



UINTAH COUNTY

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U. S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop

Committee Field Hearing Energy and Education: What's the Connection?

**Testimony of Uintah County Commissioner Brad G. Horrocks
Uintah County, Utah
Wednesday, August 29, 2018**

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee, I am Brad Horrocks and I serve on the Uintah County Board of County Commissioners located within the Uinta Basin in eastern Utah. I have lived in the Basin for my entire life and have been privileged to be a small business owner and rancher in a place I love. I am honored to testify before the Committee today to discuss energy development and public education.

The Uinta Basin really is a great place to live and work. Because I am here as a Uintah County Commissioner I am going to narrow my comments to my county, but I do not want that to be taken as ignoring the great people of Duchesne County, that are in attendance today!

Uintah County is certainly known for its vast resources of minerals. In fact, we are the top natural gas producing county in the State of Utah and number two in oil production. The vast majority of this production occurs on the over 1.3 million acres of public lands managed by the

Bureau of Land Management. The royalties generated from this production are of great benefit to our residents, providing things such as: improved roads, a public safety facility, community library, and recreational facilities.

Uintah County is a very large county. With over 2.8 million acres, the county is larger than the States of Rhode Island and Delaware combined! Yet, only 15% is privately owned. While this does equate to about twelve acres of private land per person, the remote and arid climate inhibits our residents and businesses from fully utilize these lands comparable to eastern States. Therefore, we urge the federal government to eliminate unnecessary regulations and promote domestic development of energy resources.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) established the statutory guidelines for BLM's management of federal lands. Under this Act, Congress specified that the lands are to be managed "on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield..." The law further states that BLM lands are to be "managed in a manner which recognizes the Nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber from the public lands..."

Similarly, the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970 (MMPA) encourages development of domestic natural resources. The Act states that "it is the continuing policy of the Federal Government in the national interest to foster and encourage private enterprise in...the orderly and economic development of domestic mineral resources, reserves, and reclamation of metals and minerals," and it is therefore "the responsibility of the Secretary of the Interior to carry out this policy when exercising his authority under such programs as may be authorized by law other than this Act."

In 2017, Uintah County adopted its Resource Management Plan, wherein we called upon federal agencies who administer lands within the county to:

- Fully cooperate and coordinate with the county to develop, amend, and implement land and resource management plans and to implement management decisions that are consistent with the purposes, goals, and policies described in local plans to the maximum extent allowed under federal law.
- Expedite the processing, granting, and streamlining of mineral and energy leases and applications to drill, extract, and otherwise develop existing energy and mineral resources located within the Uintah Basin...including oil, natural gas, oil shale, oil sands, gilsonite, phosphate, gold, uranium, copper, solar, and wind resources.
- Allow continued maintenance and increased development of roads, power lines, pipeline infrastructure, and other utilities necessary to achieve the goals, purposes, and policies described in our resource management plan.

Within Uintah County 260,000 acres of land are held in trust and managed by the Utah Schools and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA). Because of concerted efforts from SITLA and other state agencies, the amount of time it takes to permit an oil or gas well on SITLA property is significantly less than similar leases on federally managed lands. Increasing SITLA's presence in our county will generate more revenue for public schools and higher education opportunities within the Basin. We are very supportive of SITLA exchanging more lands into Uintah County.

As Uintah County continues to support the robust development of our energy resources, we have been working to diversify the economy and recreational opportunities available to

citizens of Uintah County and visitors from outside the area. I would like to highlight two out of the many.

The first event is the Outlaw ATV Jamboree. This is turning into a great annual event for our community. To maximize participation and diversity in riders' experience we have partnered with Vernal City, Naples City, Ashley National Forest, National Park Service, BLM, Utah State Parks and SITLA. The Jamboree is in its 3rd year and every year we have doubled registration. This year we had 140 vehicles registered for the event. Bringing on over \$140,000 to the local economy.

The second event is coming up in September this year. The Utah High School Cycling League has selected Uintah County to host one of its mountain biking races. This event will bring over 1,000 student-athletes to Uintah County. It is anticipated that there will be over 2,000 people coming to our county to support and cheer on these racers. The event will be held at our Buckskin Hills Complex. This land was acquired by Uintah County from the Bureau of Land Management to enhance various outdoor recreational opportunities. Uintah County is very grateful to have a good working relationship with our local BLM office that helped facilitate the transfer of this land to Uintah County.

Events like the ATV Jamboree and mountain biking races are a great opportunity to boost the economy, build stronger relationships with federal and state agencies, and showcase the public lands within Uintah County.

The public lands within our county provide great jobs, diverse recreation opportunities and contribute to the high quality of life we enjoy within our county. I am convinced that a good

economy must be coupled with a high quality of life, if we wish to see continued improvement in providing opportunities for our youth to stay in the Basin.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have or provide additional information.

Brad G. Horrocks
Uintah County Commissioner