

Mark S. Whitney  
Beaver County Commissioner

Beaver County, Utah

September 27, 2005  
Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health

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Testimony of County Commissioner Mark Whitney  
before the Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am Mark Whitney, a member of the Beaver County Commission. I am here to provide comments on the Minersville Reservoir Conveyance, H. R. 679.

H.R. 679 would convey approximately 200 acres of Bureau of Land Management property to Beaver County. These 200 acres are located in rural Utah on the shore of the Minersville Reservoir between the communities of Beaver and Minersville.

From 1963 to 2002 this property was managed by the State of Utah as the Minersville State Park under a lease with the BLM through the Recreation and Public Purposes Act. During this time the state constructed campground facilities, a boat launch ramp, a park, a pavilion, an entrance station, and a maintenance building on the property.

In April of 2002 Beaver County was informed that the State of Utah would be closing the Minersville State Park due to budget cuts. We were told the Minersville State Park was losing approximately \$90,000 annually.

Shortly thereafter, we convened discussions with the local BLM office to determine the options for the future of the property. The local BLM staff informed us that the existing facilities would be removed from the property and that the property would be reclaimed back to its native condition unless another governmental entity took over the lease with the BLM. No governmental entities other than Beaver County are interested in managing the park.

The park is very important to the residents of Beaver County. We do not want to see the park demolished. However, Beaver County, with its limited resources and small tax base, does not have the funds to subsidize the park indefinitely. If Beaver County is going to operate the park, we need the flexibility to develop the park in a manner that will create additional revenues. H.R. 679 would allow us this flexibility.

For example, under H.R. 679 the county would be allowed to develop certain parcels of the property in harmony with the surrounding environment which could be sold for vacation homes, a lodge, rental vacation cabins, etc. This would increase the usage at the park and also provide additional revenues that could be used for maintenance and improvements at the park.

I am confident that with H.R. 679, the Minersville Reservoir Park will become successful without becoming a burden on the taxpayers of our county.

I also feel the reversion clause in the bill does an excellent job of assuring the United States that the property will always be taken care of properly.

I look forward to working with you further on this bill and would be happy to answer any questions you may have