

April 22, 2024

The Honorable Tom Tiffany
Chairman
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
House Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joe Neguse
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
House Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Subcommittee on Federal Lands oversight field hearing titled *“Empowering Local Voices and Stopping Federal Overreach to Improve the Management of Utah’s Public Lands.”*

Dear Chairman Tiffany and Ranking Member Neguse,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, **we strongly oppose efforts to establish the Northern Corridor Highway through the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area (NCA).**

A four-lane highway corridor through the heart of the NCA would set a dangerous precedent that ignores the will of the people living in and around St. George, Utah, bypasses prior agreements, destroys critical habitat for the threatened Mojave desert tortoise and other sensitive species, and ignores more effective solutions to the region’s growth challenges. The highway also violates five environmental protection laws: the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Administrative Procedure Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act.

The Northern Corridor Highway would be counter to the 1995 Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) agreement established under the Endangered Species Act developed by the Fish and Wildlife Service. The plan was a pragmatic approach to both protect the desert ecosystem and open 300,000 acres to growth and economic development. Residents and local officials wanted more certainty that lands around St. George would be permanently protected for the benefit of current and future generations. After many years of collaboration, the NCA was established by Congress in 2009. The NCA and HCP overlap, helping to protect treasured recreation areas, critical habitat, and open space for St. George residents and tourists.

It also does not make logical sense to locate the highway in the proposed region, as there are alternatives better for economic growth and cheaper for taxpayers that do not destroy the NCA.

For these reasons, we urge you to oppose efforts to build the Northern Corridor Highway through the NCA, and urge you to continue to manage these public lands the way local citizens support and in the national interest, rather than for short-term private gains.

Sincerely,

Ileene Anderson
Senior Scientist
Center for Biological Diversity

David Feinman
Government Affairs Director
Conservation Lands Foundation

Chris Krupp
Public Lands Attorney
WildEarth Guardians

Holly Snow Canada
Executive Director
Conserve Southwest Utah

Travis Hammill
DC Director
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance