

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 8, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

We are writing to request that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) implement a pilot project in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will accommodate the needs of special populations and the outfitters capable of providing services to this population.

We are concerned that the current Special Recreation Permit (SRP) allocation process determined in BLM's Resource Management Plans (RMP) does not adequately meet the needs of special populations. Recently, Colorado Discover Ability (CDA), a non-profit organization that specializes in serving wounded warriors, was denied an SRP by BLM for the Gunnison Gorge Canyon and Westwater Canyon in Utah because all permits had already been allocated.

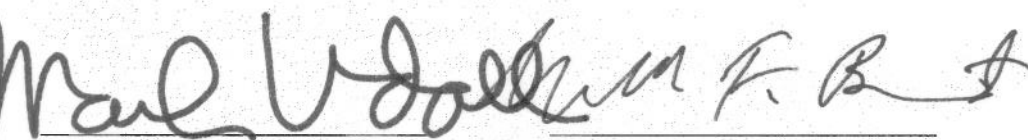
Moreover, we are concerned that non-profit organizations like CDA are often unable to compete for available commercial permits due to financial constraints. While some commercial outfitters are equipped to provide services for a portion of special needs populations, there remain individuals whose disability exceeds the ability of commercial outfitters to safely meet their needs.

While precedent to accommodate these special populations already exists within the Department of the Interior through The National Park Service (NPS) rules, the BLM does not currently have similar policies. In fact, the NPS accommodation for special populations is based on a pilot program dating back to 1979. A Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and CDA could launch a comparable—and hopefully successful—pilot program.


This pilot project could provide the basis for the possible creation of a subclass or subcategory of "special population permits" in revised RMPs. With that in mind, should the pilot project be implemented, we ask that you consider including these types of permits in any RMP up for revision one year from now.

Thank you for all that you do to protect our national treasures and make sure all Americans have access to them.

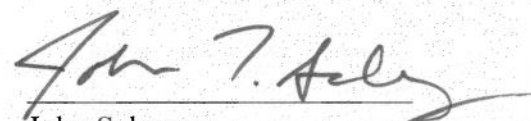
Sincerely,



Mark E. Udall  
U.S. Senator



Michael F. Bennet  
U.S. Senator



John Salazar  
Member of Congress