

AGRICULTURE
NATURAL RESOURCES
SMALL BUSINESS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0603

February 27, 2012

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Jon Jarvis
Director, National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

RE: Guided Climbing Access in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park

Dear Secretary Salazar and Director Jarvis:

I write to express my concern with a National Park Service proposal (the "Proposal") in its recent Wilderness and Backcountry Management Plan to prohibit guided climbing in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. While I recognize that guided climbing comprises a relatively small percentage of total climbing activity in the Black Canyon, I am concerned that, if adopted, the Proposal will reduce opportunities for safe, facilitated wilderness recreation and education not only at the Black Canyon but also in other areas of our country's great National Park System.

As a member of the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources and its Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, I know that Americans want more opportunities to connect to their national parks and public lands. I also know that many members of the American public have concerns about personal safety in the outdoors and want their public lands to be more accessible and inviting.

Commercial guide services, including guided rock and alpine climbing services, as well as non-profit educational organizations are important conduits for helping the public safely and responsibly experience the Black Canyon wilderness. These services have a long-standing tradition within the National Park System, have been deemed necessary and appropriate in administering park wilderness for many decades, and provide critical services to countless

visitors each year that want to experience the technical rock climbing, ice climbing, and mountaineering activities that might otherwise be inaccessible without a guide.

Climbing has a spectrum of styles and approaches. While some experienced climbers choose to enjoy the legendary vertical challenges presented by the Black Canyon on their own, some members of the public choose to partner with a Certified Guide for certain climbing objectives. This mentorship approach enhances opportunities for the public to safely experience the Black Canyon wilderness areas, and it is essential that the public continue to enjoy this option.

During our nation's economic recession, when the federal government is desperately seeking creative ways to generate job growth, this is not the time to eliminate jobs that depend on access to the Gunnison National Park. Accordingly, I urge you not to implement the Proposal, and I appreciate your consideration of a more adaptive, dynamic management approach to the public's experience of the world-class climbing in the Black Canyon and across our National Parks.

Sincerely,



Scott Tipton
Member of Congress

CC: Connie Rudd, Superintendent Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
John Wessels, Intermountain Regional Director National Park Service

