

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-4402

February 7, 2013

The Honorable Ken Salazar  
Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C St NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Secretary Salazar:

We are deeply troubled by recent Bureau of Land Management (BLM) decisions to suppress economic activity within the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (Monument). It has been reported that BLM is actively identifying and purchasing private property with the express goal of preventing commercial activities within Garfield County<sup>1</sup>.

In light of this disheartening situation, we request your help in expediting the disposal of federal lands within Garfield County. Approximately 5,423 acres of federal land have been identified by BLM as suitable for disposal, or 0.002% of Garfield County's landmass. Let us be clear, we are not suggesting that this paltry amount of disposals makes up for BLM's obvious abuse, because we believe this number is far too small and more lands should be made available, but we urge the Department to use whatever means necessary to process these disposals in an expedited manner, using categorical exclusions and other fast-tracking authorities to dispose of this diminutive percentage of federal property.

With just 3% of land within Garfield County in private ownership, it is imperative that these disposals happen in a timely manner. Concurrently, we have major concerns with BLM's land acquisition decision and expect a thorough explanation.

Commercial activities and economic development opportunities in Garfield County are already limited. When President Clinton unilaterally designated the Monument in 1996, a suite of economic development options were taken away from county leaders and residents. Resource development, ranching, and motorized recreation are some of the activities that instantly became discouraged or stopped altogether.

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<sup>1</sup> Maffly, Brian (January 30, 2013) Private land in Grand Staircase trickling to BLM. Retrieved January 31, 2013 from <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/news/55635228-78/monument-blm-private-grand.html.csp>

National environmental groups and out-of-state politicians lauded President Clinton's proclamation then and continue to offer support for the Monument now. More recently, you touted the economic benefits that outdoor recreation has on local economies:

"Protected public spaces can serve as magnets for visitors. Though the [National Landscape Conservation System] accounts for only 10 percent of the lands BLM manages, its lands are now welcoming more than 9 million visitors a year. **Those 9 million visitors spend money at local motels, grocery stores, and gas stations. They rent bikes and use guide services** (emphasis added)."

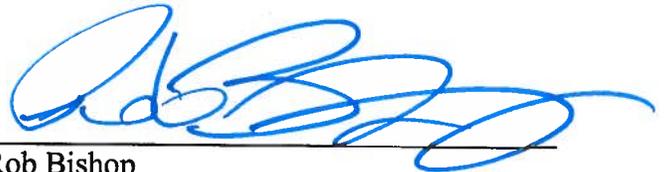
When the BLM spends nearly half a million taxpayer dollars to suppress commercial activity, they are suppressing the very activities you touted in your speech. How can "protected public spaces" grow economies or benefit local communities if commercial activity is discouraged or suppressed? If commercial activity is prohibited within the Monument, where are visitors supposed to sleep at night, eat during the day, fill up their tanks, or rent recreation equipment?

We urge the Department to do the right thing and quickly dispose of the federal acreage identified by BLM as suitable for disposal. Without this action the families of these affected communities continue to suffer economic harm at the hands of the federal government.

Sincerely,



Chris Stewart  
Member of Congress



Rob Bishop  
Member of Congress



Jason Chaffetz  
Member of Congress



Orrin Hatch  
U.S. Senator



Mike Lee  
U.S. Senator

<sup>2</sup> Kersgaard, Scot (November 18, 2010) Salazar: Economic growth more often tied to recreation than to extraction. Retrieved January 31, 2013 from <http://coloradoindependent.com/67676/salazar-economic-growth-more-often-tied-to-recreation-than-to-extraction>