

Statement of Representative Blake Moore

Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1154, H.R. 1286, H.R. 1316, H.R.
1424, H.R. 1908, H.R. 1925, H.R. 2024, H.R. 2107, H.R. 2359,
H.R. 2899, H.R. 3222, and H.R. 3616

June 15, 2021

Thank you all for the opportunity to be here today. I would like to acknowledge and thank Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Westerman, Chairman Neguse, and Ranking Member Fulcher for holding today's hearing and allowing me to testify on my legislation, H.R. 3616, the *Bear River Heritage Area Study Act*.

Utah is best known for its painted desert landscapes and National Parks like Arches and Zion. However, the Bear River basin, which is located in northern Utah and stretches into Southeast Idaho, is a lush oasis in an otherwise arid region. From fur trapping to railroads, this area has played a key role in the settling and ongoing development of the American West.

The Bear River area has long been an important part of Utah and Idaho's shared history. Native American tribes, including the Shoshone and Utes, called this area home due to its abundant wildlife and favorable weather. Later, explorers and adventurers, fur trappers, and Mormon pioneers called the valley home. The trappers' practice of stowing beaver pelts and other goods in caches for safe storage inspired residents to call part of the region Cache Valley.

In the mid 19th century, settlers from the Salt Lake valley moved north and began building homes in the Bear River area. The area's natural water supply makes it ideal for farming, and it quickly became home to thriving frontier towns. Generations of family farms in northern Utah and southeast Idaho can trace their origins to these early days.

One of the seminal moments in our nation's history happened in the Bear River Area. In 1869, the Transcontinental Railroad was completed with the driving of the golden spike at Promontory Summit. This helped propel our great nation onto the world stage, connecting our economy to continents far and wide and dramatically reducing the time and cost of coast-to-coast travel.

Today, the Bear River area spans seven counties in Utah and Idaho and contains a variety of historically and culturally significant sites that draw hundreds of thousands of visitors to the region each year from around the world.

I was proud to introduce the *Bear River Heritage Area Study Act* with my good friend Congressman Simpson to help elevate this important region. This bill authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to determine its suitability for designation as a National Heritage Area. The study would identify whether the region has cultural resources that represent distinctive aspects of our culture and whether they are worthy of conservation. I believe that the Bear River region meets these qualifications.

The proposed study would also ensure that local stakeholders, including residents, businesses, and tribal and local government

organizations have developed a sound financial plan outlining the roles and responsibilities of the participants in the Heritage Area.

I am proud that this bill enjoys significant local support in both Utah and Idaho from the Bear River Association of Governments, the Cache Valley Chamber of Commerce, Southeast Idaho High Country Tourism, and others. To demonstrate this support, Mr. Chairman, I request unanimous consent to enter 18 letters of support into the record from local stakeholders.

I am grateful to all of these stakeholders for their invaluable input.

Above all else, National Heritage Areas tell the quiet stories of our nation. Stories of places that have seen our best and worst and of regions that are critically important to the telling of our American story. From Bear Lake to the Bear River Massacre site, from Golden Spike to the American West Heritage Center and countless destinations in between, the Bear River basin is home to many of these stories. I urge my colleagues on this committee to join with local stakeholders and to support this important bill.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for allowing me to speak today, and I yield back.