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An Open letter to Secretary Ken Salazar

April 30, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

I was pleased to hear about your visit to Utah as Secretary of the Interior. As you know, Congress created your position to be steward over the vast resources owned by the people of the United States, and Utah will be a big part of that stewardship.

You oversee the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) which manages 42 percent of my state. On top of that, Utah has numerous national parks, monuments and historical sites, federal dams, wildlife refuges, and Indian Reservations. To be sure, Utah will hold a significant place in your thoughts during your service as Secretary.

I have seen my share of Interior Secretaries over the decades and have noticed some pitfalls to be avoided when managing the people's resources. Let's call them the seven deadly sins of public land management.

First, never underestimate the impact your decisions have on our nation's energy policy, security, and competitive strength. Most of our nation's energy is stored up on public lands, and access to cheap energy is a central element of world power. Our most aggressive competitors see the world as a game of King of the Hill: America is on top, and they will do everything possible to knock us off. Don't help them.

Second, never mess with our free market. It will outperform centralized government in meeting our nation's energy appetite while keeping prices low. Oil discovery and production take time, causing a lag between an increase in demand and supply. When policymakers set up artificial barriers to domestic energy production – such as withdrawing energy leases or withholding lease regulations – they upset the market's ability to respond to future increases in demand. Artificial barriers to energy production create artificially high energy prices and put our economy and competitiveness at risk.

Third, never shut down an abundant and cheap energy source in favor of one that is limited and expensive. Oil provides about 95 percent of our transportation needs. Ethanol can make up only a small portion of that need, even with huge government subsidies. Natural gas is the only other viable alternative, but natural gas vehicles are scarce. And your recent withdrawal of energy leases was an attack on some of Utah's best natural gas potential. To argue that these leases threatened our National Parks suggests you have not looked at the maps or talked to your BLM land managers.

Fourth, never assume the media or advocacy groups know or care more about public lands than your own land managers. Your assumption will almost always be wrong.

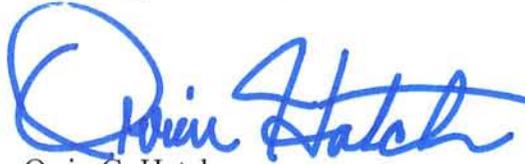
Fifth, never assume the media or advocacy groups know or care more about public lands than the locals living among them. That assumption would also be wrong. Yes, public lands belong to all Americans, but locals have the greatest stake in management decisions and merit serious consideration.

Sixth, never ignore the views of County Commissioners from public land counties. They represent citizens with the greatest stake in management decisions and often have more experience among the lands than the federal officials sent to manage them. County leaders represent a broader set of interests than any other stakeholder and are responsible for providing many of the services used by tourists and recreationists.

Seventh, never get pushed into a decision without first finding out the facts yourself. Even when the media, political appointees, and advocacy groups agree on an issue, hearing personally from local interests and land managers will always get you closer to the truth.

Again, thanks for coming to Utah. I look forward to working with you as you begin your new stewardship at the Department of the Interior.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Orrin Hatch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "O".

Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senator