

**Opening Statement
Chairman Raúl M. Grijalva
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing
H.R. 86, H.R. 118 and H.R. 1925, H.R. 2689, H.R. 2781 & H.R. 2888
October 1, 2009**

The Subcommittee will now come to order. Thank you. Today we will receive testimony on six bills.

I would like to note that today marks the first congressional appearance of newly confirmed BLM Director Bob Abbey. I was delighted to spend some time with Director Abbey earlier this week, and I welcome him here today. I look forward to working with you on the many pressing issues facing the BLM.

[I would also like to thank the Senators from Utah for taking time today to come over and discuss H.R. 1925 – as well as the Lt. Governor of Utah. I know this Red Rocks wilderness bill has garnered just a bit of attention today! And I know the debate on Red Rocks wilderness might be a contentious one. But, I hope that we can still strive to be constructive despite differences.]

We are actually hearing testimony on two wilderness bills today. Besides America's Red Rock Wilderness in Utah, we will also hear about Devils Staircase Wilderness in Oregon. I am proud of what we have accomplished this Congress, so far, on wilderness designation in the passage of Public Land 111-11. And I have made clear that I intend to continue to support efforts

to protect wilderness quality lands and to enhance the responsible stewardship of our public lands in general.

H.R. 1925, America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, introduced by our good friend on the Subcommittee, Congressman Hinchey, would designate as wilderness 9 million acres of land managed by the BLM in the state of Utah. Many of these lands are world-renowned for their narrow, sandstone slot-canyons, slick-rock cliffs and stone walls covered with petroglyphs. The rugged mesas and buttes provide outstanding recreational opportunities, critical habitat for a variety of endangered species and contain important remnants of ancient cultures.

I think we can all agree that dramatic landscapes like these are worth protecting. The canyon country of Utah is certainly unique, and definitely irreplaceable. It's an important place to all Americans.

But I am also aware that a proposal of this size and complexity, presents some unique challenges, and has invoked strong emotions -- on both sides of the issue.

In today's hearing, I look forward to hearing about both the benefits of this legislation, as well as the concerns. And again, I look forward to an honest and rigorous discussion about the merits of this bill.

H.R. 2888, Devil's Staircase would protect 29,600 acres of National Forest and Bureau of Land Management lands. The area is considered one of Oregon's most remote locations. As our colleague Congressman DeFazio found out first hand, the hike to the Devil's Staircase waterfall within the proposed wilderness area is not for the faint of heart. I am interested in learning more about this unique location.

H.R. 118 would authorize the National Park Service to acquire up to 100 additional acres for Morristown National Historical Park.

H.R. 2689, would authorize a study of the National D-day Memorial in Bedford, Virginia for possible inclusion in the National Park System.

H.R. 2781 would add 21.3 miles of the Molalla River in Oregon to our national wild and scenic rivers system.

We appreciate all of our witnesses and sponsors for joining us today.

With that said, I'd now like to turn to Ranking Member Bishop for any opening statement he may have.