

TESTIMONY of
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BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS and PUBLIC LANDS
On
H. R. 2551 - THE BONNEVILLE SHORELINE TRAIL
ADVANCEMENT ACT

Chairman Neguse and Ranking Member Fulcher, thank you for the opportunity to present the case for H.R. 2551, the Bonneville Shoreline Trail Advancement Act, originally introduced by Utah Rep. John Curtis on April 15, 2021. This legislation has arisen out of the need to secure recreational access to public lands and better manage those public lands immediately adjacent to the urban Wasatch Front. The bill has broad support among a variety of recreational groups, businesses and local governmental entities who are actively working to provide more trail-based outdoor recreational opportunities, enhance the quality of life for our communities, and manage the demands our rapidly growing population here along Utah's Wasatch Front. The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA), the Bonneville Shoreline Trail Committee and Trails Utah are strong proponents of the bill and have been working for its support.

The Bonneville Shoreline Trail Advancement Act would exchange 326.27 acres at the perimeter of four different Wilderness Areas managed within the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest, for 326.27 acres of totally intact alpine forest in heavily used Millcreek Canyon in Salt Lake County. These slight retractions will occur in places where Wilderness area boundaries extend down to the private property along residential areas and busy roadways. Adjusting wilderness boundaries in these areas will allow for a variety of recreational uses that includes mountain biking and create a buffer of open space that can be managed consistently and effectively for other concerns such as wildland fire mitigation.

The popularity of all types of outdoor recreational activities that depend on trails, both active and passive, including hiking, bird watching, trail running, and mountain biking are at an all-time high today. In recent years this trend has accelerated, due in large part to the pandemic and people looking to get out and recreate in nature close to home. This bill will help secure needed recreational access for neighborhoods and communities that exist at the wildland urban interface along northern Utah's booming Wasatch Front. Trails close to where people live and work enable people with a variety of abilities and backgrounds to access trails and wild spaces, fosters a sense of stewardship, and provides outstanding educational opportunities to a broad spectrum of the population. The Bonneville Shoreline Trail provides alternative transportation, allows for use by adaptive athletes, and affords thousands of families that have children participating in the Utah High School Mountain Bike League a safe and convenient place to practice their sport close to home.

Originally conceived of as a "shared-use" mountain bike friendly trail, the Bonneville Shoreline Trail is Northern Utah's most important regional trail and hosts thousands of hikers, mountain bikers, runners

and dog walkers every day. Planners have envisioned the trail eventually stretching several hundred miles south from the Utah-Idaho border, encircling valleys along the way at the approximate shoreline elevation of ancient Lake Bonneville. To date more than 100 miles of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail have been constructed along the foothills of our densely populated northern valleys and many more are planned for construction. Hundreds of miles of community trails link directly to the Bonneville Shoreline Trail, as it is the central organizing feature of trail master plans for numerous municipalities and counties in Northern Utah.

People in Utah rely on access to trails in general, and to the Bonneville Shoreline Trail, for their daily fitness, sense of well-being and general quality of life in Utah. Studies have shown that access to trails and outdoor recreation opportunities help to attract and retain our skilled work force, particularly in the tech arena, making trails a significant factor in our state's economic health. Utah leads the nation with more than 7,000 high school athletes now participating in mountain bike racing, making access to trails close to home a highly sought-after amenity. Existing and proposed trail alignments in Wilderness areas immediately adjacent to our communities, do not allow for mountain bikes, cannot be built or maintained using mechanized equipment and are off limits to competitive events of any kind. Wildfire is especially prevalent at the wildland urban interface and efforts to fight those fires or conduct fuel reduction efforts is hampered by restrictive Wilderness area bans on mechanized tool or machine use.

The Bonneville Shoreline Trail Advancement Act is good for the people of Northern Utah and can help secure an outstanding trail experience along the foothills, where people live and work, reducing car trips and impacts to our sensitive watersheds and canyon areas. Your support of this bill is deeply appreciated by the trail advocacy community and trail users everywhere.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would like, at this time, to address any questions you may have.