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December 14, 2017

House Committee On Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Federal Lands  
Hearing: HR 4558 (Rep. Chris Stewart). To provide greater conservation,  
recreation, economic development and local management of Federal  
lands in Garfield and Kane Counties, Utah. "Grand Staircase Escalante  
Enhancement Act"

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Susan Hand, co-owner and  
Manager of Willow Canyon Outdoor Company in Kanab, Utah. Our shop  
sells books, espresso, and outdoor gear.

I am wildly passionate about the magnificent landscapes that comprise  
my homeland in southern Utah.

But that is not what I came to talk about. I'm here to talk about money,  
about resources and profit. I'm here to share with you what I've witnessed  
over the last 23 years, as a member of Kanab's business community.

To that end, I offer this excerpt from an op-ed piece I wrote as Secretary  
Zinke's review of our national monuments was just beginning:

*I dwell on the flanks of the Grand Staircase. I was drawn here  
like a bee to a blooming flower—attracted to the stunning  
landscape and the opportunity to make a living. With my  
husband and two small children, I settled in Kanab in 1994.*

*We purchased a dilapidated commercial property three  
blocks from a humble downtown. On one side, a shuttered  
garage cradled decades of junk. On the other was an  
abandoned bakery. Old signs from long-defunct enterprises  
stood like ghosts on either side of our dream. A herd of rusting  
cars grazed the lot behind ours.*

*We stripped our small building to its bones and created a  
shop to sell books, coffee, and outdoor gear, opening just in  
time for Christmas. We underestimated the challenge of  
business in this diminutive, rural town. A long winter stretched*

*into a long, hard year. While our business slowly grew, our savings quickly shrank.*

*The following year, 1996, President Clinton evoked the Antiquities Act to proclaim the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument. It was controversial at the time—and remains so. Still, in the couple decades since, I've witnessed positive outcomes for our business, our community, and the myriad visitors from around the world that gather here in awe.*

*Now you can have your car serviced in the garage next door. You can stay in the three-story hotel that replaced the old bakery. Two additional, four-story hotels have opened down the street, and another is under construction. You can breakfast at our delightful new bakery. In fact several new restaurants are thriving, but you'll need a reservation—inconceivable 20 years ago! Come morning, a host of outfitters will offer to show you the Grand Staircase.*

*Meanwhile, the town ushered in a new hospital, school, library, and swimming pool. The Bureau of Land Management, which oversees the Monument, opened a visitor center and a comely administrative center.*

We can't know that my little town's economic success is a direct result of the Monument. But common sense, as well as research conducted by Headwaters Economics and the University of Utah, confirms that the Monument has not had an adverse effect.

On the contrary, economic studies reveal that such protected public lands are economic engines for nearby communities. The 1996 Monument designation brought a "diverse spectrum of revenue flows". Kanab's economic expansion extends well beyond travel and tourism. People choose to live near the Monument because of the extraordinary quality of life. Some have retired there, some keep a second home, some are entrepreneurs, and some are able to work there remotely. This activity has increased property values as well as incomes.

But if we want to talk about travel and tourism, Kanab has a long, rich tradition. Dave Rust, born in 1874, grew up in Utah to marry the daughter of Kanab's mayor, Dee Woolley. He embarked on a thirty-three-year career as a guide and outfitter based in Kanab. Since then, travel and tourism have become the backbone of our economy.

Ranching is a charming bit of southern Utah culture, but grazing cattle on

the high desert has always been a marginal enterprise, dependent on federal subsidies. The allotments were scarcely changed by the Monument. To enshrine cattle grazing will not develop a strong economy.

How about the coal beds of the Kaiparowitz Plateau?. The coalmine proposed prior to 1996 promised 360 double-trailer trucks through Kanab every 24 hours. Who wants that in their town? In the meanwhile, the market for coal has gone bust.

Now, our economic future is at risk. In fact the damage may already be underway. Whereas Willow's sales grew steadily over the last couple of decades, peaking in 2016, this year looks different. In the first five months of 2017, we had 6% growth year-to-date; but since then our sales dropped by 4% as compared to the same period last year.

The downturn coincides with negative press generated by the monument review and Zinke's visit to Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante. Social media reveals that a boycott against Utah is underway. The public perception is that the Utah delegation and the current administration have assumed a hostile attitude toward our state's national monuments—which were wildly popular.

Frustrated with the Utah delegation, the international Outdoor Retailer trade show, which branded our state as an outdoor mecca for the last two decades, has left Salt Lake City. We're worried about long-term repercussions.

Last year we invested in a new front on our commercial building. We planned to remodel our espresso bar kitchen over the coming winter, but with the downturn in sales we've deferred that. We've also suspended plans to hire a new, fulltime position—Community Liaison.

We don't feel that the excised monuments and proposed "national park" will ever replace the loss of the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument.