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It is an honor to join you today, and an honor to share my thoughts on the future of Utah's public lands. The Transfer of Public Lands Act gives all of us an opportunity – indeed a responsibility – to imagine a future for the physical landscape we inhabit.

We sit together today as part of a commission, a group tasked with evaluating and proposing solutions. The noun *commission* also indicates a weighty assignment, a responsibility given, as Christ commissioned his disciples to preach. In those terms, the ideas shared with the Commission on the Stewardship of Public Lands are ideas about our legacy, ideas about where Utah will be not just in 2015 but in 2115. When Utah takes these many acres from the federal government, Utah becomes steward, becomes shepherd over a vision of its future. Put more simply, we're talking about land and we're talking about legacy. The question to ask is -- What will Utah be two or three generations hence? And how should our time manage resources to bequeath a healthy economy and a healthy landscape to the times to come?

Today I propose we answer those questions in terms of balance -- balance between the necessity of economic uses and the necessity of wild places. One of

Utah's greatest resource is its undeveloped land with its opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. This is land that reinforces our identity as westerners, land that brings the economic advantage of visitors, land that offers clean air and vigorous habits to our children, land that supports the elk and the cougar and the eagle, land that makes bright, ambitious young people want to stay in Utah and start their businesses right here. As this commission imagines possible futures for Utah's public lands, I hope the members will reflect on that resource of land that, in the words of the Utah Wilderness Act of 2014, "retains its primeval character ... with minimal human impact." Looking to the future, these open spaces, these uncluttered vistas, can bring us real economic and social benefits, and differentiate Utah's from other states.

Let me add here that I'm not talking about a future of tourist money. Our legacy needs to be about more than tourism for Utah counties where 70%, 80% even 90% of the land is public land, and residents can neither fully use it nor fully tax it. The people who celebrate the tourist economy are rarely the ones changing sheets or washing dishes. But, and here is the balance part, nor do I want Utah to be a stuck in a boom-bust cycle of mining and drilling, its landscape scarred and polluted like West Virginia, its air fouled like Beijing, and its best and brightest moving to cleaner places with balanced economies. That is the road uncontrolled fracking, mining and shale oil cooking will bring us down. Consider, as a warning, Wyoming. Have you tried to breathe the air around Pinedale lately? Children and old people are urged to stay indoors. The gas industry has pumped money into the economy, but the gas industry emissions have generated ozone levels far above the worst day in Los

Angeles. Beyond the air quality, sociologists refer to the “Gillette Syndrome” to capture the consequences of boom-bust growth based on resource extraction. That small Wyoming town with all its natural gas money was shocked by drug abuse, by law breaking, by depression and by the unstitching of the very community values they thought a gas-boom would serve. Utah’s open lands can be about more than that. Indeed, critical as we must be of claims for tourism as a silver bullet fix for western economies, a tourist component brings Utah real economic benefits: tourist spending in Utah exceeded 8 billion dollars in 2012, and tourist spending in Utah has doubled since the year 2000. Any vibrant, growing, sustainable industry is one to be fostered – no one’s heading to Gillette for vacation – and its golden goose is the primeval character of our public lands.

I am a student of human relations to the environment so I hope you will let me draw a lesson from the pioneer ethic that settled the American west. The fundamental story from the Mayflower to Louis Lamour is that in struggling to thrive in these rugged, wild places our forefathers became better people. Big open country is, in the American story, a place to explore the self, to improve as an individual and to bond as a community. This is the frontier spirit. Back in 1890 the American historian Frederick Jackson Turner lamented the end of the frontier. He said that with westward expansion complete there would be fewer opportunities for Americans to form themselves as healthy individuals against wild forces, and, crucially, fewer opportunities for the community building that life alongside unsettled landscapes made necessary. (And I’ll just say that Americans today feel

this absence and it's one thing that brings them to our own open spaces, from the Green River to the Uintas – the future will only intensify the demand for self-exploration in Utah's rugged landscapes.) In essence, the Turner Thesis asserts that our fundamental values as Americans, our most beloved democratic institutions, come to us through contact with big natural forces. The Europeans can't do this, the societies that have recklessly consumed all their nature have only urban temptations and corruptions, while we Americans form ourselves upon the anvil of our wild lands. Open landscape, big habitat, nature at its most direct ... this is the heart of American patriotism, of the ranching culture that distinguishes the west, of the healthy personal exploration our children and their children can enjoy. Turner's theory of America is Utah's unique legacy for the future. Many Utahns join Turner in setting that against an economy dominated by quick exploitation whose profits go elsewhere and whose bequest is a polluted environment and a broken home.

I speak to you today about stewardship in the name of a bright future. Let me repeat that Utah's wild places can accommodate some development. They need to for the sake of the people who live real lives in Kane County, in Dagget county. But maybe in the future Utah's rural communities can be a model for wise use of their surroundings and a model for thriving lives. Thomas Jefferson celebrated the yeoman farmer as the linchpin of American democracy because that person was interested in the health of the land and in the health of the republican virtues such a life made possible. In a letter to John Jay, Jefferson wrote, "cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and its

interests by the most lasting bands.” I am not here to sing you a song about agrarianism. But I am here to say that a lived relation to a healthy landscape is crucial to the future of Utah. And the values we admire as Americans – vigor, independence, honesty, generosity – are cultivated in relation to rugged land.. As we look to the future of Utah’s public lands, let’s make that future rich in healthy landscapes shaped by local communities and let’s invest in the contact zone where farming meets ranching meets wild space.

Is this what the new Utah Wilderness Act does? I hope so. That Act will succeed insofar as it fosters a balance between people’s right to make a living off the land and the necessity of sustaining healthy natural systems all around them. Many others can speak to you about the commercial potential of public lands. I am here to say that the enduring resource of Utah’s big, undeveloped spaces should be a priority in that future. From Central Park to Zion, generations have looked backward with gratitude toward other’s foresight. My claim is that such spaces pay us back – they pay us back in physical health through air and water, they pay us back in economic well-being through tourism and through nature’s services, they pay us back in traditional American values learned via hunting, camping, fishing and adventure, and they pay us back in the spiritual realm where vast wilds spaces have inspired prophets from Moses to Everett Ruess.

Utah’s own Wallace Stegner praised the civic value of big nature. He called it “the geography of hope” and he meant that keeping some meaningful sections of our public lands free from commercial development would make us healthier as

Americans and healthier as individuals. Stegner writes, "An American, insofar as he is new and different at all, is a civilized man who has renewed himself in the wild." His appreciation is for the extra-commercial things Utah's state lands offer us: "spiritual renewal, the recognition of identity, the birth of awe." These are values Utah can lead with, values we can stand for in this century. Take the long view. If we make tar sands and shale oil production our priority Utah will become another strip-mined backwater, a place whose birthright and whose culture was sold for brief profit. Instead, in a balanced future, Utah's public lands could be Stegner's "geography of hope" where people come to see their best selves, where traditional practices thrive in grazing, in farming, in ranching and where healthy communities practice the stewardship that gives this commission its name. Yes, if Utah is to be a national leader and a national success it will do so by recognizing its geography's distinct contribution to our economy, our society and our health.

Let me conclude now by reiterating that I appreciate your attention. Democracy is a space where many voices come together and from their contrasting perspectives strengthen the state. You are the decision makers, you grip the levers of power, I am only a professor, reading books and trying to understand how people have made sense of their environments. The deduction of my studies, which I've shared with you today, is that we strengthen ourselves when we steward wild nature. Romulus and Remus may have been a fable, but Rome lost its edge when it lost touch with the fierce nature around it. As we think of the Transfer of Public Lands Act, as we think

of the Utah Wilderness Act, as we think of Utah's future, let us celebrate the bold, undisturbed character of its public lands.