

May 14, 2015

From: Mike Hyde, Community Development Director 738-1151

For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE

DUCHESNE COUNTY PUBLIC LANDS INITIATIVE

Duchesne County will be holding another series of public meetings on May 27th and June 1st to discuss Duchesne County's participation in Congressman Rob Bishop's Public Lands Initiative. The Public Lands Initiative has been referred to as a "grand bargain" in which participating Utah counties offer certain conservation lands in exchange for a variety of benefits such as: protection from new future conservation designations, recognition or establishment of rights of way over federal lands, recognition of energy zones and removal of hurdles to energy development.

Previously, the Duchesne County Commissioners were not anxious to participate in the Public Lands Initiative since Duchesne County already has 289,311 acres of wilderness, in the High Uintas. This is 13.8% of the county's land area.

However, after seeing proposals being considered by neighboring Carbon, Daggett, Summit and Uintah counties, Duchesne County leaders saw that it may be beneficial to have land management practices be consistent across the county lines in certain areas.

For example, Carbon County is proposing that the existing Nine Mile Canyon Area of Critical Environmental Concern in their county be replaced by a Nine Mile Canyon National Conservation Area. It would make sense to treat that portion of the Nine Mile Canyon Area of Critical Environmental Concern in Duchesne County the same way.

Uintah County is considering a wilderness area in the Desolation Canyon region. Duchesne County is exploring the possible extension of this wilderness area from the Uintah County line, westerly into our jurisdiction, on BLM lands, below the canyon rim, north of Nine Mile Canyon and east of Frank's Canyon.

Duchesne County is exploring options on the south slope of the Uintas to tie in with wilderness or special management areas being considered by Daggett, Summit and Uintah Counties. Again, the goal is consistency of land management across county lines where it makes sense.

Duchesne County plans to ask for the same concessions from conservation interests that are being asked for by most of the neighboring counties. These include protection of valid existing rights such as roads, grazing, recreation and water uses in any new special designation areas.

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The next public meeting will be with the Duchesne County Public Lands Committee, on May 27, 2015 at 5:30 PM. The second public meeting will be with the Duchesne County Commissioners, on June 1, 2015 at 1:30 PM. Both meetings will be held in the Duchesne County Commission Chambers, 734 North Center Street, in Duchesne.

Citizens interested in the management of federal lands in Duchesne County should plan to attend these meetings.

Citizens who would like additional information in advance of the public meetings should contact Mike Hyde, Community Development Director at 435-738-1151 or email mhyde@duchesne.utah.gov.