

RESOLUTION NO. R-2015-1934

A RESOLUTION DEMANDING THE UNITED STATES BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT GRANT WASHINGTON COUNTY AN EXTENSION TO THE 90 DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR THE DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR THE BEAVER DAM WASH AND RED CLIFFS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREAS AND THE DRAFT AMENDMENT TO THE ST. GEORGE FIELD OFFICE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT IN ORDER TO ALLOW TIME TO FULLY ADDRESS THE POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACTS THAT WOULD RESULT FROM IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DRAFT PLANS

WHEREAS, on March 30, 2009, President Obama signed into law the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, which included provisions regarding the public lands in Washington County, Utah (“Washington County Lands Bill”) that are managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management St. George Field Office (“BLM”);

WHEREAS, the Washington County Lands Bill was the direct result of discussions between Senator Robert Bennett’s office involving County elected officials, representatives from the State of Utah, representatives from the BLM, the Wilderness Society, and others;

WHEREAS, the overarching goal of the Washington County Lands Bill was to designative wilderness areas, national conservation areas, and ensure that multiple uses continued in the non-wilderness areas of Washington County;

WHEREAS, the Washington County Lands Bill directed the BLM to amend and create land management plans in conformance with the Bill;

WHEREAS, the BLM has now spent over six years compiling the Beaver Dam Wash and Red Cliffs National Conservation Area Draft Resource Management Plans and a draft Amendment to the St. George Field Office Resource Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (collectively “draft plan”);

WHEREAS, the draft plan consist of over 1,100 pages of complex information;

WHEREAS, on July 17, 2015, the BLM published notice that the draft plan was available and that the BLM would accept public comments regarding the plan until October 15, 2015;

WHEREAS, it is routine for the BLM to grant extensions to local government entities in order to allow adequate time to review and comment on resource management plans;

WHEREAS, such extensions are only fair, as the BLM takes years to compile the information;

WHEREAS, it is unrealistic to expect a substantive and helpful comment in a mere three months;

WHEREAS, after an initial review of the draft plan, Washington County believes that the preferred alternative—and in many instances every alternative except the no action alternative—proposes land management that contradicts the spirit and plain language of the Washington County Lands Bill;

WHEREAS, additionally, many of the proposed management methods will directly impact the local economic health and long term vitality of Washington County;

WHEREAS, Washington County is concerned that information regarding the socio-economic impact of many of the proposals in the draft plan alternatives was not shared with the County as required by a memorandum of understanding signed by the County and the BLM;

WHEREAS, Washington County is likewise concerned that the BLM has failed in its statutory obligations under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act to coordinate their planning efforts with local land use plans—particularly in this instance with Washington County's General Plan; and

WHEREAS, it is absolutely necessary that Washington County be given adequate time to comment on the draft plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNTY COMMISSION OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, UTAH, that the County Commission respectfully demands that the U.S. Bureau of Land Management St. George Field Office allow Washington County an additional 90 days to prepare its comment to the draft resource management plans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County Commission shall send a letter to the BLM making a request for an extension in accordance with this Resolution.

VOTED UPON AND PASSED BY THE WASHINGTON COUNTY COMMISSION AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE WASHINGTON COUNTY COMMISSION HELD ON THE 10TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2015.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

ALAN D. GARDNER, Chair

ATTEST:

Kim M. Hafen
Washington County Clerk-Auditor

Commissioner Gardner voted ____
Commissioner Iverson voted ____
Commissioner Renstrom voted ____

Approved as to Form:

Deputy Washington County Attorney