News Statement

Western Resource Advocates Urges Senate Agriculture Committee To Block Senate Bill 15-232

SB 15-252 Against Will of Coloradoans, Waste of Time and Taxpayer Funds

COLORADO (April 23, 2015) - Rob Harris, Staff Attorney with Western Resource Advocates is testifying before the Colorado State Senate Agriculture, Natural Resources, & Energy Committee today to urge legislators to block Senate Bill 232, the proposed act creating a Colorado Federal Land Management Commission sponsored by Senators Baumgardner and Sonnenberg and Representative Coram.

“Western Resource Advocates opposes SB 15-232, concerning the creation of the Colorado Federal Land Management Commission to study the transfer of public lands in Colorado from the federal government to the state.

Public lands are not just for Coloradans; they are for all Americans. A Colorado College poll conducted in 2014 found that 72% of Coloradans support this concept. State ownership or privatization of public lands does not reflect the will of the people of Colorado.

Public lands are a critical piece of Colorado’s outdoor recreation and tourism economy. From hunters and anglers to hikers and bikers, visitors to public lands in Colorado generate over $13 billion per year in spending. This recreation supports over 122,000 jobs across the state. Were these lands to be sold or were access to these lands to be restricted, that spending and those jobs would be at risk.

In addition, the Colorado College poll found 84% of Coloradans cite proximity and access to public lands for recreation as one of the primary reasons they chose to live in Colorado. For this reason, businesses also want to locate in Colorado. They place a high value on access to and enjoyment of public lands that attract and retain the best employees.

Finally, the state’s lack of adequate funding to effectively manage these lands would expose communities across Colorado to increased risk of harm from wildfires and floods. While Colorado state government employees are dedicated and knowledgeable public servants, the state simply does not have the resources to safely manage these additional lands.

For these reasons, the creation of a commission to study the transfer of public lands in Colorado from the federal government to the state would be a waste of time and a waste of taxpayer money. State resources should be used for programs that are in line with the values of Colorado’s citizens. Please oppose SB 15-232.”

For the last 25 years Western Resource Advocates has been one of the West’s leading groups of experts protecting the region’s air, land and water. WRA’s lawyers, scientists and economists craft innovative solutions for the most complex natural resource challenges in the region. Go to www.westernresourceadvocates.org and follow us on Twitter @WRADV.