

Feb. 28, 2020

Dear Mayor Wilson,

We the undersigned appreciate your attention on issues related to the Wasatch Mountain Range and request your assistance in furthering our efforts to implement decisions that support our high quality of life here in Utah. The health of our watershed, public lands and outdoor economy are paramount and we would like to offer our good faith involvement in reaching outcomes that are a win for the millions of people who enjoy the wild spaces in the Central Wasatch Mountains.

In July 2015, an unprecedented local coalition of businesses, citizens, communities, governments, and organizations, including the State of Utah, came to a consensus on a comprehensive vision and action plan to address recreation, economy, transportation and environment in the Central Wasatch Mountains. The deliverables outlined in this process represent a grand bargain, a good faith compromise, to reach the greatest positive outcome that upholds the values and desires of this community and visitors who depend on this area for water, recreation and interaction with nature. The comprehensive package has a little something for everyone, hikers, resorts, lovers of wildlife, backcountry skiers, mountain bikes, families, land owners and downstream water users. This "something for everyone" approach is the glue that keeps this vision relevant; piecemeal decision making is perhaps one of the greatest threats to this region and the need for comprehensive legislation to aid in managing the intensifying pressures in the Wasatch is urgently needed.

Currently, there is an effort by the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) attempting to fracture this accord, proposing to remove existing wilderness lands in the Mount Olympus Wilderness Area to connect a portion of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail (BST). Typically Utah has put a high value on "local control of public lands" and decries the influence of outside lobbying entities; taking this action now is ignoring and degrading the intensely local efforts and yielding to the will of a non-Utah based org that has never been formally a part of this process.

A stand alone approach to remove Wilderness, while on its face may look like a benefit to the community, will undermine our overall goal of thoughtful and holistic planning and implementation as outlined in the Accord and furthered by the Central Wasatch Commission. Carving out elements of the agreed actions leaves our communities at risk and perpetuates the piecemeal approach to land use in the foothills and canyons. The Accord, which does accommodate adjusting wilderness for the multi-use, Bonneville Shoreline Trail, is a package, a consensus, and individual actions sans a path for delivering the conservation measures are unsupportable.

The land proposed to replace the removed wilderness acreage is not of the same quality or value as the acreage proposed to be removed from the National Wilderness Preservation System. As we know in the Wasatch, which is intensively used not all acres are created equal.

Acting on one element of the Accord diminishes the holistic approach that was signed and agreed upon at the conclusion of that process. The agreement for the BST was not a calculation of these acres here for those over there, rather in the context of new wilderness areas, creating a comprehensive recreation plan that not only creates more trails, but gives users of those trails more amenities and sustainable access.

As you are likely aware, there are several processes in motion including UDOT EIS for Little Cottonwood Canyon, Central Wasatch Commission "Mountain System Transportation Plan," SL County is updating its "Wasatch Canyon General Plan," while also looking at a regional trails plan, and Salt Lake City is undertaking a "Foothill Trail Master Plan." Each of these stand alone studies or planning documents have had extensive involvement from our different groups and in addition to continuing our focus on the outcomes outlined above will provide a broad, multifaceted approach that negates the need to push legislation that detracts from the supported, community driven needs and desires that continue to be our focus.

The comprehensive compromise legislative package that has been crafted by local leaders has something for everyone. The Utah Delegation has said that transportation needs to be solved before any other actions from this package happen, yet they now wish to remove wilderness. The mountain bike community has certainly been part of these discussions. It is disappointing and disheartening to be witness to this unnecessary affront to good faith and collaboration. We believe staying our course to work on these efforts locally, holistically and comprehensively with the vast partnerships across the region achieves a result that will enhance the opportunities for enjoyment and stewardship of the Wasatch Mountains.

Sincerely,

Kyle Maynard
Friends of Alta

League of Women Voters, Salt Lake

Carl Fisher
Save Our Canyons

Will McCarvill
Sierra Club, Utah Chapter

Tom Diegel
Wasatch Backcountry Alliance

Dennis Goreham
Wasatch Mountain Club