

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 30, 2007

The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary
US Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Kempthorne:

We are writing to request your intervention to protect cultural resources and wilderness values in Utah's canyon country from damaging off-road vehicle use, specifically on the desert lands that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has inventoried and found to have wilderness character.

Since 2000, Congress has funded the BLM's multi-million dollar effort to better plan for the future of cultural resources, wildlife, recreation, and development on our western public lands. Some of the first plans under this effort are near completion in Utah and, therefore, could set a precedent for other plans across the West.

In particular, the BLM is proposing off-road vehicle (ORV) routes in lands that it has inventoried and acknowledged as possessing wilderness values, such as Fisher Towers, Labyrinth Canyon, Goldbar Canyon and Beaver Creek. By officially designating off-road vehicle routes in Utah's roadless areas, the agency is not protecting unique cultural artifacts and wilderness values. As a result, these ORV plans will be devastating to some of the most magnificent public lands and prehistoric cultural resources in the country.

The BLM currently recognizes 3.3 million acres of Utah BLM roadless areas as possessing important wilderness characteristics. These lands, known as Wilderness Character Areas, are also rich with significant and extremely rare archaeological resources. These archaeological resources, including remnants of prehistoric settlements, rock art, and artifacts that date back to the ancient mammoth hunting communities, are often located in remote areas which provide protection from harm. Their existence is generally unsurveyed and undocumented by federal agencies. Therefore, we are specifically concerned that the off-road vehicle plans under consideration by the agency recommend extensive networks of motorized off-road vehicle routes that could result in increased damage – including intentional vandalism, looting, and unintentional damages – to archaeological sites and artifacts, and areas of importance to present-day Native Americans.


Federal regulations require that BLM manage off-road vehicle use to protect public lands and resources, minimize the impacts of off-road vehicle use to those resources, and to


minimize conflicts with other users. Furthermore, the National Historic Preservation Act requires that BLM conduct meaningful consultation with Native American tribes about the impacts of agency actions, such as designation of ORV routes, on cultural resources. We are concerned that the agency is not seeking to actively protect these wilderness and culturally rich lands, as directed by Federal regulations, and prohibiting damaging off-road vehicle use from these areas.

We ask that you take action to protect Utah's exceptional archaeological and wilderness resources by immediately protecting Wilderness Character Areas from off-road vehicle use. We understand that the Utah BLM intends to complete six ORV plans for 11 million acres of public lands covering most of canyon country by next year. These plans will govern off-road vehicle use for the next two decades or beyond. By taking action, you will demonstrate BLM's commitment to its multiple use mandate and will inspire confidence in other planning efforts throughout the West.


Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to your future actions to address this issue.

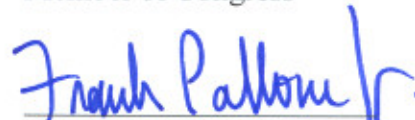
Sincerely,


Timothy V. Johnson
Member of Congress

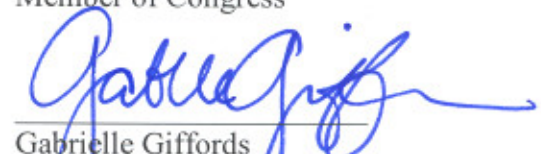

Maurice D. Hinchey
Member of Congress



Mark Steven Kirk
Member of Congress



Mark Udall
Member of Congress


Frank Pallone
Member of Congress



Patrick Kennedy
Member of Congress



Gabrielle Giffords
Member of Congress

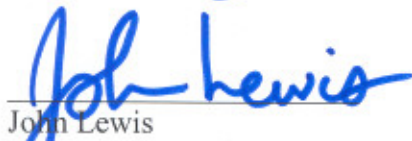

Jay Inslee
Member of Congress


Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress

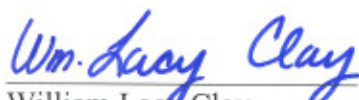

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

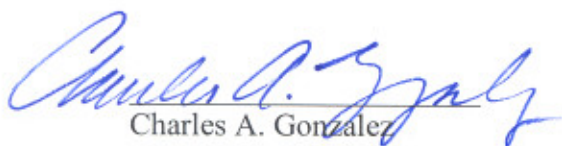

Fortney Pete Stark
Member of Congress



Timothy H. Bishop
Member of Congress


John Lewis
Member of Congress



James R. Langevin
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William Lacy Clay
Member of Congress


Charles A. Gonzalez
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Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress

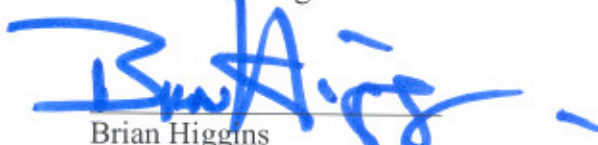

Raul Grijalva
Member of Congress



Thomas Allen
Member of Congress



Paul W. Hodes
Member of Congress



Baron Hill
Member of Congress

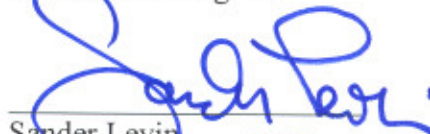

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress


Brian Higgins
Member of Congress


John A. Yarmuth
Member of Congress


James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

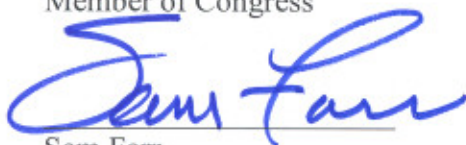

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress


Sander Levin
Member of Congress


Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



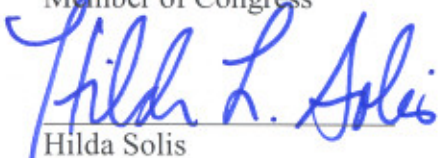
Lois Capps
Member of Congress



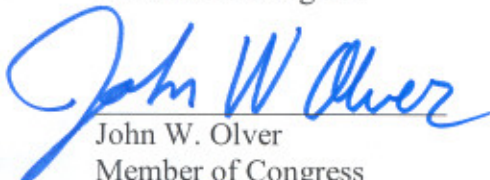
Sam Farr
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



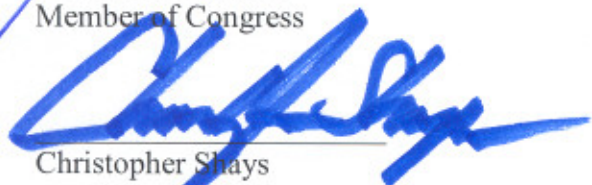
Hilda Solis
Member of Congress



John W. Olver
Member of Congress



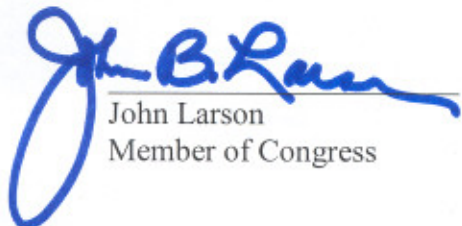
Donna Christensen
Member of Congress



Christopher Shays
Member of Congress



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



John Larson
Member of Congress



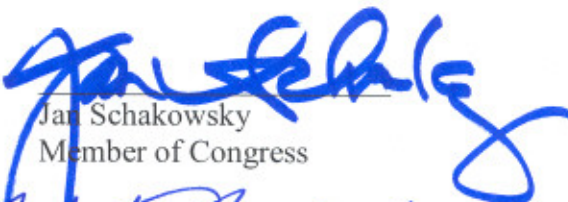
Betty Sutton
Member of Congress



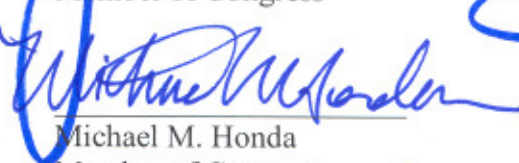
Ben Chandler
Member of Congress



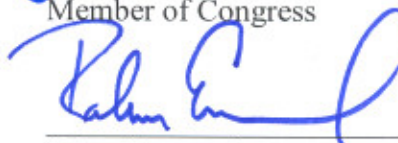
Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



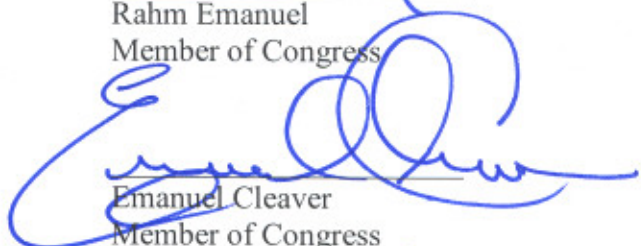
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress



Rahm Emanuel
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress



John Hall
Member of Congress



Tom Lantos
Member of Congress



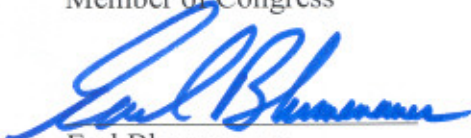
Phil Hare
Member of Congress



Dan Lipinski
Member of Congress



Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress



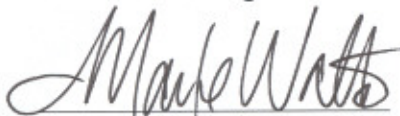
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Elijah Cummings
Member of Congress



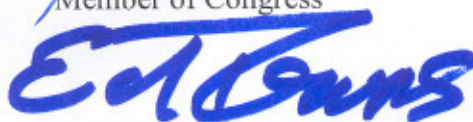
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



Jerry Nadler
Member of Congress



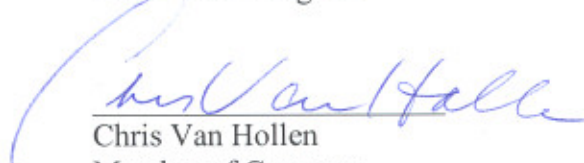
Edolphus Towns
Member of Congress



Henry C. Johnson
Member of Congress



Brad Miller
Member of Congress



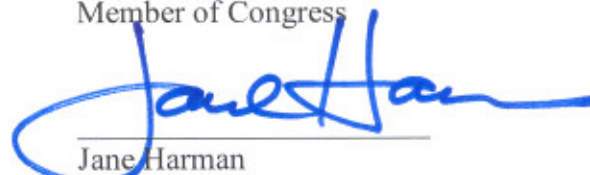
Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress



Dennis Kucinich
Member of Congress




Howard Berman
Member of Congress



Jane Harman
Member of Congress



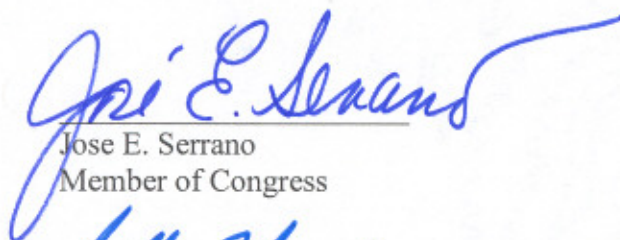
Donald M. Payne
Member of Congress




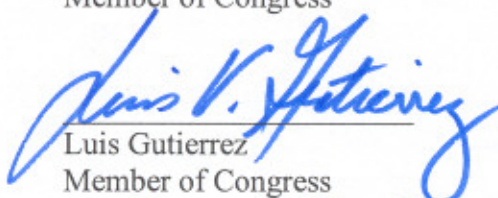
Gregory Meeks
Member of Congress

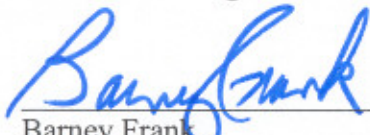


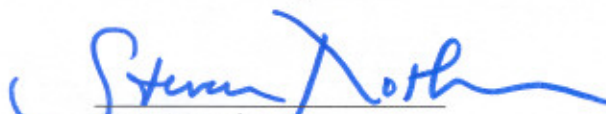
Jesse Jackson, Jr.
Member of Congress

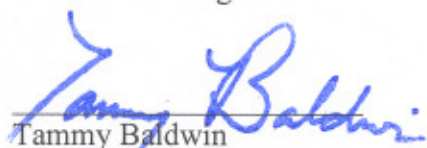

Jose E. Serrano
Member of Congress

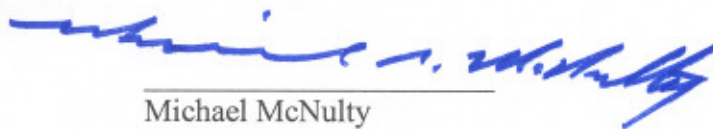

Bobby Rush
Member of Congress

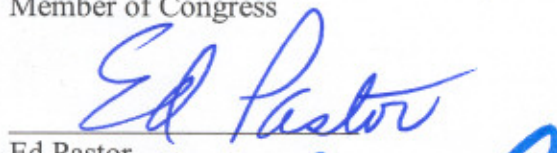

Luis Gutierrez
Member of Congress

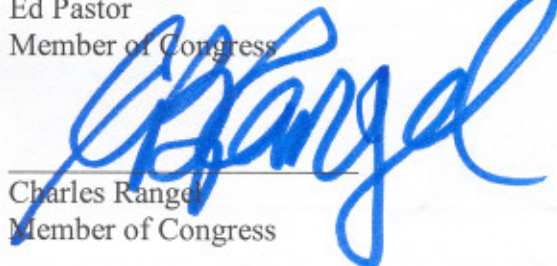

Barney Frank
Member of Congress

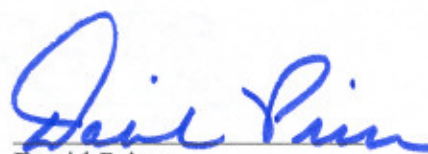

Steven Rothman
Member of Congress

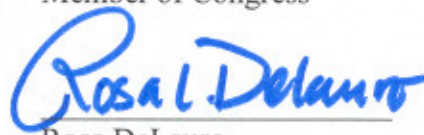

Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress

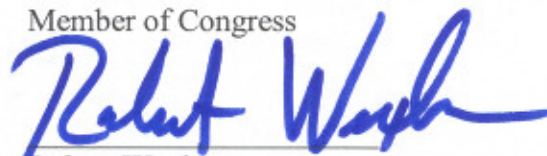

Michael McNulty
Member of Congress



Ed Pastor
Member of Congress

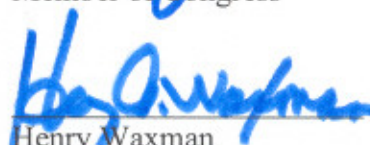

Charles Rangel
Member of Congress


David Price
Member of Congress

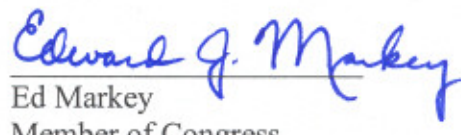

Rosa DeLauro
Member of Congress

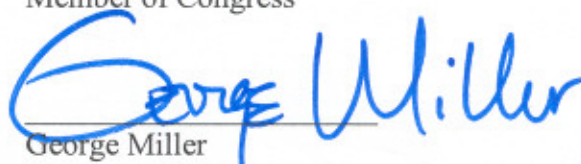

Robert Wexler
Member of Congress

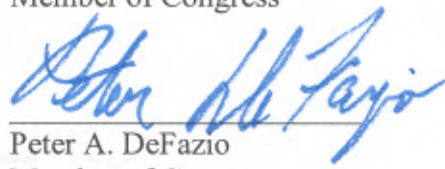

Danny Davis
Member of Congress


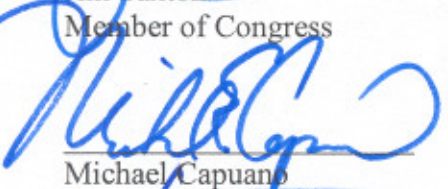
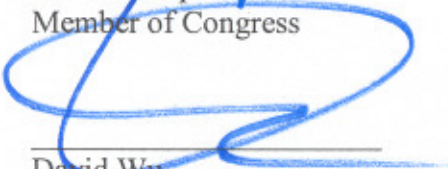

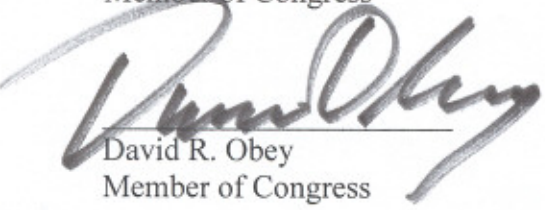

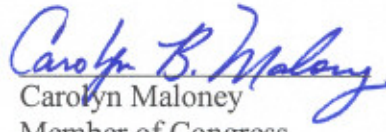

Henry Waxman
Member of Congress


Jim Moran
Member of Congress


Ed Markey
Member of Congress


George Miller
Member of Congress


Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress


Jim Saxton
Member of Congress
Michael Capuano
Member of Congress
David Wu
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Darlene Hooley
Member of Congress
David R. Obey
Member of Congress
Rush Holt
Member of Congress
Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress
Eliot Engel
Member of Congress
Lynn Woolsey
Member of Congress
Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

cc: Director James L. Caswell, Bureau of Land Management