



GARY R. HERBERT
GOVERNOR

STATE OF UTAH
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

GREG BELL
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

**Governor Gary R. Herbert's Testimony to
House Natural Resources Committee
March 1, 2011**

"The Impact of the Administration's Wild Lands Order on Jobs and Economic Growth"

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am Gary Herbert, Governor of the State of Utah. Thank you for this opportunity to share my concerns about a bureaucratically-established policy that dramatically impacts our way of life in the West and is detrimental to our entire nation.

I recognize that the relationship between the states and the federal government is a partnership. But unfortunately, we are here today because the partnership between the states and federal government was recently ignored by an action of the United States Department of the Interior.

This decision casually casts aside an agreement that was entered into more than a decade ago between the Governor of the State of Utah and the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

That agreement was reached in order to avoid litigation and to provide certainty for those who rely on consistent, clear management policies for BLM lands. Instead, this new Order will likely lead to renewed litigation while slamming the door shut on citizens and communities that are seeking certainty in the public lands management process.

I urge you – as our representatives and as our partners – to undue the damage that is being done by Secretarial Order 3310 and reaffirm a congressionally-established process that established clarity and certainty in the management of our public lands.

In my state, we have beautiful and resource rich lands that support both a strong energy-development industry and a vibrant outdoor recreation industry. There are some who will tell you that you can only have one or the other – that it is somehow a zero sum game. That is simply not true in Utah.

With new, innovative technology, we can protect the environment while also developing our natural resources in ways that were never imagined a few years ago. We have millions of acres of open land – more than enough for development and more than enough for recreation.

We have worked for years to bring varying groups and opinions together for the mutual benefit of our entire state economy and that of the nation.

Mr. Chairman, this Secretarial Order has undone years of this collaborative and costly work between county officials, environmental organizations, natural resource industries, citizens and our local Bureau of Land Management offices as they have worked together to craft BLM Resource Management Plans throughout our state.

This Order changed the rules right at the end of the game, the results of which are having a profoundly negative impact on public lands protection and natural resource development in Utah.

It is harming numerous rural communities throughout Utah whose economies rely on sound and consistent public lands management practices.

Due to this order, the economy in places like Roosevelt, Vernal, Price, Kanab, Castle Dale, Blanding, and Panquitch is going to be harmed.

We're being told by oil and gas exploration companies that, due to regulatory uncertainty, they will curb their activities in Utah. They will not invest the time and capital necessary to prepare new bids on new exploration, until the regulatory situation is steadied.

The lack of this new investment means not only a loss of jobs for Utah residents but also the loss of natural resources that only increases our nation's dependence on fuel from foreign countries. Have you checked the price of a gallon of gas lately? This Secretarial Order isn't going to help out one little bit at the pump.

Taking an inventory is important for our public lands – but how many times do we need to inventory and re-inventory the same land. We have already been through the inventory process in Utah and the only reason to ask for yet another inventory is to establish a “wilderness” designation through a de facto bureaucratic process.

The continual re-inventorying of federal lands as required by Secretarial Order 3310 is wasteful and wrong. It is justifiable only by politics ... not by policy.

This Order also directly impacts our school children.

Like most other western states, Utah was granted land at statehood for the financial support of K-12 public education and other state institutions. Utah owns 3.3 million acres of state trust lands interspersed amongst BLM land.

It is safe to say that the long-term effect of this policy will be the loss of billions of dollars to the Permanent School Fund, and ongoing losses in endowment income for each public and charter school.

This Order hinders also our State's ability to develop a long-term, sound energy plan. It hinders the ability of all public lands states to develop their natural resources. And this action serves not to benefit any one group, but to endanger the safety and economic well-being of our entire nation.

In closing, this body and your colleagues ought to be as offended as the people of Utah are by this order...

This action simply usurps the authority of Congress, and for the first time ever, creates a favored category for multiple use management, creates new levels of centralized bureaucratic review, contains vague, inconsistent and overly broad definitions of Wild Lands, and lacks clarity as to what is wilderness and what is subject to multiple use and development.

By bureaucratic fiat, one branch of the government has overstepped and overreached and has devalued the rights of the states and the citizens.

I urge you, on behalf of the people of Utah and for the benefit of the people of our entire nation, to exercise the congressional oversight you have to correct this grave error and return reason, certainty, and balance to the management of our public lands.

I thank you for your time and am happy to answer any questions.