

For immediate Release  
February 9, 2010

For information:  
Dede Carpenter, 801-943-4043; 520-7544

### **Faith Communities Urge Utah Leaders to Support Wilderness Stewardship**

For the first time in the long standing debate over the future of Utah's wild lands, leaders and members of 11 different faith traditions will call on Utah's governor and legislature to recognize the spiritual value of Utah's wilderness heritage and to support the protection of the state's remaining wild lands. The event will take place on February 10 at 10:30 AM in the Rotunda of the State Capitol.

The faith representatives will also present an exhibit, "A Call for Wilderness Stewardship," showcasing 23 posters featuring over 250 handwritten personal statements about why Utah's wild lands are important spiritually. The posters were created at Wilderness Stewardship events held within Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Islamic, Jewish, Latter-day Saint, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Quaker, Unitarian Universalist and United Church of Christ faith communities and one interfaith event.

"As the statements on the posters attest, Utah's wild places are vital to the spiritual sustenance of Utahns from all walks of life," said George Handley, member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. "Wilderness connects us to something larger than ourselves, strengthens family bonds, and provides spiritual renewal. Protecting wilderness is a way of showing self-restraint and respect for the Creation and of honoring those places prophets have sought for communion with the Creator."

"We are calling on all of Utah's elected leaders to support *meaningful* protection of Utah's wild landscapes because – to put it in biblical terms – God isn't making any more wilderness," said Reverend Erin Gilmore, pastor at the Holladay United Church of Christ. "It is up to us to protect what remains. A good place to start is with the "citizens' inventory," a carefully documented on-the-ground survey completed by Utah citizens that shows about 9 ½ million acres of publicly owned wild lands remain in Utah."

"Like so many people in Utah I moved here from out of state, drawn by its amazing natural beauty and the incredible recreational opportunities," said Dede Carpenter of Community of Grace Presbyterian Church. "The joy of knowing my children have grown up engaging and treasuring the natural wonders of this state is a gift. Utah's wild lands are of immeasurable value, deserving our protection with thoughtful foresight and not regretful hindsight for our children's children."

"All kinds of people find inspiration and renewal in wild places," said Stephen Trimble, member of the Jewish congregation Chavurah B'Yachad. "We begin the conversation here – by acknowledging that these places we all love contribute to our spiritual well-being. Standing together on this neglected common ground, we can plan together for the future of Utah's wilderness heritage."

Who/What: Representatives from 11 different faith traditions call on elected leaders to recognize the spiritual importance of Utah's wild lands and support their preservation. "Wilderness Stewardship" exhibit featuring 23 posters showcasing more than 250 handwritten statements about the spiritual value of Utah's wild lands.

When: February 10, 10:30 AM

Where: Rotunda, State Capitol