

RESOLUTION NO. 2019 - 17

RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO THE STATE OF UTAH'S PETITION TO THE U.S. SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE FOR A STATE-SPECIFIC RULE GOVERNING MANAGEMENT OF FOUR MILLION ACRES OF INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREAS IN UTAH'S NATIONAL FORESTS

WHEREAS, for generations native peoples have lived in the canyons, mountains and mesas of the Abajo Mountains and LaSal Mountains, lands that are now managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

WHEREAS, records of generations of native habitation that tell the story of the subsistence of daily life, traditions, and ceremonies are contained in the rock art, cliff dwellings and other structures, and ceremonial sites within these areas.

WHEREAS, historic remnants of Navajo hogans, pottery, sweat lodges, sheep-herding camps and farming are found throughout these areas.

WHEREAS, the cultural importance of the lands and resources in these areas are sacred to many native peoples, including Navajo, Ute, Hopi and Zuni tribes.

WHEREAS, protecting the lands and resources in these areas will help protect and preserve the cultural, prehistoric, historic records and legacy of native peoples, and the cultural traditions and practices that continue through today.

WHEREAS, The Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule), adopted in 2001 after an extensive public involvement process, generally prohibits road construction and logging in the 58.5 million acres of inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) in the national forests, including 4 million acres of forest lands in Utah, and including approximately 129,800 acres of inventoried roadless areas in San Juan County.

WHEREAS, the Roadless Rule helps protect and preserve the cultural, prehistoric and historic records and legacy of native peoples on San Juan County, and the cultural traditions and practices that continue today.

WHEREAS, in August 2018, Governor Gary Herbert announced that the State of Utah intended to petition the U.S. Forest Service for a state-specific roadless rule, blaming the Roadless Rule and other federal regulations for creating overly dense and unhealthy forests that have caused large wildfires.

WHEREAS, under the State of Utah's proposal, the "Utah Roadless Areas" would become open to road construction and logging through new or expanded exceptions for:

- **Wildlife habitat modification for any species, beyond the 2001 Roadless Rule allowance for tree cutting to improve habitat for species that are at risk of extinction.**

Opening areas of intact habitat to road building, logging, and other forms of development will have detrimental effects for native plants and animals, by fragmenting wildlife habitat, degrading waterways through increased siltation, and spreading invasive species.

- **Salvage logging of dead and damaged trees.** Such logging, after a wildfire can exacerbate damage to soils, water quality, and other resources. Such practices benefit the timber industry rather than the environment and wildlife.
- **Commercial logging of large and medium-sized trees within inventoried roadless areas.** The 2001 Roadless Rule permits cutting and removal of small-diameter trees to allow thinning of unnaturally dense stands while leaving the more fire-resistant overstory trees intact. The Utah petition proposes to allow large and medium-sized trees in roadless areas to be cut and sold.

WHEREAS, Utah's main justification for a state-specific roadless rule is the need to "improve forest health" and reduce "unwanted wildfire" and other threats. The Utah petition claims that by building roads and cutting large-diameter trees in roadless areas the Forest Service will be able to conduct more landscape-scale management activities that improve forest health and reduce wildfire impacts. However, the Utah petition offers no site-specific data, analysis, or rationale for its request.

WHEREAS, the U.S. Forest Service's 2000 environmental impact statement on the Roadless Rule found that roadless areas are in relatively healthy condition compared to roaded areas, and that restrictions on road building would reduce wildfire impacts by greatly lowering the risk of human-caused ignitions.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

Section 1: The San Juan County Commission opposes the State of Utah's roadless area petition to the Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Forest Service.

Section 2: Any actions or positions that are inconsistent with position adopted through this Resolution that were previously taken by the San Juan County Commission or County staff are hereby rescinded by this Resolution.

Section 3: The San Juan County Commission urges the State of Utah and the U.S. Forest Service to work with San Juan County residents and stakeholders to reduce fire risk to communities and to maintain healthy watersheds, plant and wildlife habitat in these roadless areas.

Section 4: The San Juan County Commission directs the County Administrator to immediately transmit this Resolution to the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service.

PASSED, ADOPTED AND APPROVED by the Board of San Juan County Commissioners this 16 day of April 2019.


Those voting aye: Commissioner Maryboy, Commissioner Grayeyes

Those voting nay: Commissioner Adams


Those abstaining: N/A

Absent:

Board of San Juan County Commissioners


Kenneth Maryboy, Chairman

ATTEST:


John David Nielson, County Clerk/Auditor