



Resolution In Support of America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act and for the Perpetual Protection and management of Grand Staircase-Escalante & Bears Ears National Monuments

PASSED AT ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE DIOCESE OF UTAH BY THE LAY & CLERGY DELEGATES 04/29/2022

WHEREAS Episcopalians respect the interdependent web of all existence – of which this fragile earth, our island home, is a part; and

WHEREAS our Baptismal Covenant calls us to strive for justice and peace among all people; and

WHEREAS in 2018, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church affirmed the President of the House of Deputies’ and the Presiding Bishop’s call to the Church to recognize Care of Creation as an integral part of The Jesus Movement; and

WHEREAS we, as Christians, recognize through the Gospel lessons of Jesus’ journey into the wilderness the vital role that an appreciation of God’s magnificent creation can play in our own spiritual formation; and

WHEREAS America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act – legislation that was first introduced in Congress by Utah Rep Wayne Owens in 1989 and has been continuously documented and updated during the past 33 years by the Department of Interior, and an active and engaged citizenry – would designate as Wilderness roughly 9 million acres of outstanding natural public landscapes, much of which is within Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments, and bordering Utah’s national parks; and

WHEREAS these wild lands contain some of the world’s richest concentrations of sacred sites important to the spiritual well-being of Native American cultures – Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute, Pueblo of Zuni, Hopi Tribe, and Navajo Nation – that endure, despite challenges, today; and

WHEREAS these lands are deeply valued by people from many different spiritual traditions as places of inspiration, connection, renewal and solace; and

WHEREAS the urgent, existential threat posed by our warming planet disproportionately and negatively impacts the underserved, underprivileged, indigenous, and people of color across the world; and

WHEREAS the publicly owned wild lands of Utah, managed by the Bureau of Land Management, belong to everyone and the protection of our public lands works to the benefit of current and future generations; and

WHEREAS fossil fuels derived from public lands account for 25% of all greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. according to a 2018 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) study commissioned by the Secretary of Interior; and WHEREAS protecting these lands and keeping that carbon in the ground significantly helps mitigate carbon emissions and maintains the ability of naturally functioning systems to sequester carbon from the atmosphere; and

WHEREAS the best defense against the effects of global warming (drier conditions, wildfires, diminished water resources, spread of non-native invasive plants, and dust storms) on Utah's public lands is to minimize ground disturbance and minimize degradation of the natural environment; and

WHEREAS these wild lands provide home to endangered or sensitive wildlife, including desert bighorn sheep, cougar, endangered desert tortoise, and habitat for elk, deer, mountain lion, bear, coyote and many other animals; and

WHEREAS these wild lands, if protected, would account for 1.5% of the remaining land that needs to be conserved to reach the goal of protecting 30% of the land in the United States by 2030; and it would preserve large unspoiled wild areas in their natural state throughout Utah as well as five regional wildlife corridors that are critical to three wildlife megalinkages within the continental-scale Western Wildway enhancing the Alaskan-Canadian Arctic with the Isthmus of Panama: Grand Canyon to Yellowstone, Grand Canyon to the Bitterroot Wilderness of Central Idaho, and the Green River (Canyonlands to Grand Teton); and

WHEREAS the Commission on Peace & Justice of the Episcopal Diocese of Utah (the "Commission"), which is charged by canon with the task of developing and implementing recommendations and strategies on issues of peace and justice, has examined the merits of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act as they relate to the mission and the environmental justice concerns of the Diocese; and

WHEREAS, based on such examination, the Commission has determined that America's Red Rock Wilderness Act closely aligns with the Diocese's interests in preserving and protecting God's creation and has therefore recommended that the Diocese and its parish congregations call for its passage; and

WHEREAS America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, soon to be re-introduced into the 117th Congress, is supported by the Utah Wilderness Coalition's more than 130 national and regional conservation groups, and is fully field-checked and documented,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2022 Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Utah urges its congregations and their members to:

- call for passage of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act to protect Utah's spectacular and irreplaceable wild lands by writing or visiting their senators and representatives seeking their support to protect their outstanding natural resources from exploitation from off-road vehicle abuse, vegetation removal and fossil fuel development;
- call for the passage of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act to help mitigate the climate crisis, protect habitat, animals, birds and all creatures, and to help mitigate racial and environmental injustices; and
- call for the permanent protection by Congress of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments as requested by Native American Tribes, First Nations and an overwhelming majority of Americans; and use the resources of the Utah Wilderness Coalition (www.protectwildutah.org) and Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (www.suwa.org) to educate themselves and others about the environmental and spiritual importance of protecting Utah's wild lands.