

Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee, I am Kathleen Karen Nelson, citizen of the town of Mantua in Utah and the person responsible for bringing Mantua's needs to the attention of Representative Bishop. I appreciate this opportunity to provide Mantua's views on HR 3849, the proposed conveyance of 31.5 acres of Forest Service land to the town of Mantua.

I would like to put a personal face on the situation the bill addresses. Mantua is in a unique position. It is 5.6 square miles of land nestled in a canyon in Utah. It is surrounded by land owned by the Forest Service, the State of Utah, Box Elder County, Brigham City, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and private land owners. Within Mantua the three largest landowners are Brigham City, the Federal Government and the State of Utah. None of these pay taxes or provide support to Mantua's economic position through their property ownership. Brigham City's piece is largely comprised of a reservoir for the purposes of irrigation and recreation. Indeed recreation is one of the main purposes for a large portion of the land surrounding Mantua. None of these endeavors create a taxable base for Mantua or generate much revenue outside of the one commercial business in town, a country store/ campground. Mantua supports these sites by being largely the only gateway to them, providing first responders in case of emergency, being the law enforcement entity, providing a fire department and sharing water with much of the land uses. Since 1992 Mantua has provided water to the Forest Service for their campground free of charge and allowed them to hook onto the sewer system for a monthly fee. The maintenance of the roads to and through the Forest Service Campground falls to Mantua. Willard Peak Road, a main road through Mantua is the entrance to the Willard Peak Road ATV trail located south of Mantua, Utah. This area is very popular for camping, mountain biking and OHV use. The road is approx 12 miles long with ATV trails leading off in every direction. Because of the recreation uses of the valley, Mantua is estimated by the police department to swell from its normal 800 citizens to 1200 many weekends of the summer. It is a popular recreation site throughout the year. Mantua bears the brunt of the effects on its roads. Mantua has been a good neighbor to all of these property owners over the years. Even with a shortage of water through the last eight years and a failing well system Mantua has continued to provide water without interruption to the campground.

With so much land owned by these entities one may wonder what land Mantua owns. Not including roads, Mantua owns eight acres, comprising 4 acres for a cemetery, 2.5 acres for a park, and 1.5 acres for municipal buildings. The annual town budget is largely based on property taxes as there is virtually no commercial base to speak of and surplus money for acquiring new land would be hard to come by. In fact the town is so land poor the Town Hall and court system and bowery sit on land leased from the Box Elder School Board. In other words Mantua is rich in natural beauties but poor indeed in ownership of land.

Mantua has need for the Forest Service land for the following potential uses:

- To build an additional cemetery when limited land area of present cemetery is exhausted. Presently the cemetery has less than 200 lots left and for the last five years has been averaging 17 lots per year being used. At this present rate and with Mantua's aging population the town expects to need a new cemetery within a decade.
- To erect new town offices.
- To construct a new and larger fire station.
- To construct new court and law enforcement facilities.
- To provide land for a memorial park.

The cemetery is the most pressing need. It has served the town since 1864. It is nearing the end of its capacity. Because of being located on a hill with drop offs on half of its perimeter and residential areas on the other half expanding the present cemetery is not an option. Our present Municipal building that houses our Fire Station and maintenance equipment also suffers from its location with a drop off and residential borders. Again there is no room for expansion. Mantua needs land desperately.

Mantua is not seeking any portion of the land that is presently used as a campground but two peninsulas that jut into Mantua and are not being used for recreation. It comprises approximately 31.5 acres total in the pieces. The first parcel is adjacent to Mantua's municipal building land and in close proximity to the present cemetery. It is grasses and weeds not forested area. As it has no source of water but natural rainfall for a good portion of the summer it is a fire hazard. The land was once owned by a Mantua citizen, Hans Rasmussen and was transferred as part of a larger piece of property to the Forest Service for the consideration of \$1. His land also was transferred to Box Elder County and Brigham City. Mantua did not benefit by the transfers of land although Hans Rasmussen's descendants still live in the valley.

Mantua would hope that this committee can see the need for the land and that its uses would benefit the public as well as the Forest Service. The road down to the campground would become a paved road and a bigger and better Fire Station would only provide essential security to the area. The proposed Mantua Memorial Park would have walking trails adjacent to the Forest Service Campground. The services and water provided by Mantua would continue and should provide some compensation for the property.

While Mantua realizes this is an unusual request it hopes that the committee can see that an exception is warranted. Mantua is a small town literally surrounded by giants and yet as requests have come to it from these government entities Mantua has tried to meet their needs and respond to them in a timely fashion. Mantua now is in need and hopes that its government will be as responsive to us.