



March 13, 2014

Utah Governor Gary Herbert
Utah State Capitol Complex
350 North State Street, Suite 200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

Dear Governor Herbert,

As exhibitors and participants in the semi-annual Outdoor Retailer Market each of us and the companies we represent extend our gratitude to you and the State of Utah for your warm hospitality and we compliment you on Utah's unparalleled outdoor beauty and recreation amenities. As active participants in the outdoor activities we represent, we are drawn to Utah – and many of us have moved our businesses here – because of the spectacular backcountry recreation opportunities. We appreciate the important balance Utah has achieved between developed and undeveloped recreation.

It is about preserving this balance that we write. In light of recent promotion of the Interconnect proposal to link the seven resorts of the Central Wasatch via ski lifts, we urge you and other state and local leaders to be mindful of the important role backcountry recreation plays in Utah's attractiveness as a winter recreation mecca. We call upon you to lead the way in ensuring the critical balance between resort and backcountry winter recreation opportunities is preserved.

While there may indeed be viable options to connect the Wasatch resorts in a way that maintains the current balance and avoids negative environmental and watershed impacts, any consideration of an Interconnect system should take place within the context of a broad and inclusive public planning process such as the current Mountain Accord initiative. Furthermore, this process must incorporate an overall transportation solution for the Wasatch area.

We also call upon you to listen to the citizens of Utah who overwhelmingly support maintaining the current recreational and environmental balance. As you know, in the 2010 *Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow* report sponsored by the State of Utah, Salt Lake County, and Salt Lake City, 94 percent of Wasatch Front residents supported limiting future resort expansion in a way that it would not infringe on existing winter backcountry ski areas and have little or no effect on environmental resources.

Given the significant growth in backcountry skiing and snowshoeing in the face of declining or flat resort skiing numbers, it is evident that backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, winter mountaineering and other forms of human-powered winter recreation are increasingly important contributors to Utah's economy and quality of life.

Indeed, the future of Utah's recreation and tourist economy may very well lie more in what is protected than in what is developed.

The Wasatch Mountains are an ecological and scenic treasure, a vital source of drinking water, a place to find solitude and respite from the noise and stress of city life and to experience wild open spaces and wilderness on their own terms. Please, be vigilant and wise in preserving this irreplaceable resource not just for today but for future generations.

We, as members of the outdoor recreation industry, look forward to participating in partnership with you and with the Utah ski resort industry, local governments and other stakeholders to ensure recreation and transportation solutions worthy of the splendor of the Wasatch Range.

Sincerely,

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Board Chair
Wasatch Backcountry Alliance

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Executive Director
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cc: Senator Orrin Hatch
Senator Mike Lee
Congressman Chris Stewart
Congressman Rob Bishop
Congressman Jim Matheson
Congressman Jason Chaffetz
Derek Miller, Chief of Staff to Governor Herbert
Spencer Eccles, Executive Director – Governor’s Office of Economic Development
Brad Peterson, Director – Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation
Alan Matheson, Environmental Advisor to Governor Herbert
Jeff Edwards, EDCUtah President & CEO
Lane Beattie, Salt Lake Chamber President & CEO
Nathan Rafferty, President & CEO - Ski Utah
Mayor Ralph Becker, Salt Lake City
Mayor Ben McAdams, Salt Lake County
Mayor Tom Dolan, Sandy City
Mayor Kelvyn Cullimore, Cottonwood Heights
Mayor Tom Pollard, Town of Alta
Mayor Jack Thomas, Park City
Andy Beerman, Park City Council Member
Dave Whittekiend, Uinta-Wasatch-Cache Forest Supervisor
Cathy Kahlow, Salt Lake District Ranger
Nora Rasure, Intermountain Regional Forester
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