



May 9, 2018

Senator Orrin Hatch  
US Senate  
104 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Representative John Curtis  
US House of Representatives  
2236 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Hatch and Representative Curtis,

Thank you for introducing legislation that would protect public lands in Emery County, Utah for their conservation and outdoor recreation values. By introducing the Emery County Public Land Management Act of 2018, we are encouraged that you have taken the first step toward legislating important protections for public lands in the county. We appreciate the collaborative approach you have implemented in developing this legislation and your earnest efforts to engage the outdoor business and recreation community. We look forward to working with you to identify conservation and recreation goals that are not addressed in the current legislation, and to advocate for those goals through the legislative process.

The Emery County Public Land Management Act of 2018 would designate roughly 530,000 acres of Wilderness, 330,000 acres of National Conservation Area, and 54 miles of Wild and Scenic River. We appreciate that the bill, while releasing 14,000 acres of Wilderness Study Area, would designate roughly 100,000 acres non-WSA lands as Wilderness. We also recognize that, in the process of drafting the bill, you made important modifications to the legislative language that will avoid precedent-setting changes to conservation laws and to the management of our public lands.

Though you have introduced a “clean” bill that would protect much of the San Rafael Swell and surrounding lands and rivers, we want to call your attention to several areas that are left unprotected by the legislation. These places have high outdoor recreation values that, if added to the proposal, would dramatically improve the legislation from the standpoint of outdoor recreation.

- **Upper Muddy Creek:** The stretch of Muddy Creek that flows southeast from I-70 to the proposed Muddy Creek Wilderness is notable for its hiking and paddling opportunities. We encourage you to add this portion of the creek, and the largely roadless landscape that surrounds it, to the proposal.
- **Muddy Creek Wilderness Omissions:** The southern boundary of the proposed Muddy Creek Wilderness area should extend to the southern border of Emery County. This remote area has outstanding wilderness characteristics consistent with the lands to the north proposed for Wilderness designation.

- **Green River Wild & Scenic River Segments:** As drafted, the legislation would add 54 miles of the Green River to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. We encourage you to work with leaders of the Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation to determine whether it is appropriate to add another 16 miles of the Green River flowing through the reservation.
- **Labyrinth Canyon:** We understand that this proposal is driven by Emery County, and you have determined not to address lands outside of the county. Unfortunately, that leaves incomplete protections for Labyrinth Canyon, one of the iconic outdoor recreation destinations in the region. The Wilderness and NCA designations for this special canyon on the Green River cover only the west side of the canyon, because the east side lies in Grand County. If you cannot include protections for the east side of Labyrinth Canyon in this proposal, we urge you to begin work with Grand County as soon as possible to develop a lands bill that addresses the outstanding conservation and recreation opportunities in that county.

We'd also like to continue to work with you to make sure that the bill fully preserves the January 2017 settlement agreement that resolved a legal challenge over the BLM's 2008 Richfield Travel Management Plan and was signed by the Trump administration and several conservation and recreation groups. The BLM is obligated under the terms of that settlement to revise the 2008 Travel plan. New conservation designations should fully preserve the letter and the spirit of that agreement.

Thank you for your work on this legislation, and for considering our comments. We understand that Emery County provided the framework for the bill, and has been flexible in accommodating changes to the language to ensure that it can pass. We hope you will take a closer look at adding the areas above to ensure that the bill serves Emery County, while providing necessary protection for the landscapes that offer so much to the outdoor recreation community. We look forward to working with you as we continue to advocate for the best recreation outcomes throughout the legislative process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Sterling", with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Sterling  
*Executive Director*  
The Conservation Alliance