

Testimony of Jerry Taylor, Mayor, Escalante City, Utah

Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands

September 13, 2011

Thank you for allowing me to testify before your committee today. Yesterday, I was in New York and when I learned about your hearing today on bills that would reform the Antiquities Act. Luckily, I was able to take a slight detour to Washington, DC so I can share with you the impact that national monument designations have on local communities, specifically, my community. I am intimately familiar with this subject since Escalante City is surrounded by part of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument that was designated in 2000.

The establishment of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument has had a devastating economic impact on the economy and people of my city and Garfield County, Utah.

It has come to our attention that Headwaters Economics has issued a report titled *Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument: A Summary of Economic Performance in the Surrounding Communities* which indicates that there has been a strong, positive economic impact to Garfield and Kane Counties from the establishment of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. This is completely contrary to our own observation and analysis.

The report indicates significant increases in real personal income and real per capita income. This is completely false with regards to Garfield County.

In summary, the establishment of the GSENM has hurt the local economy, driven our residents to find work elsewhere, and burdened local government to provide uncompensated services.

- Real personal income DECREASED from \$44,678 in 1996 (in chained 2009 dollars) to \$38,759 in 2009, a decrease of 13.25%

- Real income per capita (in chained 2009 dollars) DECREASED from \$28,542.79 in 1997 to \$25,651.58 in 2009, a decrease of 10.13%

- School enrollment in Garfield County DECREASED from 1,219 in 2000 to 925 in 2010, a decrease of 24.11%

- The Escalante region of Garfield County is the most heavily affected by the Monument. The town population decreased from approximately 850 in 1996 to 750 in 2010. School enrollment in that region of Garfield County decreased from 277 in 2001 to 172 in 2010, a 37.9% decrease.

Further, the report stated that total employment had increased from approximately 6,000 in 1996 to over 8,000 in 2009. Given that the combined populations of of Garfield and Kane Counties 12,297, including pre-school aged children, school children, and retired persons, and the current unemployment rate in Garfield County is greater than 10%, the assertion strains the bounds of credibility.

Based on our knowledge of Garfield County, the Headwaters Economics report is false and misleading.

In addition to the declining socioeconomic condition resulting from the establishment of the GSENM, resident of Garfield and Kane Counties have experienced lost opportunities in developing natural resource based industries. For example:

- The vast Kaiparowitz coal reserves (some of the highest quality coal in the world) is off limits.
- Natural gas and oil reserves are prohibited from exploration and development.
- Interpretative opportunities and visitor services are largely non-existent.
- Little has been done to improve rangeland health.
- A larger burden is also placed on local governments to provide necessary services without appropriate compensation.
- Garfield County volunteers provide all the emergency medical services for the Monument.
- Garfield County volunteers provides search and rescue services for the Monument.
- Garfield County provides solid waste disposal services for visitors.
- Garfield County has law enforcement jurisdiction over the Monument.
- Garfield County provides the vast majority of road maintenance which occurs in the Monument.

Furthermore, I'd like to emphasize:

1. A shift to a tourism-based economy, especially a primitive tourism-based economy, from one of natural resources extraction and agriculture decreases not only wages, but also the circulation of money in the county as H-2B visa workers have less to spend and generally save as much as possible.

2. A shift to a tourism-based economy removes families, the foundations of communities, as living wages are not paid to the low skill work required in the tourism sector.
3. Local property taxation is hurt by a shift to a tourism-based economy as fewer workers are able to purchase homes and instead must live in low-income housing. Further, local sales tax revenue from workers is hurt because disposable incomes are small.
4. Tourism places a strain on government services, with costs of additional services exceeding tourist provided sales taxes and transient room taxes.
5. Uncertainty in public lands decisions prevent private sector investment. The uranium mill near Ticaboo is a prime example. In recent years, the mill was assessed a value in excess of \$50,000,000. Due to the fact that the mill was not able to open, the assessed value has decreased to less than \$2,000,000. This change in valuation of directly impacted all resident property taxpayers as the burden of tax was shifted from from Uranium One onto residents.

If there are any questions regarding the devastating social and economic impacts resultant from the creation of the GSENM, we request that you contact Garfield County staff at 435-676-1157 or Escalante City elected officials at 435-826-4644.