

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

For presentation:

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. This legislation arose out of the need to secure recreational access to public lands and better manage those lands immediately adjacent to the urban Wasatch Front. The bill has broad support among a variety of recreational groups, businesses and local government entities who are working to provide more trail-based recreation that can enhance the quality of life for our communities and address the demands our rapidly growing population. The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA), the Bonneville Shoreline Trail Committee and Trails Utah have championed this bill and are supported by the National Interscholastic Cycling Association, the Outdoor Alliance, and Trust for Public Lands.

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. This a 1 to 1 exchange with no net loss of Wilderness. These slight retractions will occur in places where Wilderness area boundaries extend down to private property in residential areas and along busy roadways. Adjusting wilderness boundaries in these areas will allow for trail connectivity and more consistent and effective management of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail for recreation that includes mountain biking. It also creates 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 recreation that depend on trails are at an all-time high today. This trend has accelerated during the pandemic as people are looking to get out and recreate in nature closer to home. Trails near our urban areas enable people with a variety of abilities and backgrounds to access trails and wild spaces,

foster a sense of stewardship, and provide outstanding educational opportunities to a broad spectrum of the population. The Bonneville Shoreline Trail currently allows for alternative transportation, is used by adaptive athletes and affords thousands of kids participating in the Utah High School Mountain Bike League a safe and convenient place to practice their sport close to home.

The Bonneville Shoreline Trail is Northern Utah's most important regional trail and hosts thousands of hikers, cyclists, runners, and dog walkers every day. Planners envision the trail eventually stretching hundreds of miles south from the Utah-Idaho border encircling valleys at the approximate shoreline elevation of ancient Lake Bonneville. To date more than 100 miles of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail have been realized along the foothills of our densely populated northern valleys and many more are planned. 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 municipalities and counties along the Wasatch Front.

People rely on access to trails 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 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 sanctioned mountain bike races, creating a demand for more trails close to home.

Unfortunately, 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 fire or conduct fuel reduction efforts is hampered by these same restrictions.

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 air quality, sensitive watersheds and canyons. 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 answer any questions you might have.