

Testimony of Bob Bonar
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House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
H.R. 5718, Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act
November 15, 2016

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, Subcommittee Chairman McClintock and Subcommittee Ranking Member Tsongas, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony about the proposed Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act, H.R. 5718.

I'm Bob Bonar, President and General Manager of Snowbird Resort. H.R. 5718 would establish the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area, which is the result of unprecedented local consensus, cooperation and support from many entities and stakeholders.

Alta, Brighton, Solitude and Snowbird resorts believe this is the right compromise between the interests of the business owners, land owners, residents, backcountry and conservation communities – all of whom cherish the deep powder snow and amazing natural beauty of these canyons that are so close to a major metropolitan area.

The Wasatch Mountains and the year-round recreation they provide are a key reason for the growing population along the Wasatch Front. This proposal addresses many of the critical issues including the preservation of water quality, the balance between developed recreation areas such as ski resorts and dispersed recreation for backcountry skiers and hikers. Our number one challenge as business operators and citizens who enjoy these mountains is transportation and we feel H.R. 5718 finally provides meaningful solutions to this problem.

The resorts in Little and Big Cottonwood Canyons support the proposed land exchange that places iconic areas such as Mt. Superior, that are currently privately owned by the resorts, into the proposed Conservation and Recreation Area. In return, the resorts receive land adjacent to their developed base areas that would be used for resort operations. These land exchanges are critically important for many of the groups involved in years of negotiations leading up to this day. H.R. 5718 ensures the access to these areas for the backcountry community while providing the resorts the ability to continue to provide world class recreation and serve as economic engines for Utah providing thousands of jobs for our growing population.

In closing, I offer my thanks to all of the stakeholders who have worked diligently on this consensus legislation and to Chairman Bishop and this committee for your time today.