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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

Opening Statement of
Chairman Rob Bishop
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation
On Tuesday, May 7, 2013

1324 Longworth House Office Building Subcommittee Oversight Hearing on
Impediments to Public Recreation on Public Lands

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Americans are blessed with a vast expanse of land suitable for every type of outdoor recreation. Hunting, fishing, off-road vehicle use, hiking, camping, and boating are among the recreational activities that, for generations, American families have enjoyed on public land.

In my home state of Utah, outdoor recreation opportunities are aplenty. From the world-class skiing in the north to the red rock country of the south, Utah is a truly remarkable place to enjoy the great outdoors.

Utah is leading the way when it comes to accommodating outdoor recreation enthusiasts and businesses. Governor Herbert recently released the state's Outdoor Recreation Vision. The state legislature adopted this vision's first recommendation when they created the Office of Outdoor Recreation. And I have initiated a multi-stakeholder process to harness eastern Utah's conservation, outdoor recreation, and mineral assets in a balanced, locally driven way.

Although our opportunities on federal lands are unsurpassed, they are not being realized as fully as they should because federal land management has become bureaucratic, autocratic and dysfunctional. I believe this dysfunction has catapulted federal land management to the forefront of public lands issues. I believe we are in the midst of a paradigm shift when it comes to the management of our federal lands. Put simply, a major reassessment of our federal land management apparatus is needed.

Public use is one of the fundamental purposes of public land, and that requires open and fair access. Properly managed, our land could provide far more toward our economic well-being, our recreational use and our conservation interests. To be good stewards of federal land, we need to encourage all three objectives – and they are compatible, it is not a zero sum game. The land and all of nature on our big continent is resilient, dynamic and responds well to good management.

In many instances, public access and enjoyment depends upon the services of outfitters and guides. These outfitters and guides are typically small, locally-owned businesses who operate on very small profit margins. They provide jobs that are integral to the

communities that surround our public lands and they provide essential expertise, training, and equipment to visitors.

Increased fees, bureaucracy, restrictions, regulation, and processing time are driving up the costs of running private business on public lands making profitable operation difficult, putting many out of business, and threatening the continuation of the services that make visitor access possible and affordable for families. Unless there is a change in direction, a generation of Americans could lose the opportunity to participate in outdoor adventure and thousands of local jobs could be lost.

In today's hearing, we will receive testimony from outfitters and guides, along with representatives from an insurance company and trade associations that support their work. These are skilled professionals dedicated to public enjoyment of our public land who provide services the government simply cannot. To truly appreciate the abundance of natural resources the Lord has blessed our land with, we should encourage, not hinder, a full range of public uses that our land can provide. Today, we will hear from individuals who experience first-hand how federal land managers are performing their task of providing open and fair access and hear recommendations on how to remove impediments to public recreation on public lands.

I'd like to specifically welcome Brian Merrill and Aaron Bannon. These gentlemen have been active participants in the eastern Utah planning process and have been very helpful in outlining the challenges and opportunities facing the outdoor recreation community.