

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 7, 2011

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar,

Thank you for your June 10, 2011, letter regarding the Department of Interior's (the "Department") "Bipartisan Wilderness Agenda"^[1]. Our offices value your outreach and the opportunity to work together on this very important issue.

The Department's Bipartisan Wilderness Agenda ("Agenda") seemingly was the result of the failed "wild lands" policy. The controversial "wild lands" policy was created by Secretarial Order 3310 ("Order")^[2]. The Order was rejected by Congress and was defunded on April 15, 2011 when President Obama signed the Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011 into law^[3]. As you know, Section 1769 of the law prohibited the use of funds for implementation, administration, or enforcement of the Order^[4].

We were pleased to read your June 1, 2011 memorandum to BLM Director Bob Abbey affirming the Department's abandonment of the "wild lands" policy^[5]. This policy provided the administration with unilateral authority to impose de facto wilderness absent of input and consultation of local citizens and elected officials.

^[1] Press Release. Salazar Takes Next Steps In Push for Bipartisan Wilderness Agenda. June 10, 2011. Retrieved August 17, 2011 from <http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/Salazar-Takes-Next-Steps-In-Push-for-Bipartisan-Wilderness-Agenda.cfm>

^[2] Order No. 3310. Protecting Lands with Wilderness Characteristics on Lands Managed by the BLM. December 22, 2010. Retrieved August 17, 2011 from http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/wo/Communications_Directorate/public_affairs/news_release_attachments.Par.26564.File.dat/sec_order_3310.pdf

^[3] Public Law No: 112-10. Retrieved August 17, 2011 from <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112hr1473enr/pdf/BILLS-112hr1473enr.pdf>

^[4] See Id.

^[5] Memorandum to BLM Director Abbey. June 1, 2011. Wilderness Policy. Retrieved August 17, 2011 from <http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/upload/Salazar-Wilderness-Memo-Final.pdf>

The Department's new wilderness Agenda is built on local, state, tribal, and congressional input and participation. We appreciate this consideration. This fact was highlighted in your memo to Director Abbey when you said the Department would be "soliciting input from members of Congress, state and local officials, tribes, and Federal land managers to identify BLM lands that may be appropriate candidates for Congressional protection under the Wilderness Act."^[6]

This premise was further affirmed in your letter, when you asked our offices to identify "BLM-managed public lands where there is strong support in the local community and among elected officials for permanent protection, and that you believe are ready for designation as Wilderness by this Congress."^[7]

Local leaders in Utah have overwhelmingly rejected the Department's wilderness approach. Twenty-two of Utah's twenty-nine counties, representing 99% of Utah's BLM land and covering all three Congressional districts, responded to a similar letter from BLM State Director Juan Palma. In the various responses to Director Palma, the counties' opposition to the Department's Bipartisan Wilderness Agenda was clear.

Our offices, like many of the counties mentioned above, do not oppose wilderness. In fact, our offices are working on various county land-use proposals with local officials, environmental groups, and other stakeholders. Utahns support this county-by-county process and reject the Department's DC-centric, one-size-fits-all approach to wilderness designations.

Given the fact that our offices are currently engaged with state and local elected officials and key stakeholders in an open and collaborative county-by-county wilderness process, we respectfully request that the Department not include Utah's federal public land in the Department's October 15, 2011 report to Congress. Otherwise, the report may actually prove to be counterproductive to the process we have undertaken. As the Washington County Lands bill demonstrated, it takes a significant amount of time and careful planning before "strong support in the local community" for potential wilderness areas emerge in the state of Utah. It would be unfortunate if the Administration's recommendations undermined the work that is ongoing to identify and build support for wilderness. This county-by-county process is the preferred model in Utah. This model has had success, as you mentioned in your letter to our offices^[9], and we urge the Department to respect our continuing efforts.

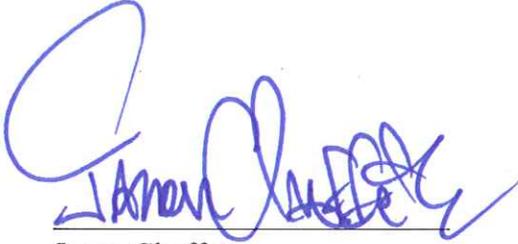
^[6] See Id.

^[7] Salazar Takes Next Steps In Push for Bipartisan Wilderness Agenda. June 10, 2011. Retrieved August 17, 2011 from <http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/Salazar-Takes-Next-Steps-In-Push-for-Bipartisan-Wilderness-Agenda.cfm>

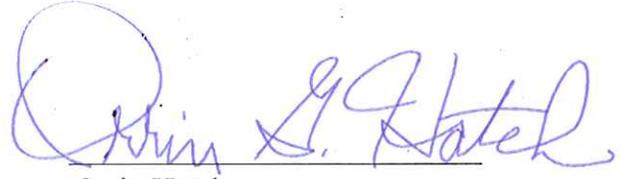
^[9] See Id.

Thank you for providing our offices with the opportunity to respond. Please reply to this letter no later than October 1, 2011 confirming that federal public land in Utah will not be included in the Department's Bipartisan Wilderness Agenda report.

Sincerely,



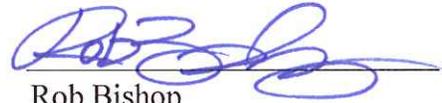
Jason Chaffetz
Member of Congress



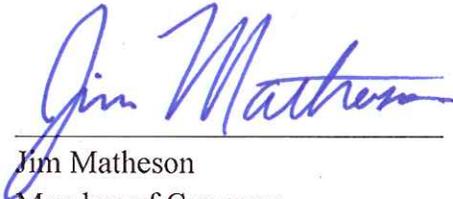
Orrin Hatch
United States Senator



Mike Lee
United States Senator



Rob Bishop
Member of Congress



Jim Matheson
Member of Congress