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Conservation Groups and Utah's Daggett County Reach Agreement in Rep. Bishop's Public Land Initiative
Agreement may serve as model for balance and collaboration on public lands

Salt Lake City--Conservation groups, Daggett County, Congressman Rob Bishop (R-Utah), and the State of Utah reached an agreement today on public lands protection as part of a process initiated by Rep. Bishop to find common ground among the groups. This plan will result in new wilderness areas, river and wildlife protections in many sensitive areas of the county, and land exchanges to remove school trust lands from areas highlighted for conservation.

"We are delighted by the addition of these pristine lands to the nation's designated conservation landscape," said Tim Peterson, Utah Wildlands Program Director for the Grand Canyon Trust. "This proposal will protect a wide array of remarkable environs: from alpine peaks in the High Uintas to the sandstone-speckled hills along the Green River in Browns Park."

Today's agreement conserves large blocks of land in the Brown's Park area, a remarkable place rich in wildlife and history. A place still reminiscent of its previous occupants and visitors: Native Americans, explorers, outlaws, and early settlers. It adds protection to the east side of Utah's most spectacular alpine environment, the High Uintas Wilderness, treasured by hunters, hikers, and families.

"It's rare in today's highly politicized environment to be able to meet in the middle on issues, especially issues of public lands protection," remarked Mark Clemens, Chapter manager for the Utah Sierra Club. "The end result though is a win for everyone."

"We believe this good news can serve as a blueprint in going forward to resolve the range of complex conservation and economic issues associated with other wild places in Utah," said Bobby McEnaney, Senior Lands Advocate for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

This agreement is intended to provide a framework for legislation to be introduced by Rep. Bishop. It identifies 82,408 acres of federal land for designation as wilderness areas. It classifies an additional 31,083 acres of federal land for a separate conservation designation to preserve wildlife and habitat and designates fourteen miles of the Green River for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. The proposal would also set up a mechanism for trading scattered state trust land inholdings in conservation areas in exchange for development-appropriate federal land elsewhere.

"This proposal is good for the land and good for the people that live there," said Paul Spitler, Director of Wilderness Campaigns for The Wilderness Society. "We appreciate Congressman Bishop, Governor Herbert, and the Daggett County Commission for their leadership in forging this historic agreement."

"This agreement is good news for conservation," observed David Garbett, staff attorney with the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance. "Kudos to the state, county, and Rep. Bishop."

The conservation groups that worked to reach this agreement are the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, The Wilderness Society, the Grand Canyon Trust, the Sierra Club, and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

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Contact:

David Garbett, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, 801-428-3992

Paul Spitler, The Wilderness Society, 202-360-1912

Tim Peterson, Grand Canyon Trust, 801-550-9861

Mark Clemens, Sierra Club, 801-467-9294 ext. 102

Bobby McEnaney, Natural Resources Defense Council, 202-289-2429