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**United States Department of the Interior
Office of Hearings and Appeals
Board of Land Appeals**

Washington County, Utah; City of)
St. George, Utah; and Washington)
County Water Conservancy District,)
Appellants,)
)
)
)
v.)
)
Bureau of Land Management,)
Respondent,)
)
and)
)
Conservation Lands Foundation,)
Conserve Southwest Utah, and the)
Wilderness Society,)
Proposed Respondent-)
Intervenors.)

REF:#DOI-BLM-UT-Co30_2015-1-EIS

**DECLARATION OF BETSY
BUFFINGTON**

1. My name is Betsy Buffington. I am the Director of Training and Mentoring at the Conservation Lands Foundation, Inc. (“CLF”). I submit this Declaration on behalf of Conservation Lands Foundation in support of its motion to intervene in the administrative appeal by Washington County, Utah of the Bureau of Land Management’s approved resource management plans for the Red Cliffs and Beaver Wash Dam National Conservation Areas.

2. I am a citizen of the United States and a resident of Montana, where I have lived since 1996. I have personal knowledge of each of the facts set forth below, and if called upon to do so, could and would testify regarding the following.

3. I joined CLF as the Vice President of Programs in 2007. As the first CLF employee, I drafted the organization's strategic plan which helped to define the role CLF would play in protecting our western public lands.

Organization History and Mission

4. CLF is a non-profit organization exempt from taxation under 26 U.S. C. § 501(c)(3), incorporated under the laws of Delaware, and headquartered in Durango, Colorado. CLF maintains regional offices in the District of Columbia and five states. The address of its Main Office is: 835 E. 2nd Ave. #314, Durango, CO 81301.

5. As incorporated in its Amended and Restated Bylaws (2013), CLF's organizational purpose is to promote environmental conservancy through assisting the National Landscape Conservations System (or the National Conservation Lands) and preserving open space and wilderness. The National Conservation Lands encompass 35 million acres and 2,400 river miles of National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Scenic and Historic Trails, and other special designations. CLF is the only non-profit in the country specifically dedicated to establishing and safeguarding the National Conservation Lands. To fulfill its organizational purpose, CLF works to protect, restore, and expand the National Conservation Lands through education, advocacy, and partnership.

6. In advancing its organizational purpose, CLF has played a significant and critical role in expanding the National Conservation Lands and establishing strong conservation policy.

In February 2010, CLF outlined the conservation challenges for managing the National Conservation Lands in a “Policy Handbook” that described the management directives in place at the time- “Our National Conservation Lands still: (1) lack a unifying management vision as well as (2) necessary policies and procedures to ensure adequate protection of their outstanding resources.” CLF launched a campaign to convince the Department of Interior and Bureau of Land Management to adopt and implement overarching conservation policy for the National Conservation Lands.

7. In January 2010, CLF developed a set of core management principles for the National Conservation Lands and its individual units based on the vision of Secretary Bruce Babbitt. Secretary Babbitt created the National Conservation Lands in 2000, and is a founding CLF board member. Based on the Secretary’s vision of how the system should be managed, CLF developed a plan to advocate for the adoption and implementation of strong policy within the United States Department of Interior and the Bureau of Land Management (“BLM”). In November 2010, Secretarial Order 3308 established a unifying management vision for the system and elevated the stature of the National Conservation Lands within the BLM. In 2011, BLM released a 15-year Strategy for the management of the system and presented the strategy at a CLF conference- The Friends Rendezvous in Palm Springs, CA. In 2012, BLM completed Policy manuals to govern the planning and daily management of each component of the National Conservation Lands including National Conservation Areas. Ultimately, through our efforts, CLF has helped procure the addition of administrative policy and guidance for managing the National Conservation Lands and all its disparate units.

8. CLF also recently partnered with the BLM to develop and institute a new visual identity, to be consistently applied to signage, print and digital materials, for the National

Conservation Lands. The BLM began implementing the new identity throughout the network of National Conservation Lands beginning in 2015. Consistent with CLF's organizational mission, the purpose of developing a consistent identity for the National Conservation Lands was to create greater public awareness of the distinctness and significance of this unique collection of federal lands.

9. CLF created the Friends Grassroots Network, which is a critical part of our organization's success and mission. One of CLF's founding principles was to help establish and work with local non-profit organizations dedicated exclusively to the protection of specific areas of public land through a National Conservation Lands designation, or to the continued conservation and restoration of lands already protected within the system. Since its inception, CLF has grown the Friends Grassroots Network to include over 60 organizations located in 12 states, including Utah. Organizations within the Friends Grassroots Network and their members organize and conduct a wide range of conservation-related activities, including clean-up projects, trail maintenance and rebuilding, riverbank and stream restoration, removal of invasive species, closure of illegal roads, water quality monitoring, enhancement of wildlife habitat, and improvement of recreational access. In 2015, for example, members of the Friends Grassroots Network dedicated over 53,000 hours to these types of conservation activities. CLF and the Friends Grassroots Networks also cooperate in public advocacy and education efforts to promote conservation of public lands.

CLF's Engagement in the Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash Resource Management Plan

10. Protecting the Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area and ensuring these public lands are managed consistent with established conservation standards for the system has been a central initiative of CLF since 2011. Our initial work with the Friends

Grassroots Groups – and more specifically with Conservation Southwest Utah (“CSU”) (then known as Citizens for Dixie’s Future) – focused on helping it build on its successful campaign to designate the two National Conservation Areas, specifically to increase its capacity to participate in the resource management process. Our support and training helped the group understand how to engage in strategic public engagement, advocacy, and expert policy analysis and partner with local conservation groups. CLF envisioned and planned that its work on this conservation project would last through BLM’s approval of a final Resource Management Plan, at which time CLF intended to shift its time and resources to assisting additional organizations within the Friends Grassroots Network on other pressing conservation needs in the American west.

11. After attending a meeting with leaders of CSU the group in the spring of 2010 in the St. George Library, St. George UT. I worked closely with them to develop a grant proposal for CLF, outlining the work they planned to do to prepare for their participation in the RMP, and the training, support and funding that CLF would provide throughout the year. While I was in St. George for that initial meeting with the Board of Directors, I hiked in Red Cliffs NCA. I am an avid hiker and was blown away by the experience. It helped confirm that CLF was dedicating resources to a place truly worthy of protecting.

12. In the summer of 2010, I worked with CSU to advocate for Land Water and Conservation Funding for the Red Cliffs NCAs as well as developing a response to the America’s Great Outdoors Initiative, which was a plan by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar to gather input on how Americans want their public lands to be managed. CLF and CSU participated in the Initiative by attending meetings and submitting comments on the importance of the National Conservation Lands.

13. In October 2010, CLF approved a grant to CSU and paid for the group’s leaders

to attend the CLF annual Rendezvous in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The Friends' Rendezvous is an opportunity for the 60-plus Friends' Groups around the nation to come together for trainings and networking.

14. In the spring of 2011, I spent two days with CSU to develop a strategic plan in preparation for the release of the draft Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash RMPs. CLF provided CSU with Policy Guidance for the National Conservation Lands and a grant of \$7,400 to engage in the planning process. Due to my previous hiking experience at Red Cliffs NCA, I made sure to extend my visit and hike through the Beaver Dam Wash NCA.

15. In July 2011, I organized a day-long RMP strategy session with CSU and members of The Wilderness Society in the Washington City Library. During that meeting we discussed the highway corridor and conservation standards for the Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash NCAs as they relate to the entire system. Due to the growing connection I had with the landscape, I again extended my trip and hiked through a different section of the Red Cliffs NCA.

16. In December, 2011, my colleague and I did a site visit with the staff and board members CSU in St. George and again went for a hike through Red Cliffs NCA.

17. In March 2012, my colleague and I held a two-day board and fundraising training for CSU in St George. We ended the training with a hike through Red Cliffs NCA.

18. In October 2013, my colleague Mackenzie Banta and I visited St George to introduce ourselves to the new CSU staff person, and we went on a long hike into Red Cliffs. When we returned to the car we encountered a group of hikers with whom we talked extensively about their experiences in the NCA, their knowledge of its designation and threats to its protection. It was inspiring to learn that these hikers supported the local public lands that CLF has worked so hard to protect.

19. Since 2010, CLF has granted a total of \$139,400 to CSU to ensure the organization's financial stability and ability to engage in the RMP process.

20. CLF has also undertaken significant advocacy and public engagement efforts of its own in the fight to protect the Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash NCAs. On August 17, 2015, CLF organized a meeting between then Utah State Director Jenna Whitlock and members of CSU. I traveled to Salt Lake City, UT to attend and my colleague Danielle Murray, Senior Director of Programs, drove up from Colorado. During the meeting, CLF advocated for strong protections for the Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash NCAs and the importance of an RMP that meets the established conservation standards.

21. On January 22, 2016, Utah Representatives Rob Bishop held a field hearing to address the Resource Management Plans in St. George Utah entitled, "Subcommittee on Federal Lands Oversight Field Hearing on Ensuring Local Input, Legal Consistency and Multi-Use Resource Management in St. George." CLF dedicated resources to organize and demonstrate support for the National Conservation Lands in this field hearing. CLF staff drafted and submitted testimony for the field hearing on behalf of board member and former Secretary of Interior Cecil Andrus. CLF also developed talking points for coalition partners to utilize in comments and the media. CLF staffer Jocelyn Torres attended the hearing and used social media to demonstrate widespread support for protecting the National Conservation Areas.

22. On November 16, 2015 CLF submitted comments on the draft Resource Management Plans for Beaver Dam Wash and Red Cliffs National Conservation Areas. CLF's comments focused on the legal and policy standards for management of units of the National Conservation Lands and our concern with permitting new Rights of Way within the Red Cliffs NCA and the development of the Northern Corridor.

23. Overall, CLF was actively involved in the administrative processes associated with the preparation of the RMPs for the Beaver Dam Wash and Red Cliffs NCAs. CLF engaged in these processes with CSU and on its own behalf to further CLF's mission and to protect the interests of the organization, its supporters, and its Friends Grassroots Network groups and their members.

24. I was made aware of Washington County's administrative appeal of the approved Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Areas Resource Management Plans on February 23, 2017. On this day, I received an e-mail from a colleague at The Wilderness Society announcing the appeal and the official statement of reasons from Washington County was attached.

Washington County's Requested Relief Will Harm CLF

25. An order granting Washington County the relief it requested in its notice of appeal and statement of reasons to overturn the RMP will directly and indirectly harm CLF. As mentioned above, CLF works with over 60 Friends groups and a core part of our mission is to uphold conservation standards for all units of the National Conservation Lands. As expected, once BLM released the approved RMP, CLF shifted resources and priorities from the Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash RMP and CSU to the twelve new National Monuments and Friends Groups that will be going through similar planning process. Examples of the places and groups we have prioritized for the immediate future include: Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument and Friends of Organ Mountains Desert Peaks; Gold Butte National Monument and Friends of Gold Butte; Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument and Tulyeome; Mojave Trails National Monument and Mojave Desert Land Trust. Similar to its prior work with CSU on the Red Cliffs NCA and Beaver Dam Wash NCA RMPs, CLF planned to invest in these new

RMPs through: 1) strategic planning expertise to Friends Groups; 2) direct monetary support for Friends Groups; 3) CLF resources for staff to travel to attend public hearings and meetings; 4) CLF resources to research, draft and submit substantive comments during the RMP planning process; 5) CLF communications support to frame the RMP process to the public; and 6) travel to D.C. to educate the BLM national office about the local process and CLF perspective.

26. If the Board grants Washington County's appeal and remands the RMPs back to BLM, due to CLF's relatively small staff size and capacity, we will be forced to pull or divert resources previously dedicated to these new Monument RMP campaigns and shift them back to Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash NCAs. An additional NEPA process will require CLF to devote its scarce resources to again appearing at additional public meetings, educating the local community about the issues under review again, and supporting and training additional CSU staff and members on how to engage in strategic public engagement, advocacy, and expert policy analysis. Experience with the current RMP process suggests to me that if CLF has to again engage in another full EIS process we will need to divert at least \$100,000 in direct support, travel resources and staff time for eight in-person meetings and staff policy and communications expertise away from other RMP planning process and friends groups. This is the same amount we invested in the original RMP.

27. If Washington County is successful and the revised EIS for the Red Cliffs NCA allows a new right-of-way corridor for a highway, it will be a precedent setting decision as it pertains to the National Conservation Lands it will be the first new rights of way granted since the release of BLM conservation manuals. A new right of way would fail to protect the landscape, which is essential to the NCA being a part of the National Conservation Lands. If granted the highway would violate what we believe in and our mission as a non-profit. Thus,

CLF as an organization will be compelled to re-engage in the EIS process to ensure it meets the conservation standards our organization worked so hard to establish.

28. In addition to my professional experiences working to protect Red Cliffs National Conservation Area and Beaver Dam Wash, as discussed above, I have a significant personal interest in the protection of the region. I traveled to Washington County twice in the late 1980's and both times hiked within what is now the Red Cliffs NCA. It was then that I became personally invested in the future of this landscape. Working at CLF allowed me the opportunity to fully engage in its protection.

Washington County's Requested Relief Will Harm My Personal and Professional Interests

29. Since 2010, I have traveled to St. George at least eight times and each time, I have extended the trip (at times during the weekend- my personal time) to spend time in the Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash NCAs. I have always been drawn to Southern Utah because of the unique landscapes that can be found nowhere else the world. Through these trips, I have developed strong personal and professional interests in the ecology and natural beauty of these areas. As I left St. George during my last meeting with CSU a few weeks ago, I discussed with CSU members my interests and intentions to return for another visit to these areas. I informed CSU of my intention to return to these NCAs before the end of the year to further my personal interests in, and dedication to, the protection of these NCAs.

30. If Washington County is ultimately successful in their desire to build a highway corridor through the Red Cliffs NCA, it will be devastating to me personally. It is a landscape I look forward to visiting as it is vastly different from my Montana experience. I will no longer be able to hike in the high desert of Red Cliffs in peace and solitude. I will instead hear the roaring of cars, experience litter and the destructive effects that happen to a landscape due to

development. I staunchly believe Washington County's desired highway is not in the best interest of the people, the wildlife and the public lands in Washington County.

31. In addition, I have dedicated the last six years to the protection of these NCAs and have built strong connections with the members at CSU. If Washington County is successful, my professional interests in protecting these lands will be harmed. For example, I will feel that I personally failed CSU and let down my team at CLF in furthering their organizational missions and campaigns.

32. On a personal level, I support CLF's mission and its work on the RMPs at issue because the opportunity to recreate and experience the solitude provide by public lands is extremely important to me. Working at CLF allows me to help protect public lands and I'm grateful to make a living doing something I care about.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare, under penalty of perjury, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed this 21st day of March, 2017 in Bozeman, Montana.

/s/ Betsy Buffington
Betsy Buffington

