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July 9, 2020

Ms. Debra Haaland, Chair
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ms. Haaland:

I am very pleased to testify before your committee. Our Brand family seeks to donate 40 acres of mountain land which borders Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP). This beautiful, undeveloped property is at an altitude of 9,000 to 10,000 feet above sea level along the eastern border of RMNP.

I was born and raised in Longmont, Colorado not far from RMNP and spent several pleasant summers during high school and early college days working in Estes Park initially as the operator of the old manual elevator at the historic Stanley Hotel and later as a bus boy in a downtown restaurant. During days off my friends and I enjoyed exploring Rocky Mountain National Park by making trips which usually consisted of long trail hikes and non-professional mountain climbing. I climbed Long's Peak, the highest mountain in the park, over a dozen times. Rocky Mountain National Park gave me a lot of enjoyment and great experiences.

After graduation from the University of Colorado, I spent four-years in the Marine Corps, and returned to C.U. for an engineering degree. After that I went to work with the Lockheed – California Company in Burbank, California as a flight test engineer and later transferred to Palmdale as a test pilot. I signed on with NASA in 1966, traveled a lot, and never returned to Colorado to live but continued to appreciate the magnificent Colorado Rockies.

In 1967, I purchased 160 acres of the pristine mountain land bordering the Park for \$32,000. The 40 acres that our family is donating is located in the northwest portion of that original 160 acre parcel about 4 miles northeast of Long's Peak summit. The land is rugged consisting of lodge pole pine and sub alpine fir forests, and grassy meadows with aspen groves. Park trails run on federal property close to the donated 40 acres, so the donated land should add to the buffer between these trails and developed areas. We have seen much wildlife there and nearby including deer, elk, and mountain sheep.

Our family camped on the property each summer, and I believe that our family instilled a love of the property into our kids. We continue to have family reunions there most years. At first we intended to build a cabin there, but as we grew older those desires changed. Now we don't want to see the property developed. That is the biggest reason that my wife, Bev, our 6 children and I, are donating 40 acres of the land to Rocky Mountain National Park; we hope that the will be preserved in its natural state and enjoyed by the American people. Also, I consider it to be payback for the benefits that I have received by being able to live my life in our American democracy.

Media in nearby cities in northern Colorado and at the University of Colorado have been positive on the donation, and we have been very grateful for the support given by Senators Michael Bennet and Senator Cory Gardner, and Congressman Joe Neguse. I hope that you also will consider this donation to be a win-win for the National Park Service and the American people.

Sincerely,

Vance D. Brand

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