January 17, 2017

To ?

Re: Transfer of Public Lands

Dear ?,

On behalf of Gunnison County, we would like to strongly oppose any federal effort to directly transfer or create easier avenues for the transfer of federally protected public lands to the states. Public lands are arguably America's greatest idea and our greatest treasure. They are our heritage and they are our future and our template for preservation has been replicated throughout the world.

The positive economic impacts of public lands are well documented. Outdoor recreation nationally creates $646 billion in direct spending each year and creates 6.1 million American jobs. As it trickles through the economy it creates $1.6 trillion in economic impact and 12.1 million jobs. The outdoor recreation economy generates $80 billion in national, state and local tax revenues each year.

In the state of Colorado, active outdoor recreation contributes over $10 billion annually to our economy, supports 107,000 jobs across the state, generates nearly $500 million in annual state tax revenue and produces $7.6 billion annually in retail sales, accounting for 4 percent of gross state product. Like other western states with a large percentage of public lands, Colorado is outpacing the nation in economic growth. The competitive advantage offered by its public lands attracts talent, investment, and businesses to Colorado, contributing to its high rate of employment and income growth. A majority (63%) of Colorado small business owners choose to do business in the state because of opportunities tied to public lands. A State of the Rockies poll shows that Colorado voters clearly value the impact public lands have on their economy – virtually all (98%) say they are an essential part of the state's economy and 85% agree that the state's public lands help attract high quality employers and good jobs.

Governor John Hickenlooper has noted that the transfer of public lands to the states would cost Colorado staggering amounts of money. For example, wildfire suppression spending by the Forest Service is so large that it can exceed what many Western states spend on police protection and law enforcement. Colorado depends on federal firefighters to control wildfires within the state. By seizing federal lands, Colorado would be responsible for the duties of public land managers. This includes providing enough staff and equipment to combat wildfires. Wildland firefighting costs last year topped $2 billion across the country, and in the 2012 wildfire season alone, fighting wildfire cost $92 million in Colorado.

Gunnison County is over 80% public lands which are essential because they support healthy communities, protect our natural environment, attract businesses and talent, are critical to our agricultural community and developed water rights and provide outdoor recreation opportunities. Rural

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Western counties with more than 30% of their lands under federal protection increased jobs at a rate 4 times faster than rural counties with no federally protected lands.

The transfer of lands to the states would resort in the privatization or auctioning off of public lands to the highest bidder and would most likely eliminate access for Americans to places they hunt, fish, hike, bike, motorcycle, off-road, snowmobile, raft, watch wildlife and generally recreate. Nothing is more American than our public lands and transferring or selling them is not in the nation's best interest.

We would strongly urge you to take steps to oppose any attempts at the federal transfer or privatization of our public lands.

Respectfully,

Phil Chamberland, Chairperson	Jonathan Houck, Commissioner	John Messner, Commissioner

cc: ?