a grant received in 2006 for the development of the four season recreation trail, also known as the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail. The operational budget of the entire program varies between \$3 million and \$4 million annually.

STATEWIDE SNOWMOBILE TRAILS SYSTEM (SSTS)

The SSTS is an extensive network of winter use snowmobile trails that encompass the entire State of Vermont. The SSTS is located on State, Federal, municipal and privately owned lands that connect Vermont communities in an environmentally sustainable manner. Approximately 75 percent of the SSTS is located on private property; ranging from the small suburban landowner to large contiguous parcels owned by private entities and timber management companies. The remaining 25 percent of the SSTS is located on a conglomeration of public lands owned by the State of Vermont, and Federal lands managed by various agencies. The State and Federal landowners serve as a critical component of the program providing sustainable access to areas across the system. While this does not imply permanent access, the longevity and sensitivity of the trail location(s) are at a much lower risk than operating on private land. This is especially applicable with new land acquisitions and the ever changing landscape of the private interface resulting in many costly trail closures. Snowmobile access on public land is a significant priority for VAST as long as the partnerships between the organization and the State/Federal entities continue to thrive and remain viable.

There are 128 local VAST snowmobile clubs that are responsible for the construction and maintenance of the trail system; including trail structures (bridges, culverts, and other drainage devices), trail signing, grooming, trail alignment, permit acquisition, securing landowner permission and compliance with all organizational, State and Federal guidelines and regulations. These clubs vary from 25 members to 2,000 plus members annually. Of the 128 VAST clubs, there are 114 clubs that have an annual grooming contractual agreement that outlines the club's responsible for the winter grooming of the 4,700 mile SSTS. VAST reimburses the clubs for grooming their contractual areas, which vary from 10 miles to 170 miles per club. Clubs are also eligible for funding through several VAST grant-in-aid programs for trail maintenance, construction, trail debrushing, signing, and for the purchase of grooming equipment. Approximately \$1 million in grant funding is available annually to the clubs for trail construction and maintenance and approximately \$400,000 is available to assist in purchasing grooming equipment. The cost of snowmobile trail groomers range from \$30,000 to \$220,000 per unit and the VAST grooming fleet consists of 120+ power units with a cumulative acquisition total of \$8 million.

The following represents the breakdown in mileage across the SSTS:

Type	Mileage
Municipal—Town Forest	25
Class IV—Town Roads	250
Green Mtn National Forest	505
State Lands	360
Public Lands Total	1,140
Private Lands Total	3,560
TOTAL	4,700

COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

The extensive VAST trail network is dependent on the local and statewide support of snowmobiling. This is accomplished through the support of the 8,000+ landowners (private, corporate, municipal, State and Federal). These individuals, entities and organizations make it possible for snowmobilers to enjoy their passion for snowmobiling and ability to recreate throughout the entire State. VAST has forged positive working relationships with governmental agencies at the municipal, State and Federal levels through many cooperative partnerships. VAST has also worked closely with other recreational groups that are part of the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council. The Council is comprised of the many recreational groups that represent the motorized and non-motorized community. This includes the OHV group (VASA & VORA), cross country skiing (Catamount Trails Association), hiking (the Green Mountain Club and the Appalachian Mountain Club), the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, mountain biking (VMBA and Kingdom Trails), the Lamoille Valley Recreational Trail Committee, regional planning commissions, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, the Vermont Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy.

Another entity that VAST works closely with is the Governor's Snowmobile Council. Mandated by the legislature, the Governor's Snowmobile Council is a separate entity composed of an array of partners and legislative support including representatives from the law enforcement community, the Department of Motor Vehicles, a member from the Vermont Senate, a member of the Vermont House, the Secretary or her designee of the Agency of Natural Resources, the Commissioner of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, and appointees from the snowmobile community. The Council meets once a month to discuss law enforcement needs and support, legislative action, statewide policy and initiatives that are brought forth by any of the participants.

State of Vermont—Agency of Natural Resources

The Statewide Snowmobile Trails Program (SSTP) is a cooperative program between the State of Vermont and VAST. Under this program, VAST and the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FP&R), Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Department of Environmental Conservation operate the Statewide Snowmobile Trail System (SSTS). This is accomplished through a cooperative agreement that outlines the responsibilities of both parties. The cooperative agreement specifically states that ANR and VAST consider it mutually advantageous to cooperate with development, maintenance, protection, and enforcement related to the SSTS and associated structures;

- Both entities agree to work collaboratively by providing technical assistance and share pertinent information for the SSTS.
- Identify in long range management plans pertinent to State land and the SSTS to ensure access.
- Identify all planning, safety and enforcement issues related to the SSTS.
- Permission is granted by the State to perform work on the State land under the terms of the agreement and in accordance to the latest version of the Guide for the Development of Snowmobile Trail Construction and follow the current version of ANR's Acceptable Management Practices.
- Continuous dialog between the entities, collaboration and ability to carry out mutual responsibilities identified in the agreement.

The funding mechanism for this cooperative agreement is the return of 100 percent of snowmobile registration receipts and 100 percent of all snowmobile related fines and penalties collected by the State and returned to ANR and FP&R, for use by VAST, to operate the Statewide Snowmobile Trails Program. The program is funded through authority granted by §3214, chapter 29 of title 23 of Vermont Statutes. Each year, VAST develops a budget based on projected snowmobile registrations, fines and penalties for the ensuing fiscal year. The SSTP budget also includes a share of the Vermont State gas tax of 40 percent of the amount appropriated under the Vermont Trails Act. It is the responsibility of the Governor's Snowmobile Council to review, advise, and approve the annual budget for the expenditure of funds for the SSTP.

The SSTP is in compliance with all Federal and State regulations and will continue open lines of communication with all partner organizations to ensure the most current Federal and State regulations are understood and adhered to on a regular basis. The SSTP will continue its aggressive information program consisting of but not limited to mandatory annual construction meetings, field inspections of projects and regularly scheduled monthly meetings to apprise clubs of areas of concern.

The State of Vermont is divided into regions and local VAST clubs in their respective regions work with VAST staff and agency personnel in identifying issues, concerns and potential projects on an annual basis. These meetings entail discussion on trail projects, potential closures for winter management activities, harvesting plans, and anything pertaining to snowmobiling on State land. This level of collaboration is beneficial for all parties to keep open lines of communication and reduce any conflict between user groups and other management activities. Several naturally declared disasters have occurred over the last decade and any repair work to the SSTS on State land is administered through the Department of FPR.

State of Vermont—Department of Environmental Conservation

The majority of the permitting and regulatory rules applicable to the SSTS are administered through the Department of Environmental Conservation. VAST clubs are responsible (with the assistance of staff) for securing the necessary permits required for trail construction and maintenance activities. Specifically, any bridge construction or placement of drainage structures require a site visit by River Engineers, submittal of the required permit application, and authorization of a streambank alteration permit before construction takes place. VAST and its affiliated clubs have an excellent track record in terms of regulation compliance set forth by the agency. This level of accountability has given VAST credibility within the agency, the Vermont legislature, the environmental community and with the landowners that support snowmobiling.

State of Vermont—Agency of Transportation

In 2003, The Vermont General Assembly authorized the Vermont Agency of Transportation to enter into a long-term lease with VAST for the State owned railroad line that spans the northern width of the State that is 93 miles in length. Since this lease was executed for the management of a State owned right away, VAST made the commitment to create a year-round, multi-use recreation trail. It was a requirement that the rail-line be rail-banked and to be used for interim trail use in accordance with authorization from the Federal Surface Transportation Board (STB), thus creating the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT).

Through the support of Senator Bernie Sanders, VAST received a Federal surface transportation grant in 2005. Earlier that year, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was enacted, and Bernie was successful in his efforts for VAST and the LVRT. A grant for approximately \$5.2 million was approved for the development of the LVRT. The terms of the grant require a sponsor match from VAST of 20 percent, for a grand total of \$6.5 million to be applied toward the project. A balance of \$4.1 million remains, while \$1.1 has been used on legal and engineering fees in obtaining all necessary

permits and design plans. These fees are eligible to be used as in-kind for the LVRT project. Donations of materials and labor qualify for a 20 percent match of in-kind funds, while cash qualifies for 25 percent for matching funds.

The Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Committee (LVRTC) was formed for the purpose of advising and participating in the planning and funding for the conversion and management of the Lamoille Valley Railroad into a year-round multi-use recreation serving the needs of those who recreate in Vermont as well as the communities and their residents. The LVRTC has representation from the motorized and non-motorized communities, regional planning commissions, and members of the communities adjacent to the LVRT. The LVRTC is charged with developing and implementing the Development Management Plan for the purpose of overseeing the year-to-year maintenance, and facilitating the day-to-day management as well as developing a policy for resolving issues and conflicts as they arise.

Actual construction of the LVRT is scheduled to begin in August 2013. Two sections of Phase I which encompass approximately 15 miles of trail and the construction of two bridges are expected to be completed before the snowmobile season begins on December 16. The LVRT will benefit local businesses and promote economic growth throughout many communities across Northern Vermont. This will also have everlasting positive effects on local users and visitors from all over the country.

State of Vermont Department of Public Safety and the Department of Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement Unit

VAST operates under a Cooperative Agreement between the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, Vermont State Police, Fish and Wildlife Department and the Vermont Sheriffs' Association for the purpose of providing law enforcement patrols on the SSTS. The safety of all snowmobilers on the SSTS is the foremost priority in managing the snowmobile program. The growth of both the SSTS and the popularity of snowmobiling over the past 15 years have significantly increased the need for active trail law enforcement. Five dollars of every snowmobile registration sold (per year) is applied directly for the purpose of funding law enforcement through the cooperative agreement.

USDA Forest Service

VAST has a special partnership with the USDA Forest Service and operates on the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) under an annual cooperative agreement. Through this important partnership, local clubs maintain over 500 miles of groomed corridor trails and work with Federal personnel in trail maintenance and construction projects. All grooming, construction and maintenance activities are accomplished by local clubs and volunteers and are financially supported through the VAST grant-in-aid program. There is limited Federal funding that is also applied to the winter maintenance program through the cooperative agreement with the Forest Service. Snowmobiling is recognized as an important use on the GMNF and plays an important role in the sustaining the recreational objectives as outlined in the GMNF management plan. During the plan revision process, VAST played a vital role in protecting snowmobile access and keeping trails open that otherwise would have been lost in the designation of wilderness areas. VAST officials and club members attended numerous public hearings and meetings and ensured that snowmobiling remain a viable recreational activity on public land.

Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), VAST served as a contractor through the partnership and cooperative agreement with the Forest Service and was able to complete 20 trail projects located throughout the northern and southern half of the GMNF. The total spent on these projects exceeded \$530,000 and through the partnership, costs were reduced, jobs were created and the work was accomplished with a combination of volunteer and contractor efforts.

PRIVATE LANDOWNERS

A critical piece to the program, private landowners are essential to the sustainability of operating an interconnected trail system. There is a growing challenge in terms of managing the changing landscape through development, regulations and management objectives. The majority of the SSTS is located on private land which requires attentive and careful consideration when addressing issues, conflict and trail closures. Consequently, having consistent access to trails on public property plays a critical piece in the importance of maintaining trails and connections through the State that comprise the entire SSTS. The stability of the SSTS is constantly being challenged and VAST has managed to maintain the system through volunteer efforts, assistance and advisement from the Vermont legislature and governmental entities, and a solid understanding of how important recreation is to the local communities and the State of Vermont.

LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT

The State of Vermont recognizes the importance of outdoor recreation and snowmobiling and relies on the respective organizations to implement successful programs. Under Vermont Statute, Title 23 VSA, Chapter 29 3206(d) provides all landowners allowing snowmobile use of their land the following protection:

“No public or private landowner or their agents shall be liable for any property damage or personal injury sustained by any person operating or riding as a passenger of a snowmobile, or upon a vehicle or other device drawn by a snowmobile upon the public or private landowner’s property, whether or not the public or private landowner has given permission to use the land, unless the public or private landowner charges a cash fee for use of the property, or unless said damage or injury is intentionally inflicted by the landowner.”

In addition, public and private landowners are covered from liability under several other statutes that include the Vermont Trails System; the VAST SSTS is one of the first trail systems to be part of the original designation. This is another important component of maintaining such an extensive system across private and public lands.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

In 1995, VAST undertook its first ever survey of the impact of snowmobiling on Vermont’s economy. At that time, VAST was managing approximately 2,500 miles of corridor trails. It was determined that the total economic impact exceeded \$162 million annually. In 2003, Johnson State College conducted an Economic Impact Study on Snowmobiling in Vermont. The overall economic impact to the State of Vermont is over \$550 million annually. This amount has been adjusted to \$350 million annually.

The following categories were considered during the study:

- Purchase of fuel for snowmobiles and trail groomers
- Total snowmobile purchases
- Snowmobile accessories and parts
- Trailers, options and parts
- Tow vehicles, sales, parts and service
- Lodging, meals, snacks
- Real estate purchases and annual expenses
- Registration and membership fees
- Tax revenue
- Indirect factors: VAST Operations, grooming equipment purchases, groomer insurance, grooming expenses, and trail construction and maintenance

Snowmobiling in Vermont is recognized as a significant economic driver during the winter months. This is second to the \$2 billion ski industry. The benefit of snowmobiling is extended throughout the entire State where local businesses that provide services such as fuel, food, repairs, lodging and other related services are bustling with activity during the coldest months of the year. The SSTS reaches almost every community in Vermont from small family businesses to large dealerships and restaurants that fuel snowmobiling’s economic engine.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

VAST has gained public support through media outlets such as local and regional newspapers, radio and news stations throughout the State, social media, Web site and through various VAST campaigns. Media coverage varies from weekly radio trail reports throughout the season highlighting events and trail conditions, the opening/closing of the season and press releases for club events such as charitable fund raisers, landowner appreciation dinners and special partnerships that exist between VAST and its cooperators. Recently, VAST developed a PR campaign highlighting the organization, members, volunteers and landowners, and snowmobile safety through ten short video clips that aired across the State and throughout New England. On the State and local level, VAST has supported safety and responsible riding at events across the State where members and the communities are encouraged to participate. Every year, VAST clubs donate to their local charities and VAST has a major event where all proceeds benefit a charity of choice. This past season, snowmobilers raised over \$5,000 for the Vermont Make-A-Wish Foundation.

SUMMARY

VAST is a dynamic organization that thrives on the support of volunteers, members and landowners. This essential combination provides the key ingredients that contribute to the success of the program and the continuance of the Statewide Snowmobile Trails System. There are many challenges that the organization and International Snowmobile Community continue to address and will face in the future. However, with a solid base of volunteers, members, landowners, and the continuation of supporting partnerships from public and private entities, snowmobiling will continue to be a traditional, fun and family recreational activity for many generations.

Mr. BISHOP. And last but not least from Minnesota, Mr. Ron Potter. You are recognized for 5 minutes, please.

STATEMENT OF RON POTTER, RETIRED, RECREATION SYSTEMS MANAGER, PARKS AND TRAILS DIVISION, MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. POTTER. Mr. Chairman and Committee members, my name is Ron Potter, and I am honored to be here today.

On January 8, 2013, I retired from my full-time employment with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources after 37 years. During that time, I worked primarily for the Division of Parks and Trails, focusing on recreational trails.

The Department of Natural Resources provides recreational trails for equestrians, mountain bikers, hikers, paved trail users, snowmobiles, off-highway vehicles, and our water trail system. These opportunities were all provided through the section that I managed in the last 8 years of my service with the State of Minnesota.

Minnesota is blessed with an abundance of public lands located mainly in the northern third of the State. Of these public lands, counties manage about 4 million acres for timber and recreation. The State manages another 5 million acres for forestry and recreation purposes. AND the United States Forest Service has 4.6 million acres and two national forests, the Chippewa and the Superior.

The Chippewa National Forest is about 1.6 million acres, located in the north central part of the State. The Superior National Forest is about 3 million, and that includes 1.1 million acres in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

The snowmobile program in Minnesota is one of the largest and best in the Nation, with current trail mileage of 22,253 miles. We have more miles of snowmobile trail in the State than we do State highways. Of this opportunity, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources maintains about 1,000 miles of that system, with the remainder being maintained by local clubs working through local government units.

The grant program to maintain this extensive system is set up so that the DNR receives annual funding from our State legislature, and the DNR must contract with local government units that are a subdivision of the State, so county, townships, or cities. These local government units then contract with the local snowmobile clubs to complete the work on the ground. This effort promotes partnership and working together cooperatively up through the State agencies. The effort currently involves 180 clubs, 81 out of the 87 counties, 1 township, and 19 cities.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources also administers similar grant programs for cross-country skiers and ATVs, off-highway motorcycles, and trucks. The cross-country ski program has been around for about 30 years. It is not a large program, but it is very important to the clubs and the communities that it serves.

The ATV grant-in-aid program was first established in 1984. It has maintained a fairly stable involvement in the early years, about 20 clubs. Then in the late 1990s, motorized activity started to become closely scrutinized, and many of the traditional riding areas were threatened to be closed. In response to this, the clubs became more involved and started working toward getting their favorite riding areas into the grant-in-aid program.

These new projects, although they weren't really different from the earlier ones, had a very low success rate. Only about 10 percent of the projects were being successful. So we tried to figure out what was going on.

There were several issues that were being brought to light with these projects. Number one, government units as the sponsors did not have the staff time to work on these projects, so to move the project forward, it was up to the clubs to do that. The club members for the most part are working citizens who are doing it as a volunteer. They have normal jobs and family duties, so they have limited time to dedicate to this effort.

The other factor coming into play is that there are more regulations regarding this type of activity both on public and private lands. More counties were required to go through planning and zoning, and there was also more government agencies becoming involved with sign-off on the projects. Clubs were getting frustrated and having trouble figuring out how to navigate through the layers of governmental involvement, and after a couple of years would just give up and walk away from the project.

So what we proposed is to fund two FTEs to assist these clubs and sponsors with this work. We turned this into four FTEs by adding other funding, because this work was very similar to the trail work that you do for all types of recreational use. So we had staff people that understand the agencies involvement. They understood the different process of each agency and worked closely with the clubs and their sponsors. In a matter of a couple years, we turned that around to a 90 percent success ratio on projects.

Minnesota is very fortunate to have two major OHV manufacturers located in the State. We have Polaris Industries and Arctic Cat Industries. These companies continue to be great partners in all of our efforts. In getting these projects reviewed, oftentimes we need many machines. We contact these manufacturers, and they provide machines to get the agency folks out to view them. These cooperative partners as well as others have grant programs that allow clubs to receive funding to be used toward capital improvement or projects or to meet the necessary match.

Recreation programs in Minnesota continue to live and die on partnerships at all levels, but some partnerships can't be maintained by volunteers on a part-time basis. They need some assistance. Trail systems span all public ownerships and involve corporate and private stakeholders as well. Partnerships aren't just

nice to have and to do, they are absolutely necessary. And we want to meet the demand of providing sustainable trails and to provide a quality experience for everyone.

Thank you.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Potter follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RON POTTER, RETIRED, RECREATION SYSTEMS MANAGER,
PARKS AND TRAILS DIVISION, MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Ron Potter. On January 8, 2013 I retired from full-time employment with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) after 37 years. During that time I worked primarily for the Division of Parks and Trails focusing on recreational trails. The Department of Natural Resources provides recreational trails for equestrians, mountain bikers, hikers, paved trail users, snowmobilers, off-highway vehicle enthusiasts, and water trails. These opportunities were all provided through the section that I managed during the last 8 years of my service with the State of Minnesota.

Minnesota is blessed with an abundance of public lands, located mainly in the northern 1/3 of the State. Of this public land base, Counties manage about 4 million acres for timber and recreation, the State manages about 5 million acres for forestry and recreation purposes, and the United States Forest Service has about 4.6 million acres in two national forests, Chippewa National Forest and the Superior National Forest. The Chippewa National Forest is about 1.6 million acres and located in the north central part of the State. The Superior National Forest is about 3 million acres in size, of which about 1.1 million acres lie within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

The snowmobile program in Minnesota is one of the largest and best in the Nation with a current trail mileage of 22,253 miles. We have more miles of snowmobile trails than we have of State Highways. Of this opportunity, the Minnesota DNR maintains about 1,000 miles of the trail system, with most of the system being maintained by local snowmobile clubs, working with and through local government units.

The grant program to maintain this extensive system is set up so the DNR receives the funding from the State Legislature as part of the annual budget. The DNR must contract with a local government unit that is a subdivision of the State like a county, township or city. These local government units then contract with a local snowmobile club to actually complete the work on the ground. This effort promotes partnerships and working together cooperatively from the club through the State agency. This effort currently involves 180 clubs, 81 out of the 87 counties are involved with the program, one townships and 19 cities. The details of this program and how it operates are explained in the Minnesota Trail Assistance manual which was provided to the Committee.

The Minnesota DNR administers a similar program for cross country skiers, all-terrain vehicles (ATV), off-highway motorcycles (OHM) and trucks and jeeps or off road vehicles (ORV) as we refer to them in Minnesota. The cross country ski program has been around for about 30 years, is not a large program but is important to the clubs and communities that it serves.

The off-highway vehicle (OHV) program includes ATV's, OHM's and ORV's. Each of these groups has a grant program designed to assist them with developing and maintaining riding opportunities. Funding for these programs comes from a State vehicle registration as well as a portion of the State gas tax attributable to that particular group and type of off road use. These programs are all modeled after the snowmobile program because it has been so successful.

The ATV grant-in-aid program, as Minnesota Trail Assistance Program is called, was first established in about 1984 and maintained a fairly stable involvement by about 20 clubs. In the late 1990s this motorized summer activity started coming under closer scrutiny and many traditional riding areas starting getting closed. In response to this more clubs became involved and starting working toward getting their favorite riding areas into the grant-in-aid program. It became apparent rather quickly that the traditional way of dealing with these new projects was not working.

These new projects, although not really different from earlier projects, were having a very low success rate as they moved from proposals to actually funded and maintained trails. Only about 10 percent of the projects were successful, the majority of the projects failed to be completed. So we started to follow up and see why this was happening.

There were several issues, one being these projects are moved forward by the trail administrator for the clubs. Even if the club had a local government unit as a sponsor, it didn't have extra staff time to work on these projects so the club had to champion its project if it wanted it to happen. These club members were, for the most part, working citizens that did this club work as volunteers, above and beyond their normal job(s) and family duties and therefore had limited time to dedicate to it.

The other factor that was coming into play at this time was more regulations regarding this type of activity on both public and private lands. More counties were requiring planning and zoning approval, more and extensive approval processes were needed for use of public lands and more agencies were getting involved and having sign-off authority. Clubs were getting frustrated and were having trouble figuring out how to navigate through the layers of governmental involvement and after a couple of years would just give up and walk away from the project.

This wasn't helpful for the public or the agencies because the activity was not going away and without providing more riding opportunities the existing sites were getting over used. I met with the motorized groups to figure out a way to address this opportunity. The Minnesota DNR was split into four regions statewide and we were seeing this issue in all four regions and the clubs were getting so frustrated they did not want to even try getting a new project approved and funded.

I proposed to the groups that if they would support getting two full time positions funded I would turn this trend around. During the 2006 legislative session they convinced the legislature to provide enough funding for two full-time equivalents (FTE) from the OHV dedicated accounts. Upon receiving that funding I then matched it up with other funding we had available and took the funding for two FTE's and turned into funding for four FTE's, putting a regional acquisition and development specialist in each region.

The work needed for the OHV projects was the same type of work that was needed for most of the recreational program projects. These staff persons were now required to spend half of their time working on OHV projects and moving them through the process. Staff not only had a better understanding of the agencies involved, understood the different processes each agency required and also had a close working relationship with the clubs and their sponsors. The employee's success was directly linked to the success of the projects they worked on. In a matter of a couple years we were able to take a 10 percent success rate on OHV club projects and turn that around to a 90 percent+ success rate.

Minnesota is also very fortunate to have two major OHV manufacturers located within the state, Polaris Industries Inc. and Arctic Cat Inc. These companies continue to be great partners in our efforts. Often times we need to get agency staff and/or regulators onsite to view these linear projects, which can be challenge. Just finding enough machines to get these staff onsite is often more than the DNR or clubs can do by themselves. With such advance planning and working with these corporate partners we can have an adequate number of new machines available to complete field inspection in a safe and timely manner. These corporate partners, as well as others, have grant programs allowing clubs to receive grants that can be used as a match or to totally fund projects. Through these efforts they have enabled clubs to complete projects that were stalled because of funding issues.

The recreation programs in Minnesota continue to live and die on partnerships at all levels, but some partnerships just can't be maintained by volunteers on a part time basis, they need some assistance. Trail systems span all public ownerships and involve corporate and private stakeholders as well. Partnerships aren't just nice to have and do, they are absolutely necessary if you want to meet demand of providing sustainable trails and provide a quality experience for everyone.

Mr. BISHOP. I appreciate all of you being here, and for your testimony, both written and oral.

We will turn to questions from the Committee. Mr. Tipton—or, I should say, Mr. Gosar's best friend Mr. Tipton.

Mr. TIPTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank our panel for taking the time to be able to be here and your testimony today.

Ms. Korenblat, I understand you have a trail that you manage in my district, in Grand Junction, Colorado. Can you tell us, what does that add economically?

Ms. KORENBLAT. So I think you are referring to the Kokopelli Trail.

Mr. TIPTON. Right.

Ms. KORENBLAT. I work in several areas of your district, actually. Your district is quite important to mountain biking.

Mr. TIPTON. It is.

Ms. KORENBLAT. And the challenge on the Kokopelli Trail has to do with the oil and gas activity in the area. And to date, it has been fine, but there isn't really a provision. Technically, technically, I could have a group out riding on the Kokopelli Trail, people that have come from all over the country, and we could ride along and come upon a drill rig, and the BLM wouldn't have had an obligation to technically notify me before.

Mr. TIPTON. That is kind of interesting.

I was kind of wondering, though, actually, what does that contribute back to the local economy?

Ms. KORENBLAT. Yes. It brings—I would say it is several thousand people. From my company it would be a couple of hundred people a year. But the trail entertains—lots of other people come to ride it. So it means something quite a bit to Fruita, the town of Fruita, Colorado.

Mr. TIPTON. Sure.

Ms. KORENBLAT. And then it connects into Moab. So for both places it is an important driver in the spring and fall, and it attracts worldwide folks.

Mr. TIPTON. I bet it is. And throughout our district, we have an abundance of trails. We have been able to put one together from Gunnison up to Crested Butte, and the role and some of the addition, really, into our economy.

Mr. Jackson, I thought it was interesting, and Ms. Nelson as well, you both talked about collaborative processes. I think you said that 75 percent of the land in Vermont is private, and then 25 percent is State or Federal land.

We are neighbors, actually, Mr. Jackson. I get over into Moab somewhat frequently. And when you were able to put this collaborative process together, how did that work? Can you describe that a little bit with FLPMA, and can you see that being applicable in other areas?

Mr. JACKSON. I think it is very comparable. And there is a provision, I think it is in section 307 of FLPMA, that provides for these kinds of cooperative agreements.

What had happened was the area was experiencing rapid recreational use when mountain bikes were sort of first invented. The Sand Flats Recreation Area, otherwise known as the Slick Rock Trail, and everyone in the early 1990s who had bought those bikes decided they needed to go try the trail.

One particular spring in 1993, we had a coalescence of a bunch of spring breaks for high schools, colleges, and we literally had riots up on—I don't know if Ashley was there then. But it had clearly gotten out of hand. It was a little too much for BLM to put that kind of direct process into managing it, so they approached the county and said, look, this is directly adjacent to your major city, Moab. Would you guys be interested in managing up there? And we said, certainly.

Mr. TIPTON. Good.

Well, I was a little concerned, and I know you are as well, as a councilman, when you talked about some of the revenue; \$1,400 a month I think is what you were saying some in the tourism industry were earning. And you wanted to be able to expand that basis. Can we create those win-wins with the proper development of those resources—with natural resources and then public outdoor activities as well?

Mr. JACKSON. I absolutely believe we can create those kind of win-win situations. I think what you are referring to is the average monthly wage for the service sector, \$1,400 a month. And I think in any type of economy, even an expanded economy, you always have certain folks that work at that level. But 35 percent of them, that is a lot.

So what you would hope to do is work with other industries, and smartly, to develop other types of resources where the folks who typically fill those service-sector jobs are less skilled, maybe a little less educated, to have jobs in other industries that can pay a little bit more.

Mr. TIPTON. So fulfill actually the mission of the BLM land of many uses, right?

Mr. JACKSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. TIPTON. Great.

Ms. Nelson, I was a little interested when you were talking about snowmobiling. I think we have a lot of that in my district as well. But you had also mentioned horseback riding. Mr. Nelson and I, we share a common area and some common background from the standpoint that by executive decree, we had had the Canyon of the Ancients proclaimed in southwest Colorado and then moving to not allow horseback riding. Do you see these as compatible uses really for our public lands?

Ms. NELSON. For horseback riding?

Mr. TIPTON. Horseback riding, just to be able to get out and ride your horse down a trail?

Ms. NELSON. Absolutely. I know from my experience in the State of Vermont, the equestrian community has a very active chapter, and they have a lot of support from the State of Vermont and from other user groups to utilize portions of our statewide snowmobile trail system as well as other places on State and Federal land. It is an acceptable and manageable activity that is supported by, like I said, the State and from other users.

Mr. TIPTON. Yes. I found snowmobilers and equestrians to be pretty good custodians, as well as bicyclists, of our public lands as well.

So, Mr. Chairman, I have used my time and part of Mr. Gosar's time, so I yield back.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you.

I will turn to Mr. Horsford if he has questions.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

To the panelists, Congress has a history of using wilderness designations as the highest level of conservation. And while I support wilderness designation, I support it with the support of local communities having a say.

What are your views of other forms of land designation like a national conservation area, or a national recreation area, or some other form that provides conservation, but doesn't have the strict requirements of congressionally designated wilderness?

Mr. JACKSON. I am sorry, was that question directed at me or just the panel?

Well, I think the bottom line there is working together and collaborating with people. I think that is the key. It is a mighty big landscape out in our part of the world there, millions of acres, and it doesn't have to be an all or nothing.

We are supportive in Grand County of some wilderness designation. We have areas of landscape that are, in fact, wilderness. There is no cell phone service. If you go in there and you don't know what you are doing, you are in deep trouble.

We support other types and have had very preliminary discussions of other types of land designations, such as national recreation areas, national conservation areas. I think, speaking from a western rural county perspective, our problems are with Antiquities Act designations such as monuments, that there is absolutely no need for any collaboration or discussion with locals. It is just usually some special-interest group that has a certain thing they want to do on a piece of land. They take it to the President, and with the stroke of a pen, there is a million and a half acres that is not available typically for other types of uses.

So we are supportive and willing to sit down at the table with anyone who has ideas on how they think lands should be managed. I think the key is we just want to be part of the discussion.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you.

And local, like I said, involvement is key.

The second question, actually, maybe for Ashley to answer, is on the Antiquities Act. This Subcommittee in particular has spent a lot of time on the Antiquities Act issue to make national monument designations by the President more difficult. If Congress fails to do its job of considering and moving conservation proposals, do you feel that the monument designation is an important element to still have to protect public lands?

Ms. KORENBLAT. I think that we all carry tools in our toolkit we don't like to use very often, and I think that at this point, we still need that tool. But the legislative process is much, much to be preferred precisely for the reasons you were asking about with these alternative designations and the fact that you can do the work locally prior to the enactment of the legislation to sort out all the details. And that is very hard work and very challenging, but the details are super important. And that is why the legislative process is just so much better, because we can work those things out in advance.

Mr. HORSFORD. We have a bill, the Tule Springs bill, in my district which would create a national monument, but we have all of the local stakeholders who have worked really for more than a year to get to that point. And while the President could issue it, there would be some consequence to him doing that which would not necessarily take into account all of the agreement that the local community has reached.

So I really appreciate in your testimony you talked about the need to not make this an either/or choice of land protection or economic growth, but that we need balance and to work together.

What role really should local residents play in their influence, including in areas of oil and gas resources on public lands?

Ms. KORENBLAT. I think it is really important to understand what people do out there, and that locals are very passionate about these landscapes, and giving them the opportunity to talk about what they do and to let folks know what is happening out there really, really makes a difference. So it is about the details, and it is about allowing locals to work together to sort out what the details need to be.

And some of the examples that we saw of these great partnerships here today are exactly the type of partnerships that leads to a working, functioning landscape that optimizes the opportunity there. And there is opportunity, too, through these companion designations to sort some of that out and to work with the resource-extraction folks with directional drilling and placement of roads so that we can have our cake and eat it, too. But we do have to do a better job of planning.

Mr. BISHOP. Let me ask a few questions, if I could. Let me start with Commissioner Jackson. In your career you were with the Bureau of Land Management. Now you are one of the leaders of the county in which you live. Can you just talk to me about the concept of balance as far as the economic development that is necessary within your county?

Mr. JACKSON. Yes. As I indicated, it is just wise whenever a community or a county has the opportunity to diversify their economy, they should do so. I moved to Moab in 1982. When I moved there, Moab was a one-industry economy, all centered around the uranium industry. Probably 70 or 80 percent of all economic activity was uranium. And then we had Three Mile Island, and the cold war ended, and the commodity price plummeted, and it never came back.

So through the wise leadership of a lot of good community leaders in the area, we said, well, we have national parks, we have great scenery, let us go looking for some of this recreation economy. And we were very successful in doing that. But we, again, now 30 years later, find ourselves possibly with another one-industry economy. And as a geologist by background, a recreation economy in a rural area, we are 250 miles away from urban areas, we are again dependent upon a worldwide commodity price we have absolutely no control over, and that is the price of a gallon of gasoline.

Mr. BISHOP. You also have another entity within your county as well, which is potash. First of all, can potash be developed without harming the recreational side of what you are doing in the county? And does that have also the same opportunity of boom and bust, which every other entity does have?

Mr. JACKSON. I believe so, Mr. Chairman. We have had a potash mine in Grand County since—it has been there since the 1960s. So it has been there roughly 50 years. It employs about 60 people a year. The latest I heard on their reserves is they have 125 years of reserves of potash. Potash is used as a fertilizer to grow food for an ever-expanding worldwide population. The area takes up about

1,000 acres of land, and the recreational use around this potash mine, and Ashley is familiar with this, in Shafer Basin and below Deadhorse Point has absolutely exploded over the last 20 or 30 years. So my observations are that this potash mine doesn't seem to bother the recreation.

Just one other point I would make, Mr. Chairman, is this potash mine is the single largest taxpayer in Grand County. Out of our budget, our county budget, of about \$22 to \$23 million, this potash industry pays in property taxes over \$1 million a year.

So, yes, sir, I believe there is room in our 2.4-million-acre county for another potash mine, and there are people exploring and looking for that possibility.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you.

Mr. Martin, you mentioned in your written testimony the Forest Service planning rule. Do you have any concerns with the proposed directives from the Forest Service planning rule that would pertain to wilderness evaluations that could be used to restrict trail access or mountain biking access?

Mr. MARTIN. Mountain bikers and wilderness have an interesting relationship. Bikes are a low-impact, quiet-use form of recreation, appropriate for back country places. We support many wilderness designations across the country, and we are not seeking to overturn any regulatory language; however, we believe that there are pragmatic solutions that can protect both the landscape and valuable mountain bike resources.

Mr. BISHOP. All right. Thank you.

Ms. Nelson, of the 25 percent of your trails that are on State or Federal lands, do you know how that is divided up between State and Federal?

Ms. NELSON. Yes, I do. About 500 miles of statewide snowmobile trail system is located on Green Mountain National Forest. And then about—I have it in my written testimony—I believe it is about 650 miles are located on State lands.

Mr. BISHOP. So you are about half then, roughly.

Ms. NELSON. Yes.

Mr. BISHOP. OK. Well, listen, I have only got 12 seconds. I will come back to you and the others. We will turn to Mr. Horsford first.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you.

So timely, the GAO just released a report today, in fact, on the Forest Service trails. And the report has some interesting findings just on the agency's ability to properly care and maintain trails throughout the country.

Can you comment, Mr. Martin, on the condition of trails in your area or the areas that your association and members utilize?

Mr. MARTIN. Yes. Thank you for your question.

The Wood River Valley, which is the home of the Ketchum and Sun Valley area, we have nearly 450 miles of single-track trail. And as I stated in my oral testimony, most of that is repurposed trail that was originally built for other uses other than recreation, trails that were not built in a sustainable manner, as we now know how to design and build.

So that points to—the planning process is critical moving forward, and building trails that do not require a large degree of

maintenance and repairs. Where I live, we have done a very good job of partnering with the Forest Service. We rally our volunteers multiple times throughout the season and help with their most pressing needs. Their trail crew numbers have diminished quite a bit over the last couple of years, and it makes that partnership even more important. And it is a vital piece of maintaining our asset, which is our trail system.

Mr. HORSFORD. So what would be some of your recommendations for how we should better do that as Congress in supporting the agencies responsible?

Mr. MARTIN. As I discussed, the planning process going forward I think is key, and to build trail systems that provide the user experience that you are looking for, that care for the environment, that are sustainably built, sustainably designed, and provide that experience that you are seeking, while not requiring significant ongoing costs of maintenance and repairs.

I mean, I don't know the details of our local Forest Service district's budget. I just know that their trail crew numbers have diminished quite a bit. It would be nice if they had more resources to bring to the table and our partnership.

Mr. HORSFORD. Well, actually the report indicates that the maintenance and reconstruction backlog has ballooned to \$524 million in 2012. That figure has increased by more than half since 1989, the last time that the GAO analyzed the National Forest Trail System. So the question becomes, how do we address this backlog? And it is about resources, but it is also about local participation, planning, and prioritizing.

Mr. MARTIN. Absolutely. I would say the short and simple answer is collaboration and partnership. It is how we get the most done with the resources that we have.

Mr. HORSFORD. Mr. Chairman, this past weekend my policy adviser and I were in Virgin Valley, in a portion of my rural district, and we have heard from our constituents time and time again that it is this local input that is critical. And some communities have done it better than others.

And I know we have witnesses here who have some best practice, but I think we have got to figure out a way to capture in maybe a written form the best practice, and then figure out a way in which to implement that on a more consistent basis, because it is something that regardless of whether it is bicyclists, hunters, sports fishermen or individuals and businesses that are using public lands for development, it all comes back to the question of local input, coordination, and having a say. And I hope that we will have more time at a later hearing to dive into this GAO report that just came out, but clearly it also is about resources. So thank you very much.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you.

Let me return to some of my questions for Ms. Nelson. I appreciate Vermont is not one of those Western States. My Western State has always been a public land State; it will always be a public land State. I think much of the discussion is who actually makes the decisions on those public lands.

So as you are working with both State and Federal lands, probably about 50–50, and the Forest Service moves toward imple-

menting its 2005 travel management plan, or travel management rule, will that have an impact on the partnerships that you have developed and the access that you have achieved in your statewide snowmobile trail?

Ms. NELSON. I am optimistic that it won't have any negative impact on our current relationship with the Forest Service. I mean, we operate under an annual cooperative agreement, which is part of a partnership that we have developed over the last 30 years. I think this is through the work of the volunteer clubs, the credibility and accountability that we follow all environmental regulations and compliance. And we have basically taken on the responsibility to manage our trail network, along with working with the mountain bikers and the equestrian groups. So I think that this has really paved the way in terms of everybody working together and being on the same page.

I think the bottom line is keeping open lines of communication and ensuring that everybody is following through with the commitment that they have made.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you.

Mr. Potter, I don't want to leave you out of this as well. We have some stuff here for you. You mentioned that Minnesota has one of those unique situations where you actually have more land under State control than you have under Forest Service control, almost like a 2-to-1 ratio. Congratulations. I wish I could replicate that in some ways.

Can you talk more about the level of recreation, maybe even multiple-use access, on State lands versus the amount of access that has been done on the Federal forest in Minnesota?

Mr. POTTER. Certainly, Mr. Chairman. Our State forestlands and county lands are managed for multiple use, and they promote that very heavily. We don't have any wilderness designation or that type of designation on State or county lands. We have some State parks which are certainly off limits, and we have some scientific and natural areas for particular reasons. But the forest-administered lands of that 5 million acres is for multiple use.

So it is a working forest. We manage for timber. We manage for gravel, for iron mining, and recreation is a big part of that. And with the Federal lands, I believe on the Chippewa National Forest, of their 1.6 million acres we have 320-some miles of snowmobile trail on that land. On the Superior, it is a similar number of about 400 miles on their lands. On the State forest and county lands, it is considerably more than that. The exact number I don't have, but it is in that 2,500, 2,600 miles on the county and State lands.

The one thing I wanted to touch on and kind of follow up on what Mr. Martin had said is that a lot of these trails that we have on public ownership, they are provided because there was other activity that went on there, timber management, for example. And we know the best management practices for managing these trails, and to put those on roads that were used for extraction of timber is not the best management practice and are not the most sustainable. So if we can move toward building trails that will handle these uses, I think we will have a lighter impact on the land and far more sustainable trails.

Mr. BISHOP. You talked about the four State FTEs that you have working on this, and those are all State employees. Those are basically facilitators to deal with the groups that are using your trail system and lands?

Mr. POTTER. Mr. Chairman, yes. Because of all the additional—

Mr. BISHOP. Did that system of having those facilitators, though, did that work better than what we have always heard about is the analysis paralysis that sometimes happened on Federal lands?

Mr. POTTER. Mr. Chairman, yes. Like I said, before they had them in place, we had 10 percent, if lucky, of projects that were being successful. Once we put those folks on and had them working hand in hand with the clubs and the other agencies, we have turned that around to around a 90 percent success ratio on projects.

Mr. BISHOP. All right. Thank you.

Now, before I go on, do you have anything more you would like to ask any of these witnesses?

Then let me just finish off this round of questioning, and then we will thank you for your service of being here and testifying.

Ms. Korenblat, the Commissioner talked about the potash plant that was there. Can you explain the relationship that potash has been as far as helping with your trail system in Grand County?

Mr. KORENBLAT. Well, the potash plant hasn't interfered with the trail system. Oh, and as far as helping, they did donate, and that would be in Deadhorse State Park, where they donated \$20,000. And State parks matched it with another \$20,000. And we built about 9 miles of trail. And that resulted in the park revenues going from about \$400,000 to almost \$800,000 in just 2 years. So it was a really powerful investment, and showed how keeping these trails up leads to more visitors.

Mr. BISHOP. So, Ms. Nelson, do you have a similar situation with either the logging companies or the logging rolls and some kind of partnership there in the trail system in Vermont?

Ms. NELSON. It is not really a working relationship other than we cross a lot of large timber management properties, and Vermont has a working landscape. Primarily the economy is based on timber harvesting and sugaring in the winter months. And so we work with those landowners in making sure that we can continue access while they can continue on with their business.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Commissioner Jackson, can you just tell me about how the county is managing Sand Flats, and it was asked to do that, and how successful that has been. Somebody in there said that you could replicate that in other kinds of situations?

Mr. JACKSON. Yes, Mr. Chairman, I did mention that, and that is based to a great extent on my experience with the Bureau of Land Management. There are other areas where local management of resources makes sense. I would suggest one of them could be in the minerals industry itself. Under the 1987 Federal Oil Gas Royalty Management Act, there was a provision for State management of the inspection program for Federal oil and gas wells. As the State of Utah looked into that at that time, they decided not to do it, and the reason was simple: They weren't provided any funding

to do that. Had they been provided funding, I believe they could have done that and would have done that.

It is a little bit similar with the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, Federal laws that are managed by the EPA, but States can stand up, come forward and get primacy for those programs.

One of the real keys to any management of Federal lands by other entities is a revenue stream. If the Federal Government wants you to manage a certain piece of land, a certain resource, be it oil and gas, or mining, or outdoor recreation, they have to provide a revenue stream. And usually the very resource itself can be that revenue stream.

Mr. BISHOP. And you did say the Sand Flats provides—just for the fees that are going on, that just provides the revenue stream that is appropriate for the county to maintain the management of that area.

Mr. JACKSON. Yes, it turns out great. They established a fee system there, and it pretty much paid for itself. There are other fees, however, that come out of that program. The BLM still collects fees from any commercial permits that it allows in the Sand Flats; for instance, Hummer tours, ATV tours. I believe there is probably mountain bike tours up in there, too. And Ashley would know this. You guys, the BLM charges, is it 3 percent of the gross or the net?

Mr. KORENBLAT. Gross.

Mr. JACKSON. Gross.

So the BLM, when they give Ashley or a business like that a permit, they then charge her 3 percent of the gross revenues go back to the BLM. So there is another revenue source at Sand Flats that the county doesn't see. But the entrance fee alone is enough to pay for the management.

Mr. BISHOP. Thanks. You have just given us a source to balance the budget. I appreciate that.

Ms. Korenblat, we talked about the importance of locally driven land management, that having people who are there in the community that benefit from the events that take place has some kind of advantage. And I mention that only because I talked very early on in the opening statement about the news that we just had from Yellowstone and Grand Tetons where the concept of paddling is no longer going to be allowed on a wild and scenic river that is there for recreational purpose. That restriction came even though that recreation designation is part of the legislation that established this recreational wild and scenic river, it is mind-boggling as far as how we work in this situation.

I saw a similar thing in Washington State, where the forest supervisor has withdrawn a permit that allowed pack and guide services to operate in the wilderness area on the idea that she was just not comfortable with having a commercial operation in a wilderness area, which doesn't necessarily preclude what they could have done had they been done there.

The point is that sometimes we seem to have a lot of words that sound great on paper, and the farther away we get from the actual people on the ground who understand the situation of what is taking place, and you move that decision up the food chain until it ends up up here, that sometimes we have really strange answers

that take place that, to me, are far more restrictive than they ought to be.

So can you just speak on two things very quickly for me? Just the importance of locally driven management decisions; and second, very quickly on nongovernment organizations, how they can also enhance land management?

Mr. KORENBLAT. Right. Well, I think in both those cases, while I don't know the specifics, it sounds like the partnership broke down. It is all about that relationship like Mr. Martin has in his community. Those relationships make sure that the local land manager, and the local outfitters, and the local user community, regardless of what the activity is, that they are working together, and that you wouldn't see a surprise come up like that where you have an area that is supposed to be managed for recreation, and suddenly there is a big inhibitor to the recreation.

I mean, occasionally there are capacity issues, and there might be other issues, but most of the time where there are these strong partnerships and strong local involvement, those problems don't come up. It wouldn't happen in Moab because the Moab BLM works so hard to meet the needs of the businesses in Moab and the community that is coming to visit.

So it all comes back to local involvement, and promoting those partnerships and keeping them healthy with those NGO organizations that bring funding, and expertise, and people to the process that supplement what the land manager is doing.

Mr. BISHOP. I thank you.

And I think we have been trying to talk here about both motorized and mechanized forms of recreation that can be used on these.

Let me just throw out one last question that I don't really know what the answer actually is, but have any of you had an instance where you think the Federal agency's efforts have not provided adequate opportunities for volunteer service before a trail system was closed down? Have any of you confronted one of those situations where you don't think the ability of allowing volunteer work was adequate before decisions were made as to closing a trail process on Federal land? And I don't know if there is such or if you have seen it. Apparently—

Mr. KORENBLAT. There are places where there are sort of capacity issues in terms of management time. I mean, for example, I have applied for a permit in a forest and been told that they liked my use and would like to give us a permit, but didn't have anyone to administer it. So I have had that problem. And I think there have been places where volunteers have said, we want to do this, or we want to do that, or we want to help, and they have said, you can't do that, we aren't ready for you, or they delay. So there are inefficiencies out there for sure.

Mr. BISHOP. I am glad you all have not faced those specific situations. We have had, primarily from some other groups, a lot of equestrian groups, some backpacking groups that were willing to go in there and try to maintain the trails, but were either not allowed to go in there or prohibited from using the kinds of tools that would make it effective to maintain those types of trails.

Lynn?

Mr. JACKSON. Yes. While you were talking there, Mr. Chairman, a recent incident came up. This is in Garfield County, Utah, which is just across the river a piece from Grand County. I love talking like a westerner. And it was an old trail built in the early 1980s that came off of the cliffs in a place called the Orange Cliffs, and it was in the middle of nowhere. In fact, the land form, the big mesa that this trail road came off was called Land's End.

And so over years it just kind of fell into a state of disarray. And here recently I was approached by some folks in Grand County who were working with some people in Garfield County, and a group of volunteers, motorized recreationists, had volunteered to go in and reopen that trail. It established a great loop system for people working or recreating over there. And they were initially told by the BLM in that part of the world that they couldn't do it. And when the volunteer group pointed out that it was on the BLM's own transportation plan, they said, well, we will reconsider that.

Now, I don't think that has been resolved yet, but I think it is getting to your question—here is a group of volunteers that offered to keep a trail open that had been there for 30 or 40 years and ran into quite a bit of resistance on getting that done.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. And actually I hadn't heard about that one in Garfield, which usually they would let me know sooner than that. So I appreciate it.

With your indulgence, I want to thank all the witnesses who have been here to give testimony. Our efforts are obviously looking at a way of seeing how we can improve relationships and how we can improve especially the recreation opportunities that we have on public lands. Sometimes we tend to look at things in black-and-white definitions, and not always is that the best situation for outdoor recreation opportunities.

So I appreciate your testimony, both oral and written. It is helping to build a narrative that we will use to come up with some suggestions and some solutions to move this forward that I think will allow us to have actually greater access to public lands in the long term and the short term for a whole group of different types of activities that should be there. So I appreciate it.

And I want to officially apologize once again for making you sit here and wait. If it makes you feel any better, I was not entertained while I was waiting on the Floor going through the votes either, but that is one of the negatives that sometimes happen when there are afternoon committee meetings. So I guess in the future, if you are invited back, make sure it is a morning committee that you are going to go to and not an afternoon one.

If there is nothing else, once again with our appreciation this meeting will be adjourned. There may be—never happens—but there may be some questions that Members have for you that can be sent to you in written form. We would ask that you would assist us with responding in written form as well.

But with that, we are standing in adjournment.

[Whereupon, at 4:34 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

[Additional Material Submitted for the Record]

The document listed below has been retained in the Committee's official files.

- Minnesota Trails Assistance Program Grant-in-aid [GIA] Trails, OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE [OHV] Funds of All-Terrain Vehicle [ATV] Off-Highway Motorcycle [OHM] Off-Road Vehicle [ORV], Program Manual, April 2011, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/grants/recreation/ohv/program_manual.pdf).

