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Press Release

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Over 4500 Voiced Their Opinions in Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow

During November, over 4,500 Utahns participated in the *Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow* process, which will update Salt Lake County's master plan for the Wasatch Canyons. (Survey results are below.) Residents evaluated a range of policy scenarios dealing with watersheds, recreation, transportation and development in City Creek, Red Butte, Emigration, Parleys, Millcreek, Big Cottonwood and Little Cottonwood Canyons. These scenarios reflected ideas presented in more than 5,000 comments received during the first round of public involvement in May 2009 and project the long-range impacts of various policy choices.

245 people attended four open houses in early November and more than 4,500 have completed an extensive on-line survey.

Participants reviewed a range of scenarios which were based on initial public input. The scenarios outlined diverse policy options and projected the impacts of those policies. While the November public feedback is still being analyzed, a solid majority of participants support the following:

- Year-round public transportation in the major canyons;
- Watershed protection and open space preservation;
- A rail line up Little Cottonwood Canyon;
- Improving existing trailhead facilities;
- Establishing "no parking zones" along some portions of the major roadways to discourage over-crowding;
- Improvements at resorts to facilitate year-round outdoor activities; and
- Improving popular backcountry recreation areas for climbers and mountain bikers.

In addition, respondents strongly support clustering new canyon development at higher densities to preserve open space, increasing funding to protect watersheds, and restricting zoning variances that conflict with existing regulations.

The State of Utah, Salt Lake County, and Salt Lake City are sponsoring this public process. The U.S. Forest Service is a supportive partner, supplying technical expertise, and Envision Utah is serving as project facilitator. A Steering Committee composed of diverse community leaders and interest groups is guiding the process. This process may also influence future revisions of other relevant plans in the study

area, such as the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest Plan and Salt Lake City's Watershed Management Plan.

The survey results are being used to gather general impressions about canyon-related issues and to generate draft policy recommendations for further public review in February. After more analysis of all input received from the public, Envision Utah will work with the project's technical committee and steering committee to create recommendations for Salt Lake County's consideration.

The Wasatch Mountains and canyons are central to the quality of life we enjoy. Their watersheds provide more than 50% of the drinking water for over 500,000 Salt Lake County residents, they create unequalled recreational opportunities, and they attract tourism to the state. Our region's future is tied to the future of the canyons.

"By making wise decisions today and planning for tomorrow," said Alan Matheson, executive director of Envision Utah, "we – and our children and grandchildren – will continue to enjoy the remarkable Wasatch Canyons well into the future. Involving the public in a meaningful way ensures that decisions about the canyons encompass broad considerations and meet public needs. *Wasatch Canyons Tomorrow* is the vehicle to do this."

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