



The National Grassroots Organization of Republicans for Environmental Protection

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June 6, 2003

Honorable Bill Owens  
Governor of Colorado  
136 State Capitol  
Denver, CO 80203-1792

Dear Governor Owens:

REP America, the national grassroots organization of Republicans for environmental protection, was greatly disturbed to hear of your administration's proposal for resolving RS-2477 issues in Colorado.

Frankly, the letter that DNR Executive Director Walcher sent to Interior Secretary Norton on May 15, 2003 was astonishing. Its implications for national parks, monuments, and wildlife refuges are sweeping. If accepted and fully carried out, your administration's proposal likely would result in extensive and lasting harm to national public lands, including soil erosion, air and water pollution, wildlife habitat damage, and degradation of scenery. Magnificent treasures that give Colorado its special beauty would be thoughtlessly squandered.

But the issue runs much deeper. Your administration's proposal is not a Colorado-only matter. Dinosaur National Monument, Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge, and other national public lands are the birthright and property of all American citizens. They are national treasures that symbolize and embody our nation's heritage, history, and culture, akin to Gettysburg, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Statue of Liberty. Parochial interests must never be allowed to trump their protection on behalf of present and future generations of Americans.

Your administration's proposal is a brazen overreach that would allow local governments, for all intents and purposes, to expropriate national public lands under the guise of managing every cow path and miner's trail that county commissioners assert is a "highway."

As you know, citizens around the nation, including owners of outdoors businesses, have expressed grave concerns about the state of Utah's


recent actions in regard to RS-2477. Imagine their level of concern if Colorado pushes a proposal that goes even further than the Utah actions.

The principles of true conservatism and true patriotism impose a duty on present generations to act as responsible stewards of our common heritage. Degrading the public lands that are in our generation's care would be disrespectful to our wise forebears and irresponsible to our voiceless descendants.

We urge you in the strongest possible terms to withdraw the current proposal and direct Mr. Walcher to develop a balanced, responsible proposal for resolving legitimate RS-2477 claims in ways that do not degrade our nation's heritage.

Thank you for considering our views on this serious matter.

Sincerely,



Jim DiPeso  
Policy Director

Cc:  
Gale Norton, Secretary of the Interior  
Greg Walcher, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Natural Resources