



IPAMS
Independent
Petroleum
Association
of
Mountain
States

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Lowell Braxton
IPAMS Utah Representative
3666 Millbrook Terrace
Salt Lake City, Utah 84106

September 30, 2009

Hon. Nick Rahall
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
2307 Rayburn House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Doc Hastings
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
1203 Longworth House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Raul M. Grijalva
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks,
Forests & Public Lands
U.S. House of Representatives
1440 Longworth House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Rob Bishop
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Parks,
Forests & Lands
U.S. House of Representatives
123 Cannon House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

Re: H.R. 1920 America's Red Rocks Wilderness Act of 2009

Dear Congressmen Rahall, Hastings, Grijalva and Bishop:

The Independent Petroleum Association of Mountain States (IPAMS) appreciates the opportunity to comment on H.R. 1920, America's Red Rocks Wilderness Act of 2009, in advance of hearings on October 1, 2009.

IPAMS represents over 400 companies engaged in environmentally-responsible exploration and production (E&P) of natural gas and oil in the Rocky Mountain West. IPAMS represents several operators who together produce over 85% of Utah's natural gas, and is the only trade association in Utah exclusively devoted to E&P.

IPAMS is strongly opposed to H.R. 1920. We believe that natural gas and oil development is compatible with the land and environment. The impact of natural gas and oil activity in Utah is very small and temporary: of the approximately 36 million acres of federal lands in Utah, about 60,000 acres, or 0.17% have surface

disturbance. When a well is decommissioned, the land is reclaimed to its previous state. Natural gas and oil reclamation is so successful in Utah that the lands proposed for wilderness designation in H.R. 1920 contain hundreds of previous and even existing well sites. This demonstrates that we can develop vital American energy resources while still preserving the land for recreation, wildlife, and other resource values.

IPAMS is concerned that the Red Rocks Wilderness Act would place a significant amount of energy off-limits to development. Energy development on public lands is extremely important in Utah, where 67% of natural gas and 42% of oil production is federal. The amount of acreage, 9.4 million, that would be taken away from energy development constitutes about 17% of Utah's total surface. In Utah today, 12 million acres (22%) are already off limits to energy production. H.R. 1920 would eliminate the productive use of a huge proportion of Utah's public lands, eliminating multiple use of the land and enabling only a narrow range of activities. Utah's rural economies and jobs would suffer if 39% of public lands were in a permanent, non-productive capacity.

While IPAMS appreciates the fact that the Natural Resources Committee is deliberating this bill, it has not been passed into law after nearly two decades of introduction before each successive Congress. IPAMS has obtained evidence through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request that, despite its failure to pass into law, the Department of the Interior is currently removing nominated parcels from lease sales in Utah that are within the 9.4 million acre Red Rocks Wilderness proposed area. IPAMS objects to de facto wilderness protection of lands that have been proposed but not passed by Congress, and would like to call this to the Committee's attention. DOI's removal of these parcels from lease sales are de facto withdrawals of federal land from multiple use management and therefore contrary to law.

BLM is required to manage federal lands pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. 43 U.S.C. § 1701(a)(7), (8) & (12); 43 U.S.C. § 1732(a) & (b); 43 C.F.R. § 1610.5 3. FLPMA identifies "mineral exploration and production" as one of the "principle or major uses" of public lands. 43 U.S.C. § 1702(l).

Of the 9.4 million acres of federal land proposed for wilderness designation, 3.2 million acres are currently designated as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). With respect to much of the remaining 6 million acres of federal lands comprising the Red Rocks proposal, for more than 30 years BLM has managed these lands for multiple uses, including oil and gas leasing, exploration and development, mining, grazing, and recreation. As a result, these lands contain human imprints that render these lands ineligible for wilderness or other special designation. Thus, the Department of the Interior's apparent treatment of these federal lands as de facto wilderness is also contrary to the facts on the ground.

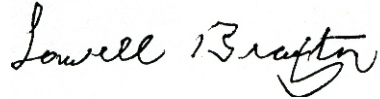
Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Attached is a report from one of our member companies about the wilderness quality of some of the proposed lands, including pictures. These are just some examples of lands that do not meet the original intent of wilderness as defined in the

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Wilderness Act of 1964. We support the position of Utah's Congressional Delegation that any wilderness designation in Utah should be focused on lands that meet the criteria for wilderness, and that are identified through a collaborative process involving state and local officials, industry, and citizens' groups.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lowell Braxton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'L'.

Lowell Braxton
IPAMS Utah Representative

Encl.

cc: Governor Gary Herbert
Senator Orrin Hatch
Senator Robert Bennett
Congressman Rob Bishop
Congressman Jim Matheson
Congressman Jason Chaffetz
Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar
Bob Abbey, BLM Director
Selma Sierra, BLM Utah State Director
Michael Styler, Utah Natural Resources, Executive Director
Kevin Carter, Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration