



PRESS RELEASE
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Grand County Announces Process for Public Participation by Grand County Citizens in Congressman Rob Bishop's Proposed Public Lands Bill for Southeastern Utah

The Grand County Council is preparing to formally participate in Congressman Rob Bishop's proposed public lands bill for southeastern Utah. This will involve sending the Congressman information on Grand County's position and suggestions for the long term management and designation of public lands in Grand County. The Council process identified below has been developed to involve public participation by Grand County citizens in this effort.

Congressman Bishop's public lands bill proposal was initiated early in 2013 and has involved a wide array of local, regional and national level interest group interactions during this time. The proposal is to create national legislation to define and create an array of public land management designations for several counties in southeastern Utah. The Utah counties that have been informally involved to date have been Grand, Uintah, Emery, Carbon, San Juan and Wayne.

Congressmen Rob Bishop and Jason Chaffetz have produced a 62-page Status Report that fully explains the intent of their proposed legislation. Grand County residents are encouraged to read the Report before commenting to better understand the scope, history, and goals of the congressional land planning initiative. Copies of the Report can be found online at http://robbishop.house.gov/uploadedfiles/pli_staff_report_112013.pdf or hard copies can be made available for a fee at the Grand County Courthouse upon request.

The Grand County Council is committed to public participation from the citizens of Grand County. In August 2013, Grand County, in partnership with Congressmen Bishop and Chaffetz, hosted an open forum at the Grand Center and toured various sites in southwestern Grand County. During these events, the congressmen and Grand County officials listened to involved stakeholders and the public as they identified their goals and ideas. Approximately 250 Grand County citizens participated in these

events, with most expressing support for Grand County's continued involvement in the congressional process.

In November 2013, the County Council approved a process that established a three-member Council study group – volunteered by Council Members Jackson, Nyland, and Paxman – to develop a range of alternatives regarding long term designations for public lands in Grand County ranging from minimally restrictive to highly restricted designation categories; to prepare GIS maps showing alternatives; and to develop broad legislative direction/language for each alternative.

The next phase for public participation by Grand County residents begins with publication of this news release. The local public is invited to provide written comments by letter (no e-mail comments will be accepted), maps, suggestions, and other relevant information related to long-term land management and potential designations in Grand County to the Grand County Council through Friday, January 17, 2014. Submissions must be focused on Grand County and may include recommended designations for a specific geographical area, land management prescriptions, concerns, and general suggestions for the future of public lands in our county relative to the Congressman's proposed legislation. Comments submitted to the Grand County Council can be sent directly to the Council's Office at 125 E Center Street, Moab, Utah, attn: Public Lands Bill.

Grand County is focused on giving our county residents and local business owners the opportunity to have their voice heard. The Council study group is aware of prior input and suggestions from others inside and outside of Grand County through their involvement with the Congressmen's offices.

Following submission and analysis of these comments the Council study group will then prepare an array of draft alternatives based on the public input received. These alternatives will be identified on maps along with suggested legislative language guidelines. The alternatives will then be presented at a public meeting at the Grand Center some time in February 2014. Grand County residents will be informed of the time and place for that meeting. Local public input will again be solicited at that meeting, and an additional period of time will be allowed for public feedback on these alternatives.

The final phase will involve the County Council voting on which alternative, or combination of alternatives, will be forwarded to Congressman Bishop for his consideration in the Congressional legislation he will propose.

The Council study group's actions will craft and identify suggestions for the Congressman to consider in his legislation. Any eventual change to Grand County's Land Use Code or Wilderness Plan would require a separate public process and formal approval of the County Council. Even though the ultimate decision makers for this land bill legislation are Congress and the President, the Council study group believes it prudent for Grand County and its residents and businesses to have more formal input into the outcome of that legislation.