

**An open letter to President Obama, Governor Herbert, Senator Hatch,  
Senator Lee, Representatives Bishop, Chaffetz, Stewart and Love**

March 15, 2016

We are writing you regarding the future of Utah's redrock wild lands as student leaders from universities and high schools in Utah. Through our leadership on campus today, we will be in your shoes in the near future. As young people who inherit the consequences of decisions made by the elected officials of today, we ask that you provide robust broad-scale protection for the special landscapes in Utah that are still largely undisturbed and wild.

We write as both Utah natives and as those who have come to Utah from other states and countries. One of the reasons we have all chosen to pursue higher education in Utah, is because of spectacular scenery, healthy outdoor-oriented lifestyle, and a growing recreational economy that is linked to the presence of Utah's still wild public lands. We believe the wilderness designation for qualifying lands is the best path for protecting these values and our future because of the national standard set some 50 years ago – not a watered down version suggested by lesser protective status.

We are extremely disturbed that large portions of wilderness quality public land have been excluded from legislation recently proposed through the Public Lands Initiative. Under this legislation, it is almost certain that Utah's precious and iconic landscapes will face irreparable degradation in the future by consciously doubling-down on fossil fuel extraction that threatens planetary health, exacerbates climate change, and casts doubt on the well-being of ours and future generations. We view the burning of fossil fuels as the most serious planetary issue of our times and the Public Lands Initiative, as currently written, only makes these matters worse by

green-lighting “energy zones”, coal mines and highways to support these dirty industries.

Public land is just that – it belongs to the American public, to *us*. We view it as our home, our birthright to inherit and steward, and to enjoy in respectful ways. Our generation *has the most at stake* in ongoing decisions facing Utah’s redrock wild lands. Not only are we avid users of this land, but we will inherit any adverse consequences that will arise from short-sighted decisions made by the current generation of elected officials. What we want is for our generation, our children and their children to have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of Utah’s redrock wild lands in the condition you and your forbearers have enjoyed it.

With the utmost respect and urgency, we call upon you to consider the interests of our generation and support actions and legislation that will retain the wild nature of our public lands in Utah that are still wild today. The Public Lands Initiative does not represent our interests. Barring a legislative solution, we support use of the Antiquities Act to create Bears Ears national monument in southern Utah securing these lands for our future.

Sincerely,

**University of Utah**

*Karsyn Ansari – National Student Exchange Student, Environmental Studies*

*Ayja Bounous – Honors, Environmental Humanities Graduate Program*

*Austin Holmes – Associate Director, Sustainability Board; Member, ASUU*

*Katherine Nix – President, Honors Urban Ecology and Sustainability Scholars*

*Clint Harper – President, Student Collective of Architects and Planners and Ecologists*

*Kailey Kornhauser – Environmental Humanities Graduate Program, 2014-15 Student Body President Westminster College*

*Sarah Abraham – President Psi Chi International Honors Society; Secretary, Psychology Student Advisory Committee*

*Sabrina Stein – Ambassador, Honors UEXPLORE*

*Cortney Bayuk – Ambassador, Honors UEXPLORE*

Sarah Martinez – *Member, Hispanic Connection*  
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Hunter Klingensmith – *President, Enviro Club*  
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### **Brigham Young University**

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Sarah Martin – *Publisher, BYU Political Review*  
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### **Utah State University**

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### **Westminster College**

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### **Utah Valley University**

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### **Academy for Math, Engineering & Science, Charter High School**

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### **Rowland Hall Saint Marks High School**

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