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NEWS RELEASE

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Analysis Shows Utah Public Lands Initiative Guts Wilderness Protections, Creates WINOs

*Proposal by Bishop, Chaffetz contains numerous unprecedented
measures to weaken wilderness protection*

MISSOULA, MONTANA – This week Wilderness Watch released a detailed analysis of the wilderness provisions found in Congressmen Rob Bishop’s (R-UT) and Jason Chaffetz’s (R-UT) discussion draft of their Public Lands Initiative (PLI) for dealing with public lands in eastern and southern Utah. Though the PLI proposes to designate some new Wildernesses, the new analysis shows that the PLI guts protections the Wildernesses would receive under the 1964 Wilderness Act, and includes numerous unprecedented harmful provisions never before found in any wilderness designation law.

“The dramatic and unprecedented nature of these provisions would strip from the Wildernesses in the PLI many of the protections afforded by the Wilderness Act,” said George Nickas, executive director of Wilderness Watch and a long-time Utah wilderness advocate. “The PLI would create nothing but WINOs,” Nickas added. “Wildernesses In Name Only.”

Wilderness Watch’s analysis focuses solely on the wilderness protection and wilderness stewardship provisions of the PLI. There are many other problematic provisions in the PLI, including poorly-drawn wilderness boundaries, giveaways to the oil and gas industry, land transfers and land giveaways, etc., but this analysis hones in only on the wilderness protection and stewardship provisions.

The full nine-page analysis is here: <http://wildernesswatch.org/images/wild-issues/pdfs/03-2016-Utah-PLI-Act-Wilderness-provisions.pdf>

“The PLI discussion draft unfortunately includes bad provisions that would damage Wilderness with language on wildlife management, motorized access,

buffer zones and military overflights,” said Kevin Proescholdt, Wilderness Watch’s conservation director. “Some of those provisions have appeared previously in other wilderness bills. But the PLI also contains unprecedented damaging language for Wilderness in the areas of fire, insects, and disease control; livestock grazing; hunting, fishing, and shooting; trail and fence maintenance; water rights and water developments; land acquisition; airshed protection; and bighorn sheep viability.”

“This unprecedented language has never before appeared in any other wilderness bill that has passed Congress,” added Nickas. “It makes a mockery of the idea that the PLI would actually protect any Wilderness.”

“We should protect real, wild, authentic Wilderness in Utah,” concluded Proescholdt. “We shouldn’t be designating fake Wildernesses that rob the citizens of the State and nation of the real thing.”

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Wilderness Watch is a national wilderness conservation organization with offices in Missoula (MT), Moscow (ID), and Minneapolis (MN). The organization focuses on the protection and proper stewardship of all Wildernesses in the National Wilderness Preservation System, and has developed extensive expertise with the implementation of and litigation over the 1964 Wilderness Act. See www.wildernesswatch.org.