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TITLE: UTAH **WILDERNESS BILL**

SPEAKER: MR. BENNETT

TEXT: [*S18824]

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, as you know, I have joined with other members of the Utah delegation and Governor Leavitt in introducing S. 884, the Utah Public Lands Management Act, also known as the Utah **wilderness** bill. Since we introduced this bill earlier this summer, we have been criticized up and down by opponents of S. 884 that the extensive process we engaged in to study and eventually recommend over 1.8 million acres in 49 **wilderness** areas was not extensive enough. Since January, over 22,000 public comments have been submitted, over 45 public hearings were held and 600 personal testimonies were accepted. However, our critics choose to overlook this fact as well as the fact that it is time to bring to closure this 20-year-old debate.

Mr. President, I ask that the following document be printed in the Record at the proper place as proof that the public comment process has indeed been extensive. This is an excerpt from a publication by the Coalition for Utah's Future/Project 2000. It details the extensive process which the coalition, joined by members of Utah's environmental community and county commissioners and citizens of Emery County, undertook to discuss and resolve the issue of **wilderness**. Unfortunately, cost and space limitations will prohibit the inclusion of the entire text. I would encourage those who are interested in the full report to contact the coalition at the address following the excerpt. I commend these folks for their tremendous efforts to reach consensus on one of the most difficult and contentious public lands issues in our State. I believe this report illustrates just how extensive the process has been. I wish to express my thanks to the Coalition for Utah's Future/Project 2000 for the time and effort they have spent in conceiving and implementing this pilot project.

The material follows:

A Project of The Coalition For Utah's Future/Project 2000

INTRODUCTION

In twelve short months, a traditional rural community in Utah moved from what appeared to be a deeply seated, anti-environmental sentiment to a protection oriented public lands agenda. Involved Emery County leaders and citizens alike, are now publicly espousing the desire to work with disparate parties and land managers to solve problems and seek mutually beneficial land protection mechanisms. How did this rather dramatic transformation in the county's approach to public lands issues occur? The answer involves the willingness of several visionary county and environmental leaders to be the "guinea pig" in a cooperatively designed Community and Wild Lands Futures Pilot Project sponsored by the Coalition for Utah's Future/Project 2000 (CUF), a non-profit, multi-issue organization comprised of diverse community leaders interested in a quality future for all Utah citizens. It also involves the surfacing of values, long held within the county but unacknowledged, due to the acrimonious nature of environmental disputes

throughout Utah and the West over the past fifteen years.

The pilot was conceived in the summer of 1993 when CUF's conflict resolution consultant, Susan Carpenter, put a hypothetical question before a group of some 25 disparate stakeholders interested in resolving the conflict over Utah's BLM **wilderness** designation issue. She asked participants to assume the year is 1999, and that a Utah BLM **wilderness** bill, which everyone could support, had just been signed into law. "What", she asked, "are the steps beginning in 1999 and then working backwards to 1993, that led to the passage of this bill?" The group's response to this question became the basis for the conceptualization of the Community and Wild Lands Futures Pilot Project (CWFP). CWFP, they hoped, could become a model for other rural Utah communities and interested parties in the West.

The word future is key here. Conservationists in the design group reasoned that helping communities articulate their values, visions, and goals for an "ideal" future, would enable citizens to move beyond current problems and contentious issues toward a more pro-active plan based on commonly shared community values and "sense of place". This, they also theorized would lay a more productive foundation for subsequent discussions regarding environmentally sensitive, adjacent public lands. Rural leaders in the design group supported this community-based, grassroots approach. They expressed [*S18825] the need for local empowerment and a seat at the table when making decisions regarding public lands issues affecting their future.

The group boiled these ideas down to three community questions, which were to be followed by broad-based wild lands futures deliberations in a focused geographic area. The community questions were: What do we have?, What do we want?, and What can we do?. In short, the hypotheses proved correct. Asking citizens what they valued, how they wanted the future to look, and exploring options to achieve this vision on the front side of a county-wide general planning initiative, led to outcomes such as: 1. the formation of a public lands council, 2. county agreement to enter wild lands futures deliberations with a broad range of interests and affected parties from within and without the county, 3. a county proposal for the protection of over 500,000 acres of BLM land (including 184,000 acres of **wilderness**), and 4. the conceptualization of a public lands institute involving cooperative partnerships with the BLM and other agencies for the preservation and management of the San Rafael Swell.

COMMUNITY AND WILD LANDS FUTURES PILOT PROJECT (CWFP)

In the summer of 1993, the broad-based group of stakeholder volunteers known as the Process Advisory Group, including decision-makers and resource representatives, gave birth to the Community and Wild Lands Futures Pilot Project. As described in the opening of this paper, when challenged to consider how a **wilderness** bill passed Congress by working backwards from 1999, the Process Advisory Group agreed that the first step should be community-based. Out of the discussions came the following project goals:

1. Address community and wild lands futures in a rational and scientific manner.
2. Create a grass roots process for comprehensive local community planning and sustainability.
3. Identify resources to enrich the process and generate useful information to share.
4. Connect the local visioning/planning process with the issue of public wild land futures and with state and national processes and players.
5. Develop a broad based recommendation for the classification of public wild lands in the pilot region.
6. Educate the broader general public about rural planning and community self-determination, and ecosystem management of natural systems and wild lands issues.

7. Create a replicable model.

A concept paper was circulated among approximately 300 interested parties at national, regional, state and local levels requesting constructive feedback. The reviews were favorable, which meant the next task was to select from one of several receptive pilot communities. In October of 1993, Emery County became the chosen community for the pilot project, and the newly formed Canyon County Partnership (CCP) received CUF funding to initiate staff support.

Today, the seed is germinating and concepts are maturing. County initiated deliberations include ideas to 1. develop a resource area partnership among Emery County, the BLM, the Forest Service, and other public land users, 2. become a nationally supported pilot program, and 3. conceptualize a non-profit San Rafael Swell Institute. Today, Emery County is proposing and exploring a planning/management partnership arrangement with the BLM. The purpose would be to:

Incorporate direct local involvement in land management agency planning processes.

Incorporate direct local involvement in land management agency decision-making processes.

Reconcile differences between the Emery County Master Plan and the planning goals and objective of the land management agencies.

Develop consistency between the ordinances and regulations of the federal and county entities.

Cooperate in law enforcement activities.

Cooperate in the provision of emergency services.

Cooperate in the permitting, design, placement, construction, and costs of public facilities (roads, buildings, etc.).

Cooperate in the facilitation of allowable uses.

Cooperate in the mitigation of impacts from various uses.

Cooperatively work to resolve local conflicts between uses, users, and stakeholders.

Leverage the limited resources of the local and Federal entities through coordinated efforts.

Share in a joint stewardship over the public lands within Emery County.

CUF believes it is a major accomplishment that Emery County is now adopting cooperative, problem-solving principles in newly conceived public lands initiatives within the County.

APPLICATION OF THE MODEL

In conclusion, the Community and Wild Lands Futures Pilot Project did advance environmental decision-making through inclusive community and interest group participation. Outcomes are evolving and project participant evaluations were overwhelmingly favorable. OPB's Brad Barber writes, "It (the project) taught us that this type of thing may work in the future. Once a **wilderness** bill is done in Utah-we should talk about moving into cooperative management." CUF board member and Moab Times Editor, Sam Taylor says, "In the event the (Utah delegation) bill does not become law, CUF has laid the ground work that will still lead to piece-meal resolution for the BLM **wilderness** issue. We have given them a road-map," he concludes.

Many participants believe that the pilot has application value for comprehensive planning efforts in rural areas, and some can see it being applied to growth management, transportation, education and topical problems in urban areas. It clearly is recognized as being superior to the conventional approach of deriving local input from a couple of perfunctory public hearings. Jane Brass suggests that the need for disseminating information regarding the pilot model "is pervasive as states struggle with public lands issues." She cautions that communities should not have consultants dictate a quick way out. Rather, she recommends working through a process to "find answers that will be more acceptable to your community". Another participant echoed the concern that it could be dangerous to create a "cook book approach". The emphasis from a model should be on need and a few questions to ask in the beginning, he cautioned. Chairman Petersen advises other rural county leaders, who might be considering a similar planning model, "1. Put together a good steering group, 2. Listen to their input, and 3. Listen to people from other areas and take advantage of their successes and failures."

COMMUNITY VISIONS: A CATALYST FOR CREATING POSITIVE FUTURES

CWFP demonstrated that engaging local citizens in discussions about their values and visions of the future enabled them to develop solid plans for economic development and empowered them to approach the highly polarized issue of **wilderness** as an issue which could be resolved with their traditional adversaries, not as a battle to be won.

The constructive progress made by the county in the relatively short time will continue to bear fruit for the county on public lands issues and other matters of county interest. In reference to "Discovering Common Ground" by Marvin Weisbord, project consultant, Susan Carpenter, summarizes her perspective. She writes, "Weisbord makes the point that creating the tension between what we have and what we really want is a much more effective way to get what we want than the more traditional methods of problem-solving and conflict management (identify the problem and then develop options to solve it). My experience bear this out. I see the Coalition's Emery County Community/Wild Lands Futures Project as a powerful, effective model which can be applied to a wide range of issues at the county and state level across the West." Currently, CUF is moving forward with an initiative focused on quality growth in Utah. History will reveal whether we, as a whole and increasingly diverse community in Utah and the West, are able to build on the lessons learned from the Emery County experience.