

**SUMMARY OF WASHINGTON COUNTY
GROWTH & CONSERVATION ACT OF 2008**

Title I & Title II. Wilderness Areas

These titles designate 264,394 total acres of wilderness in Washington County on land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Forest Service, and the National Park Service, including more than 94% of all BLM Wilderness Study Areas in the county. This is a substantial increase over last session's proposed designation, and represents a significant compromise. Upon enactment of this legislation, more than 1 of every 5 acres, or 20.5%, of land in Washington County would be federally designated wilderness.

Title III. Red Cliffs National Conservation Area

This title establishes the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area, comprising nearly 62,000 acres, including 44,695 acres of BLM land. This provides permanent protection for the endangered desert tortoise and other at-risk species in the area surrounding St. George, Utah.

Title IV. Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area

This title establishes the Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area, comprising nearly 78,000 acres, including 68,083 acres of BLM land. This includes the Utah portion of the tri-state area of critical environmental concern for the desert tortoise. This is a significant addition from the previous proposal, and provides permanent protection for one of the most sensitive landscapes in the county.

Title V. Wild & Scenic River Designation

This title designates approximately 165.5 miles of the Virgin River and its tributaries as Wild and Scenic Rivers, following the National Park Service's recommendation. This is the first such designation in Utah history.

Title VI. Washington County Travel Management Plan

This title requires the BLM to prepare a comprehensive travel management plan for Washington County. As part of this comprehensive plan, BLM will designate the High Desert Off-Highway Vehicle Trail and identify alternatives for a northern transportation route.

Title VII. Land Disposal

This title authorizes the sale of approximately 9,052 acres of BLM land in Washington County, divided into three tiers. The bill directs the BLM to offer the first tier (906 acres) for sale 18 months after the bill passes, and conduct annual sales thereafter of the second tier (3,146

acres) with the final sale occurring prior to January 1, 2013. Each sale parcel in the first and second tiers has already been identified in the St. George Field Office Resource Management Plan for disposal.

For tier three lands, this legislation reduces the cap on discretionary land sales from 20,000 acres in the previous bill to 5,000 acres. This title does not direct the BLM to identify any tier three lands for disposal, but rather gives total discretion to the BLM's land use planning process. If the BLM chooses to sell any lands under tier three, it may do so only after an extensive public review and revision of the resource management plan. Tier three lands may only be selected in accordance with the Vision Dixie principles, which significantly reduces the land eligible for disposal.

The land sale proceeds would be allocated as follows: 85% to the BLM for land acquisition within Washington County, and administrative costs (capped at the lesser of 9% of the account or \$15 million dollars); 5% to the state to support education; and 10% to Washington County for conservation and other projects. The new focus on land acquisition allows the BLM to enhance the federal estate by disposing of low-priority, non-environmentally sensitive lands and then using those proceeds to acquire high-priority, biologically significant lands.

Title VIII. Rights-of-Way

This title would designate only two rights-of-way (approximately 932 acres) as reservoir sites, after complying with the National Environmental Policy Act. Both of these sites (Anderson Junction and Warner Valley) have been identified in the resource management plan. This is a decrease of 7,912 acres from the previous proposal, and does not include rights-of-way for projects in Ft. Pearce or Cougar Canyon. Unlike the previous bill, this legislation does not designate any new utility corridors, such as the Lake Powell Pipeline Corridor or the Northern Transportation Corridor.

Title IX. Management of Priority Biological Areas

This title directs the secretary of the interior to identify and manage priority biological areas within Washington County.

Title X. Conveyance of Dixie National Forest Land

This title conveys, for fair market value, 112 acres to correct survey and other administrative errors on Dixie National Forest land adjacent to Pinto, Utah.

Title XI. Authorization of Appropriations

This title authorizes such sums as are necessary to carry out this legislation.