

Statement
By Leland F. Pollock
Garfield County, Utah Commissioner
before the
House Committee on Natural Resources,
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
Thursday, December 14, 2014 at 9:30 a.m.
Room 1334 Longworth House Office Building

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and Members of the committee:

My name is Leland Pollock, and I am the chairman of the Garfield County, Utah Commission. I also serve as chairman of the National Association of Counties Public Lands Committee and have formerly served as the Chairman of the Utah Association of Counties Public Land Steering Committee. I am also the son of a Park Service employee and literally grew up within the boundaries of Bryce Canyon National Park. I have lived on and around public lands my entire life, and understand their importance to the local communities and the nation as a whole. Based on a lifetime of experience with public lands and National Parks, I believe I am informed and can accurately testify before you today.

Garfield County is a scenic rural area roughly the size of Connecticut. 93% of the land base is under federal ownership, and I believe we are the only U.S. County that contains portions of 3 National Parks (Bryce Canyon, Capitol Reef and Canyonlands). We are also home to significant portions of the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, the Dixie National Forest, the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM or Monument), two BLM field offices, and a small segment of the Fish Lake National Forest. Private ownership is extremely limited, and is only 3% to 5% of the total land base. On that limited tax base Garfield County is responsible for schools, road maintenance, garbage collection, emergency medical services, law enforcement, search and rescue and a host of other public services. Garfield County, like Kane County, is responsible for the liabilities on millions of acres of federal land within their boundaries, without a voice in how those lands are managed.

I am here today to testify on local needs of Garfield County for the Grand Staircase - Escalante National Monument and the Escalante Canyons National Park proposed by Representative Chris Stewart. Public lands, monuments and parks are a wonderful thing. The basic premise of preserving outstanding resources for the enjoyment of current and future generations is honorable. The BLM & Park Service has developed wonderful skills at managing people while preserving resources.

Unfortunately, over the past few decades, enjoyment of public land and park resources by current generations has suffered at the hands of those who believe federal lands should be managed to lock people out and prohibit reasonable visitation and access. It has suffered by a misguided notion that the best management comes from agency heads that are significantly influenced by special

interests and political lobbying. For the past 21 years Garfield County has been forgotten by federal managers thousands of miles away who do not understand the impact the Monument has had on the lives of real people in southern Utah. As a County Commissioner I must speak up for those forgotten families, forgotten stewards of the land, forgotten hunters, ranchers, and tourists, those who are clinging to a life they once knew and that could be restored if those people had a voice that was heard in Washington D.C.

The proposed Escalante Canyons National Park and the various units of the GSENM, to be of any significant benefit to anyone, must be managed a) largely under the direction and guidance of local elected officials who best know and understand the resources and b) to accommodate a variety of the American public by becoming “people places.” They must be places that allow the current generation to enjoy and appreciate the great wonders of the area, while preserving the resources for future generations.

Garfield County has the skills, technical knowledge, and ability to accomplish these two tasks simultaneously: 1) facilitate and allow the enjoyment of Garfield County’s outstanding resources by the current generation; and 2) preserve our outstanding resources for future generations. These are not mutually exclusive management goals. The local people had accomplished those multiple use/ sustained yield goals for over 100 years prior to the designation in 1996. Unfortunately, many individuals and groups create conflict and promote exclusive, single-use designations for the purpose of restricting public access to public lands.

Monument Effects

President Clinton’s monument designation 21 years ago started a suffocation of Garfield County. While no single industry felt an instant fatal blow, the effect of the restrictions cumulatively was death by a thousand cuts.

1. **Socioeconomic Deficiencies**. Prior to 1996 Garfield County was a growing economy and population. For approximately 120 years multiple-use land-based industries that sustainably and reasonably used public lands surrounding Escalante supported the families of that community. With severe monument restrictions on that land, businesses started closing and young families were forced to move to metropolitan areas to find employment. That exodus caused a self-perpetuating effect in all industries that now had a dwindling customer base. This economic shrinking has continued for 21 years.

The tourism jobs that were promised were never realized, as the monument has never been managed for tourism and access to visit the incredible sights, but rather for limited recreation and more like a conservation area. The few jobs that outfitting and recreation guiding did bring are seasonal and low wage; more suited for college students in the summer than for a living wage to support a family year-round. Nationally, 10.5% of the economy is made up from service industries. In Garfield County tourism and service industries (and it is usually the low end jobs from those industries) comprise approximately 44% of the local economy. Attached is a chart showing the seasonality of Garfield County employment compared to two nearby communities and the State of Utah. All other effects stem from a struggling local economy hobbled by over- burdensome land restrictions.

Please also note, some will attempt to mislead you into believing the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument has been a great economic boon to Garfield County. They often cite an economic study produced by *Headwaters Economics*. That study draws its data from communities that are hundreds of times larger than Garfield County, such as the Phoenix metropolitan area, and the area designated for monuments is 5% to 10% of that designated for Garfield County. The study also includes the largest community in Southern Utah in the analysis, even though it is two counties (over 100 miles) away and on the other side of Zion National Park and Bryce Canyon National Park.

2. **Loss of School Kids and Families.** Since creation of GSENM in 1996 enrollment in the 7th through 12th grades of Escalante High School has dropped from over 150 students to less than 50 today. That is a loss of more than 66%. We would not permit the loss of two thirds of the juveniles in any species on this planet. But yet, we manage our public lands that completely surround the communities in Garfield County in a manner that results in that very same loss. Only in this instance, we're talking about people, families and human lives. Even when classes are available, the quality of education with on a few students per class, without sufficient student/social interaction, suffers compared to an energetic class of 15-20 students discussing and sharing diverse viewpoints. The situation became so unbearable that in 2016 the County was forced to issue an emergency declaration.

3. **Increase Burdens on Local Governments.** Garfield County has tremendous scenery. Creation of the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument brought attention to that scenery and required increased local government services in the form of road maintenance, law enforcement, search and rescue, and other services. For example: The Hole in the Rock Road, a route originally traveled by pioneers in 1879, has increased approximately 2000% since 1996. However, the Monument Management Plan, written and controlled by agency heads without accepting local input, prohibits improvements to the road. That means Garfield County cannot install culverts or drainage improvements to accommodate floods which leads to poor road quality and increased automobile incidents not equipped to handle the rough roads. The BLM and Park service then repeatedly call our road crews out in the middle of the night - risking our lives - to rescue trapped and stranded visitors. Here again, local elected officials have the information and experience to correctly manage problems, and agency heads in Washington DC are unfamiliar with the territory.

Similarly, utility corridors, well established prior to the Monument designation, have been severely restricted by poor management without local input. Garfield and Kane Counties have been limited in expanding fiber optic connectivity for internet and cell towers because of management restrictions within already prescribed utility corridors. Beside the economic potential that connectivity would provide, the lack of adequate cell reception has created a safety issue that could often be prevented by stranded visitors being able to call for help or use mobile based navigation.

That same utility corridor restriction caused an emergency in the town of Henrieville which was not permitted to access its water lines for repair in the Monument and suffered a catastrophic collapse of its entire water system. Tens of thousands of gallons of water for drinking only was hauled to the city at great expense over a week until the right to access the lines was allowed by

Monument management.

4. **Lack of Adequate Signing.** The same Monument Management Plan prohibits guidance signing in approximately 94% of GSENM. People on even the most popular hikes are frequently lost; and in July of this year we had another death on the trail to the 2nd most popular hike in the Monument because the hiker could not find the trail back to his car. Most of the consequences of poor management are preventable with proper simple signage. However, the expense for poor management is passed on to Garfield County when called for search and rescue, medical, and law enforcement services.

5. **Loss of Artifacts and Objects of Antiquity.** One of the great ironies of the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument is collection of artifacts and souvenirs. The Monument Management Plan prohibits any rock or artifact removal, including for the Monument itself for use in display purposes in the visitor center because the visitor center is located in Canonville Town, outside monument boundaries. However the Management Plan allows universities and museums to come to Garfield County, extract and raid our world-class archaeological and paleontological artifacts and take them out of the County with no remuneration and without any local hope of their return. If the landscapes are unique to the area, and worthy of visitors coming to experience them here, the unique paleontological and archeological resources are equally impressive and researchers should come to Garfield County to experience them. Federal agencies have long promised, in accordance with scientific protections of the Antiquities Act, to make the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument a science monument with a science research center and on-site university classes, but for 21 years those promises have never been fulfilled.

6. **Closing the Monument to Visitors.** A 1.9 million acre Monument should be large enough to accommodate many visitors. However, the Management Plan, written without genuine local input, severely restricts visitation in almost all parts of GSENM. In two thirds of the Monument many small groups of friends or family cannot legally visit together because they will be over the 12 person limit. In 94% of the monument family reunions or scout camp-outs are illegal because of the 25 person limit. In the front country designation it is a violation to collect dead & down firewood, so families cannot roast marshmallows or hot dogs unless they bring their own firewood. The monument management plan is written to keep people out rather than accommodate reasonable visitation and allow the public to enjoy the area in a reasonable manner. These explicit rules also restrict historic religious and cultural heritage events, which were supposed to be grandfathered into the monument plan, but the Harvey rule precluded that use.

Much of that closing to visitation is implicit. A purposeful lack of most infrastructure discourages the vast majority of Americans from enjoyment of these public lands. The second most popular destination, the Peekaboo and Spooky trails, lack any restroom facilities, and the trailhead and parking area is covered in trash and human waste by more than 20,000 annual visitors leaving a health hazard and stench. Another popular religious and cultural attraction, Dance Hall Rock, finally received a restroom, the only restroom in over 40 miles of popular attractions, only after 19 years of persistent requests.

7. **Wildlife Habitat Recovery and Livestock Grazing.** The Monument has historically been a coveted hunting ground for mule deer and other species. Wildlife benefited from greatly from livestock producers who maintained vegetative quality and water sources for livestock and wildlife alike. While livestock grazing was guaranteed by the 1996 designation, Monument management decisions to not allow habitat recovery projects or for equipment use for water source maintenance that naturally erode over time, has severely limited livestock producers and their livelihood. Monument management repeatedly cite that few livestock numbers have been permanently reduced, but in reality over a third of the guaranteed AUMs have been “permanently suspended” due to dwindling grazing conditions on the ground. Monument management does not need to cut AUMs from livestock grazing, the ranchers will be forced to do it themselves because there will not be anything on the ground for their livestock, or the wildlife, to eat.

The effect of that restriction has also impacted wildlife, including critical mule deer migratory corridors. This wildlife decline has impacted the local population as well as sportsmen across the intermountain region who have historically relied on southern Utah as a premier hunting destination. Without the habitat recovery projects carried out on public lands across the West, all animals suffer.

Future Solutions

These are just few of the real-life problems that have occurred because local elected officials were not given any voice in managing lands within their jurisdiction. Admittedly, federal officials provided lip-service, held open houses, and requested comments in the Federal Register. However none of the local input was adopted into the plan. While a historic view of the effect of poor management could continue, I prefer to focus on solutions for the future to better accomplish the dual goals of enjoying and using the land now, and preserving the resources for future generations. Congressman Stewart’s legislation for Garfield County, Canyons of the Escalante National Park and the units of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument will provide a balance between federal management and local input and establishes a platform to best accomplish those dual goals.

Primarily the proposed legislation will better place public lands in public hands again. Critical to that aim is the distinction between tourism and recreation. Tourism is conducted by larger groups of people and is generally attraction based. Tourists come prepared for a specific set of activities and are looking for a specific set of outcomes, locations, schedules, or accommodations. Many details and other aspects of their experience may be handled by others. The presence of other individuals participating in the same activity is accepted and sometimes welcomed. Frequently tour buses, shuttles, paved roads and trails, trams, and other facilities for transporting people to various places are used.

Quite differently, recreation is most generally self-directed and involves much smaller numbers of people, possibly only one or two individuals. The presence of others participating in the same activity, at the same time in the same place is unwanted and unaccepted. Often, facilities are not required or are even shunned. In parks and monuments where tourism and recreation are both accommodated (e.g. Zion and Bryce Canyon National Parks) recreation makes up a very small percentage of the visitors, generally less than 5% to 10%.

The more heavily visited areas of Zion and Park Bryce Canyon National Parks are examples of tourism and represent people parks/monuments/public lands. The remote areas of Capitol Reef National Park and the Maze District of Canyonlands National Park are example of land base parks. It should be noted that even people parks like Bryce and Zion use a relatively small percentage of their lands to accommodate the vast majority of their visitors, and recreationists are able to enjoy the majority of the land in solitude that most tourists will never try to visit. A key distinction is also that people parks/ monuments accommodate both tourism and recreation. Land base parks/monuments only accommodate recreation. Hence, land based parks have a much smaller visitation and a much higher per visitor cost than people parks.

In order for the Grand Staircase-Escalante area to fully benefit the American public it needs to maximize the value to both tourists and recreationists, while at the same time preserving the attractions, heritage, scenery, activities and resources that justified the designation in the first place. Time and space are insufficient to discuss all aspects of managing the public lands in the Grand Staircase-Escalante area, but summarized below are some of the most important aspects that need to become foundational management principles.

1. **Access**. In order for the Grand Staircase-Escalante lands to be a benefit to the American public, access needs to be provided for tourism and for recreation. For the past 20 years access in the GSENM has been woefully inadequate. It is the main source of conflict between the federal government and the State of Utah and its Counties. Even remote access roads throughout the Monument have been repeatedly restricted and closed throughout the 21 year history. On the current trajectory there will not be any motorized access inside the monument in another 21 years. Generally, the Grand Staircase-Escalante area is bounded on the south and west by US 89 and on the north by State Highway 12; an All-American highway. Other than those two state highways, paved roads in the monument are limited to 14 miles of the Burr Trail Road, a short section of Kodachrome Road from the town of Cannonville to Kodachrome Basin State Park, and a few miles of Johnson Canyon Road through private land in Kane County. Hole in the Rock road, the most heavily used road in the interior of the monument, has management plan prohibitions against reasonable improvements. In order to make the entire area work for the public, access must be improved, roads must be reliable, and infrastructure supporting recreation and tourism must be developed. Many of the search and rescue efforts could be prevented with better road access and signage on those roads so visitors know what their vehicle is suited to and where they should avoid.

Associated with such improvements are adequate rights-of-way along the existing roads and trails. The rights-of-way need to include sufficient width to accommodate turnouts, overlooks, bus turnarounds, rest stops, restrooms, bike lanes, interpretive areas, and other features normally found in national parks and monuments. It is estimated that a width of 330 feet on each side of State highways or County road centerline would be sufficient for all major collectors and arterials. For local roads and resource roads a width of 165 feet on each side of centerline would be generally adequate with provisions in specific instances to increase to the 330 foot width identified for larger transportation facilities.

2. **Attractions**. There are numerous spectacular natural attractions along the existing County roads and State highways. Many more attractions exist within walking distance from major

transportation facilities. However, the current monument management plan prohibits the development of pathways, trails and facilities that will accommodate visitors and especially Americans with disabilities.

Adequate flexibility needs to be provided, so as attractions are identified, they can be accessed by those desiring to participate in tourism-based activities. More remote attractions which require knowledge of the backcountry, technical skills, or strenuous efforts can be reserved for those individuals and groups that desire to participate in less developed recreation oriented activities. The area is more than large enough to easily accommodate both without competition.

3. **Community Development.** It is recognized that development of tourism related facilities is best located in communities adjacent to parks and monuments and not on public lands. Tourism related facilities accommodating a large number of people, large developed campgrounds, eating facilities, and other convenience based infrastructure should be located on private lands within towns and communities. Facility development within the parks and monuments should be limited and relatively primitive. Campgrounds should not compete with local businesses. Concessionaires and tours should be housed primarily in nearby communities, parking areas should be adjacent to County roads and trails, and local communities should be sustained in every manner possible. Likewise, employee housing, as much as possible, should be included in the communities so that park and monument employees become integrated into the communities where they live to develop relationships with the local residents and better understand the relationship between federal lands and local populations.

4. **Scenery.** Visitor use surveys conducted by various federal agencies indicate motorized recreation for viewing of scenery and pleasure is the dominant recreational activity on public lands in Garfield County. The scenery is what draws people to the area. State Highways and County roads need to be augmented with adequate turnouts, viewpoints and parking areas. Rest stops need to be carefully placed, so viewing may be maximized and safety ensured. Wherever possible, such parking facilities should also be tied to attractions, interpretive sites and points of interest.

5. **Traditional Uses.** One of the major problems with the creation of the Monument in 1996 was subsequent management attempted to curtail or eliminate traditional activities that have occurred in the area since settlement. Hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, rock hounding, backpacking, canyoneering, mountain bike riding, ATV use (limited to existing roads), and other activities that have been going on for half a century need to be authorized and continued. Significant work has been done by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) and others to restore various wildlife habitats and populations. Wildlife management is a significant aspect of UDWR's program and must continue to be managed by the State of Utah. Proper wildlife management, hunting, and fishing within federal designations must continue to be under the jurisdiction of the State of Utah and needs to be supportive of local values and interests. The Monument must be able to work better with UDWR and other wildlife organization to enhance and restore critical wildlife habitat and ensure that hunting those areas, as well as other traditional uses, will continue in perpetuity.

6. **Domestic Livestock Grazing.** Domestic livestock grazing is a critical part of the local heritage and continues to be a significant economic driver. It is engrained and entwined in our way of life

and culture and is under constant threat from outside special interests. As a County Commissioner, I seek a voice for the quiet rancher working tirelessly to provide for his family as many previous generations did before him. Currently that rancher is not sure whether he will be able to continue ranching, what future monument boundary changes will mean for his family and heritage, or whether there will even be a resource to graze. Those families need certainty in the future from Congress. Livestock grazing must be continued and enhanced through reasonable and sustainable vegetative and water projects in perpetuity to guarantee this part of our heritage in the American West is not lost.

7. **Hiking & Camping.** Hiking and camping activities need to be supported through development of appropriate facilities. As these activities get increasingly remote, the facilities can be reduced accordingly. However signing needs to be available at all popular hikes and should be developed in a manner that is conducive to the activities. There must always be adequate information available, so someone who is lost or having trouble will have an opportunity to receive the support they need.

8. **Scientific Research & Museum.** Garfield County views the loss of scientific resources (archeological and paleontological) as an extraction industry that has resulted in a loss to the local area. High on Garfield County's list of needs is Scientific Research and a Museum. The science industry is a clean technology that would provide valuable jobs, a critical element to a diversified economy, and other benefits to areas that are losing valuable archeological and paleontological artifacts. The State of Utah, Garfield County, public entities, and private enterprise are engaged in an effort to develop a human history museum in Escalante. It is partially complete; and preliminary plans are designed to accommodate federal participation in the scientific research and the curation of artifacts. Archeological and paleontological specimens collected from Kane and Garfield Counties should remain here, and the scientific research associated with them should also be conducted here. Colleges in Utah have partnered with Bryce Canyon National Park to provide joint educational opportunities connected with college degree programs. Those efforts should be expanded to include the communities and schools in the Grand Staircase- Escalante Canyons area. Kane and Garfield Counties could become science hubs of unique resources and bolster the scientific and educational opportunities not usually provided rural counties. However, these endeavors are only guaranteed through local input in the management of those resources as federal management has been ineffective thus far.

9. **Consistency, Cooperation & Coordination.** Garfield County recognizes great value in consistency, cooperation, and coordination between the various levels of our nation's governments. Garfield County desires to be fully engaged in the planning and development phase for the modified monument and adjacent lands. Garfield County has gone to significant effort to educate itself regarding federal processes associated with CEQ regulations, NEPA, FLPMA, and Park Service regulations and guidance. We believe the County is in a position to be a cooperating agency and valuable resource on every plan or project proposed by the federal government. Additionally we believe, in many instances, we are ideally suited to serve as a joint lead agency, especially where the facilities either impact or are maintained by Garfield County. This is certainly true for the transportation network which is entirely maintained by Garfield County. It is also true for those activities that involve search and rescue, law enforcement, emergency medical services, solid waste collection and disposal, water quality governed by the Clean Water Act, and air-quality

governed under the provisions of the Clean Air Act. Management plans for monuments and parks are best developed in cooperation and coordination with local elected officials, and FLPMA mandates that federal plans be consistent with State and local plans to the maximum extent allowed by law. That has not happened in the last 20 years and nothing but conflict is the obvious result. Local elected officials must have a meaningful seat at the table throughout the planning and development process and must be full partners with local agency executives in the development and implementation of resource management plans.

Conclusion

HR 4558 best provides for the best management of the incredible beauty and resources located in Garfield and Kane Counties. Through local input working in cooperation with federal land managers, we can achieve the goals of enjoyment and use of the land now and preservation of these lands for future generations of all Americans, not just a select few. Only the principles in this legislation allow us to return these public lands back to public hands.

There will be some who criticize this testimony and attempt to pick it apart word by word. Admittedly, I am not the most eloquent of individuals in verbal or written presentations. However, I can assure you, my sincerity cannot be questioned.

Local elected officials know the land best, know what their constituents need, and know how to best serve the visiting public while preserving the resources that brought them to our area in the first place. And we have skin in the game. We will be here long after federal officials are transferred and the visitors return home. We will live – and die – with the management decisions that are made. We should have representation in those decisions.

There is adequate room in the concepts I have presented for improvement. Things may need to be altered, changed and modified. But there is no fault in local elected officials having a say in what happens within their jurisdiction; and there is no deficiency in our ability to solve differences if we want to. There is adequate acreage for a variety of experiences; there are adequate resources; there are technical skills that can be employed; there are a host of management structures that can be used; and importantly, Mother Nature has the ability to assist us and correct our minor flaws. But even she cannot help us if groups or individuals focus on exclusion and conflict rather than solutions. And she smiles on those industrious local officials that do their best to cooperate with her and preserve her resources for current and future generations.

We are hopeful that, after careful consideration, Congress will take appropriate steps to make Garfield County's lands more available to the public, better managed by including local management and more supportive of local and national socio-economic needs, by quickly passing this bill with bi-partisan support, showing Garfield County that Congress has no longer forgotten them. Thank you for the opportunity of speaking today.

I would be happy to answer any additional questions you may have. I can be reached at (435) 616-2718 or by email at leland.pollock@garfield.utah.gov.

Thank you again.

Respectfully Submitted



Leland F. Pollock
Chair, Garfield County Commission

Exhibit 1: a chart of Garfield County school enrollment depicting the period of time the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument has been in existence. Please note, it has not broken out the Escalante High School enrollment. Had that specific school been shown separately, you would notice more pronounced impacts that are shown on Exhibit 1. We can provide that data as needed.

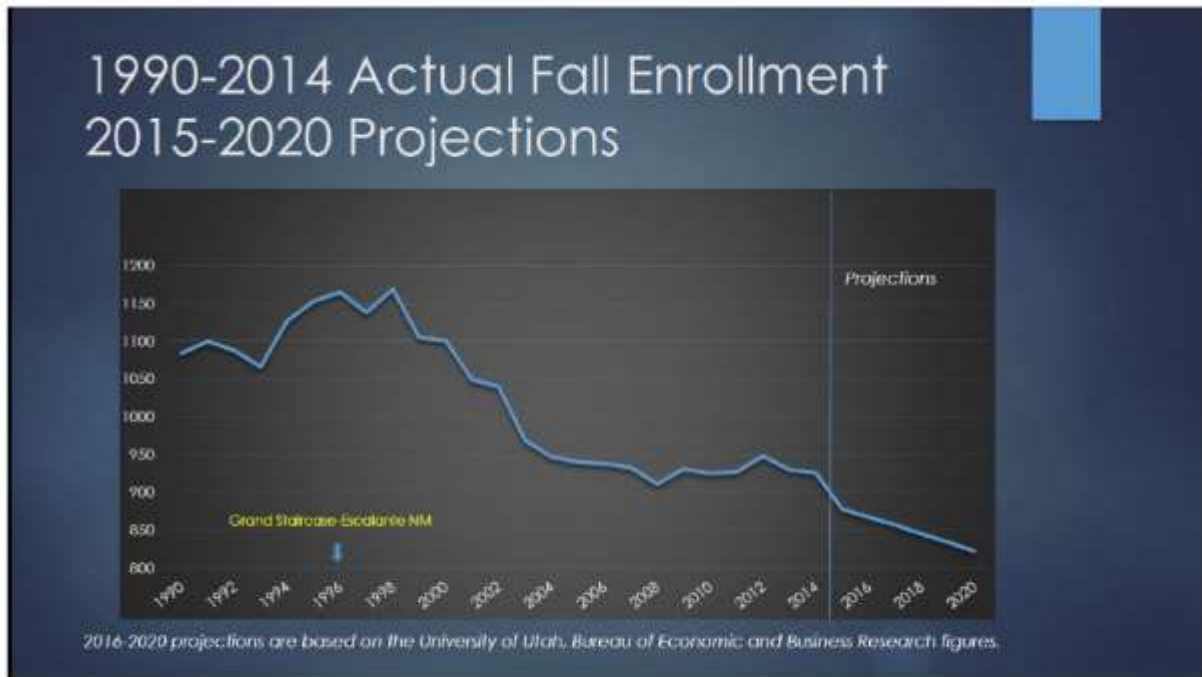


Exhibit 2: a graph depicting unemployment figures from Garfield County with those from Cedar City, Utah and St. George, Utah.

Among the permanent workforce, about one person in six will be unemployed in January every year.

While Garfield County unemployment dropped below the regional and state averages in the summer months during the early years of the Great Recession, it exceeds those areas in recent years.

