



Resolution #13

Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs
Approved, September 10, 2006

OPPOSE A DESTRUCTIVE PUBLIC LAND BILL AFFECTING WASHINGTON COUNTY, UTAH
(Washington County Growth and Conservation Act of 2006)

In 2005, the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs passed a resolution supporting America's Redrock Wilderness Act (Resolution #6, 2005), a citizens' proposal for the protection of over 9 million acres of BLM lands throughout the state of Utah as Wilderness. A second resolution was adopted (Resolution# 14, 2005) supporting Wilderness designation for the Zion-Mojave proposed wilderness in Southwest Utah, a particularly vulnerable part of America's Redrock Wilderness. New legislation had been introduced, the Washington County Growth and Conservation Act of 2006 (S. 3636 and H.R. 5769), that could impact vast amounts of public land in Southwest Utah, including the Zion-Mojave proposed wilderness. The Senate Energy & Natural Resources committee will consider the legislation in September. Several provisions in the Washington County bill are cause for serious alarm.

-- The bill denies wilderness protection for the overwhelming majority of wild lands that would be preserved under America's Redrock Wilderness Act (H.R. 1774/S. 882), including stripping existing statutory protection from over 14 square miles of congressionally protected BLM wilderness study areas;

-- the bill requires the sale and/or exchange of no less than 40 square miles (24,300 acres) of BLM-administered public land;

-- diminishes public involvement and input by sidestepping existing land sales law (the Federal Land Policy and Management Act-FLPMA);

-- gives away rights-of-way on public lands (estimated at 14 square miles) to country water developers at taxpayers' expense;

-- creates a new mandate to funnel funding derived from sales of public lands away from land conservation towards local interests and development projects, such as off-road vehicle trails, highways, pipelines, utility corridors, and dams in Washington County;

-- requires that BLM establish a new system of off-road vehicle trails

in Washington County;

-- authorizes utility corridors and rights-of-way that would be used for a planned pipeline to Lake Powell; the pipeline would pump approximately 70,000 acre-feet of Colorado River water from Lake Powell, crossing over 120 miles before reaching a reservoir near the city of St. George; and

-- requires that BLM consider placing a transportation corridor through the Red Cliffs Desert Tortoise Reserve, already set aside as critical habitat for the endangered tortoise.

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs strongly opposes the Washington County Growth and Conservation Act of 2006 (S. 3636; H.R. 5769) in its current form.

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