

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20500



Dear President Obama,

We represent a diversity of Utahns who work in the fields of health and well-being. Based on a fast-growing body of scientific evidence, we feel compelled to speak out for the physical, psychological, and public health benefits of protecting Utah's Greater Canyonlands region, which we call on you to protect as a national monument.

Like First Lady Michelle Obama, we are very concerned with the mounting cost of Americans' increasingly sedentary lifestyles. Lack of physical activity contributes to a large number of deaths each year from conditions such as heart disease, obesity, and diabetes. Our children are the first generation in human history not expected to have longer life spans than their parents due to the obesity epidemic. Inspiring people to get outside and *move* is critical to public health. Recent studies show that people surrounded by nature are less likely to be obese and that proximity to nature is related to physical activity. With its lure of extraordinary beauty and exceptional walking, biking, rafting and other activities, Greater Canyonlands offers a superlative place for all Americans to discover the joy and satisfaction of being physically active.

A mounting body of research shows that time spent in nature is good for our emotional health as well. Just taking a walk in a natural setting decreases anxiety, reduces physiological response to stress, and enhances a sense of well-being. Wild nature is also a place of healing for people who have suffered trauma or who are experiencing emotional challenges, such as our veterans or troubled youth. Furthermore, research indicates that problem-solving skills, concentration, and creativity are dramatically enhanced when people interact with natural settings, especially those that are pristine and remote. In a time when diagnoses of anxiety-related disorders are at an all time high, we need places like Greater Canyonlands that provide an accessible and affordable source of mental and emotional rejuvenation.

Finally, large natural areas protect reservoirs of clean air and water, providing important health benefits that reach far beyond their boundaries. The two million Utahns who live along the Wasatch Front and suffer exposure to health-threatening air pollution know firsthand the importance of safeguarding such resources. With two of the West's major rivers meeting at its heart, and little development to dirty its clean air, Greater Canyonlands offers particularly significant air and water quality related health benefits to people across the West and beyond.

For these reasons, Mr. President, we urge you to protect the Greater Canyonlands area in southeastern Utah by proclaiming it a national monument. Protecting this world-class landscape would not only preserve an area of unparalleled scenic beauty and rich cultural heritage, it would also foster a healthy America. That is a goal that anyone can support.

Today, Greater Canyonlands is a vital sanctuary for the health and healing of body, mind and spirit. Without action, however, the grandeur, beauty and health benefits of Greater Canyonlands will be diminished over time by dirty energy development and poorly regulated off-road vehicle use. What has been a refuge and source of physical and mental rejuvenation will be lost, not only to Utahns, but to all Americans. We ask you to please preserve our natural heritage and create a legacy of healthy Americans by acting to protect Greater Canyonlands.

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