

**Subject:** Protection of wilderness areas in our nation

**Submitted by:** Illinois Clergy and Laity Concerned for Utah Wilderness (Dale Beck, Paul Black, Jim Bortell, Howard Daughenbaugh, Burt McIntosh, Bill Miller, Phares and Harriet Odaffer, Miley Palmer, Jan Robinson, and Jerry Stone)

**Estimated Financial Impact on the Annual Conference:** None except for some postage expense

**Staff Resource and Time:** Resources and assistance provided by some Conference staff

**Council on Finance and Administration Comment:**

**Whereas** creation is a gift from God; and

**Whereas** God has called us to be stewards of God's creation; and

**Whereas** Jesus, Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist and numerous other key biblical personalities had many of their central experiences with God in the wilderness; and

**Whereas** this remains a common reality among God's human creatures to this day; and

**Whereas** all of God's Creatures have intrinsic value in God's eyes; and

**Whereas** our best scientific research tells us that non-human creatures are currently undergoing a crisis of extinction 1,000 times over rates typical of the planet's history; and

**Whereas** global warming is threatening to increase the rate of extinction; and

**Whereas** protecting the diversity of non-human life requires setting aside substantial, connected wilderness areas so the mobility necessary for adaptation to climate change and other threats is provided; and

**Whereas** humans depend upon a healthy environment for life giving services such as clean water and fresh air; and

**Whereas** many of these ecosystem services are approaching a state of crisis due to excessive human exploitation; and

**Whereas** many of the special places in the United States of America such as the red rock canyon lands of the Colorado Plateau, the coastal plain of the Arctic, and many other locations across the North American continent are threatened with harm due to excessive exploitation of resources and motorized recreation; and

**Whereas** the United States of America with its heritage of public lands and legal provisions for protecting wilderness lands provides a special opportunity to preserve the blessing of creation as God has given it to us; and

**Whereas** since the time of Theodore Roosevelt our federal government has legislated protective measures for wilderness area and millions of people have availed themselves of their spiritual and aesthetic benefits; and

**Whereas** The United Methodist Church through Resolution #10 in the 2004 Book of Resolutions states, "We advocate for the preservation of forests (including reforestation), wetlands and wild areas for ecological balance, wildlife production, water quality, air quality and the human spirit" and "we believe that the wondrous diversity of nature is a key part of God's plan for creation...we support national and international efforts to protect endangered species and imperiled habitats;"

**Be it resolved** that through its Conference Board of Church and Society the Illinois Great Rivers Conference (IGRC) of The United Methodist Church indicate to the members of the United States

Congress, the Department of the Interior, and the President its support for the protection of wilderness areas in our nation; and

**Be it further resolved** that the members and local churches of the IGRC are encouraged to indicate to their respective senators and congressional representatives their support for the protection of wilderness areas in our nation; and

**Be it further resolved** that the United Methodists of the IGRC are encouraged to visit and explore these special wilderness areas thereby availing themselves of the spiritual and physical blessings to be experienced in these expressions of God's creation.