

Mr. Chairman, Members of Congress, I appreciate the opportunity to travel from a small, snow covered county in Northern Utah to Washington D.C. to address you today.

I have been involved in local politics as the Mayor of Garden City and as a Commissioner in Rich County, Utah for the last sixteen years. As a native of Utah, our lands and natural resources are part of my heritage and I love them dearly. In our county, the Federal and State lands are integral to our agriculture, economy, recreation and lifestyle. Over my lifetime I have seen the changes in the uses, attitudes and values of these lands and I struggle with what their future will be.

When the Division of Parks and Recreation approached our county to consider a proposal to create the Shoshone National Trail System, support was immediate. Recreation is a significant factor in Rich County. In the winter, thousands of snowmobiles visit groomed trails and surrounding playgrounds. In the summer, boats and PWC's utilize beautiful Bear Lake. But unfortunately, the use of OHV's, which is increasing dramatically with the influx of visitors, have little opportunity to ride them in a safe, well designated trail system. Most OHV enthusiasts respect the environment and private property and they do pay thousands of dollars in registration fees and property taxes but cannot travel public roads. Consequently, they end up in the wrong place at the wrong time without a trail system, frequently impacting and damaging watersheds, harassing livestock and wildlife, and negatively affecting the recreational experiences of others. This has created a host of present and potential problems that we, as community leaders, have not had the ability or the funding to address.

You have been provided with an excellent overview of the proposal and the existing OHV recreational status, so I will not dwell on those facts and figures. What I will focus on is that as a County Commissioner, I have had the opportunity to speak to many individuals, both elected officials and citizens about this proposal. Commissioners that live within the area covered by the Piate Trail are happy to have it there and state that cooperative efforts between Federal, State and local governments and the public have resulted in positive recreational and economic opportunities. You have before you letter of support from the four counties involved with the Shoshone Trail. I cannot speak for them personally, but I know they are excited about the Shoshone Trail.

Rich County, after reviewing the current proposed trail map, is solidly behind the proposal. There were a few things we needed to be assured of before we committed. There will be no "taking" of private land without compensation to develop this system. Some roads my cross private property but the County considers them right of use (RS2477) roads which we will support as part of the trail system. Grazing on Federal and State lands is critical to our livestock industry and with proper planning and construction of fence crossings, OHV riders and can stay where they are supposed to be. We see improvements of existing roads that will minimize accidents and provide for safer travel opportunities through these lands. We expect increased signage and funding for law enforcement, so that individuals, who have no regard for the environment or the other living things using it, will be convinced to change their ways. The recreational economy in Rich County is presently concentrated in Garden City on the shores of Bear Lake, but this trail system would provide some excellent opportunities for other rural communities that now only see traffic passing through on the way to somewhere else. Finally, with the approval of this proposal, we look forward to involving all the public interests in its planning and development.

I sincerely hope that this committee will provide a favorable recommendation for the Shoshone National Trail bill. It would provide us the opportunity to develop relationships between the stewards of these lands and their resources, the entities that are responsible for their management and protection and our citizens that use and cherish them.