An aerial photograph of a city at dusk. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. In the foreground, a multi-lane highway runs diagonally from the bottom right towards the center. The city below is densely packed with buildings, many of which have their lights on. In the background, there are rolling hills under the twilight sky.

Collaborative Conservation

The Washington County Growth and Conservation Act 2009

Photo David Becker <http://money.cnn.com/galleries/2008/moneymag/0807/gallery.bp.live.job.growth.moneymag/5.html>



Collaborative Conservation

The Washington County Growth and Conservation Act 2009

- *“The love of the land that brought so many people to the West and keeps them there is common ground on which Westerners can articulate and enact a commitment to a shared agenda of living well in a well-loved place.”*

--Daniel Kemmis

- *“The Future is not something we enter. It’s something we create”*

--Leonard I. Sweet

Washington County



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USGS Groundwater-Watch Map http://groundwaterwatch.usgs.gov/countymaps/UT_053.html

Washington County

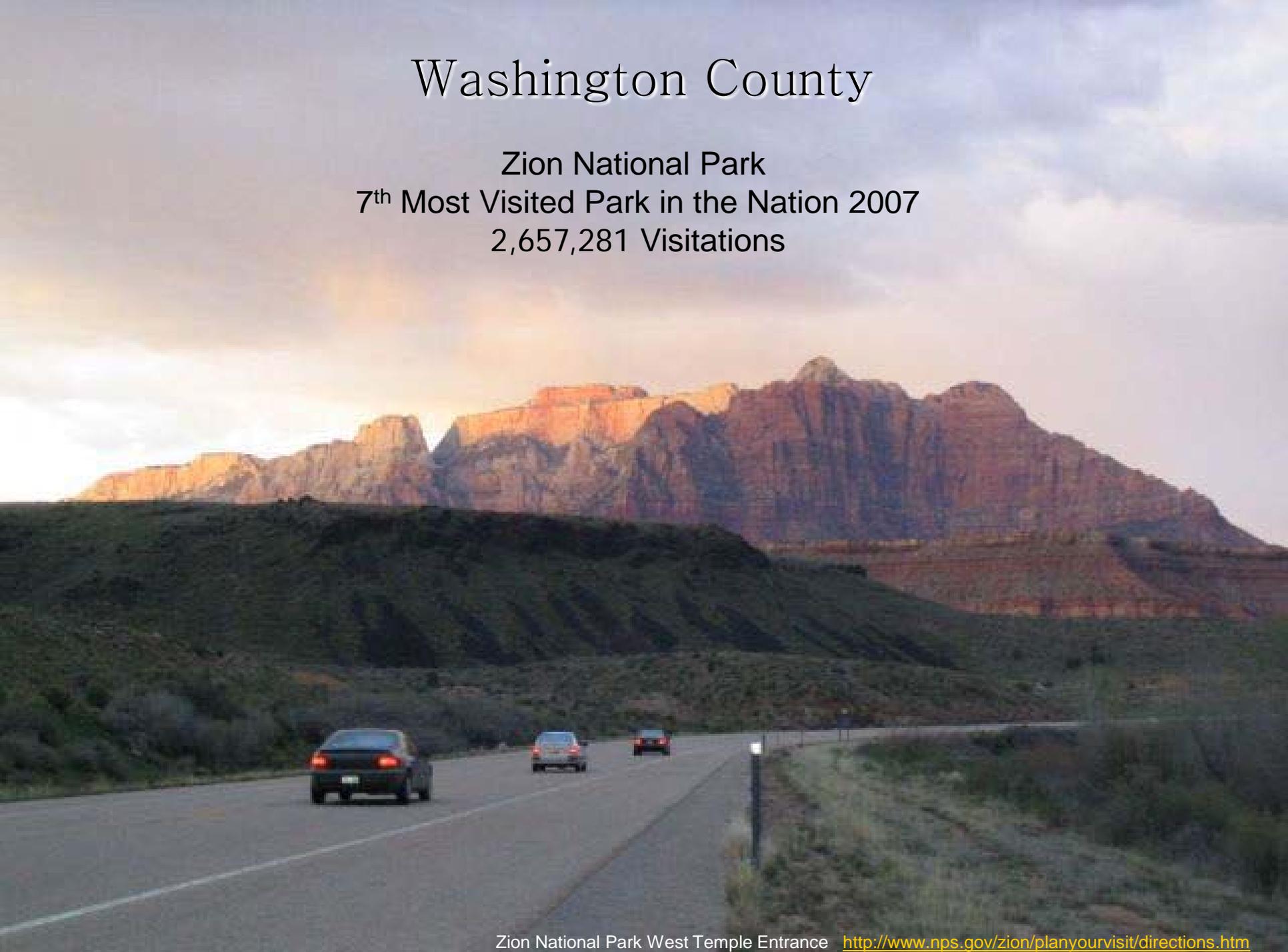


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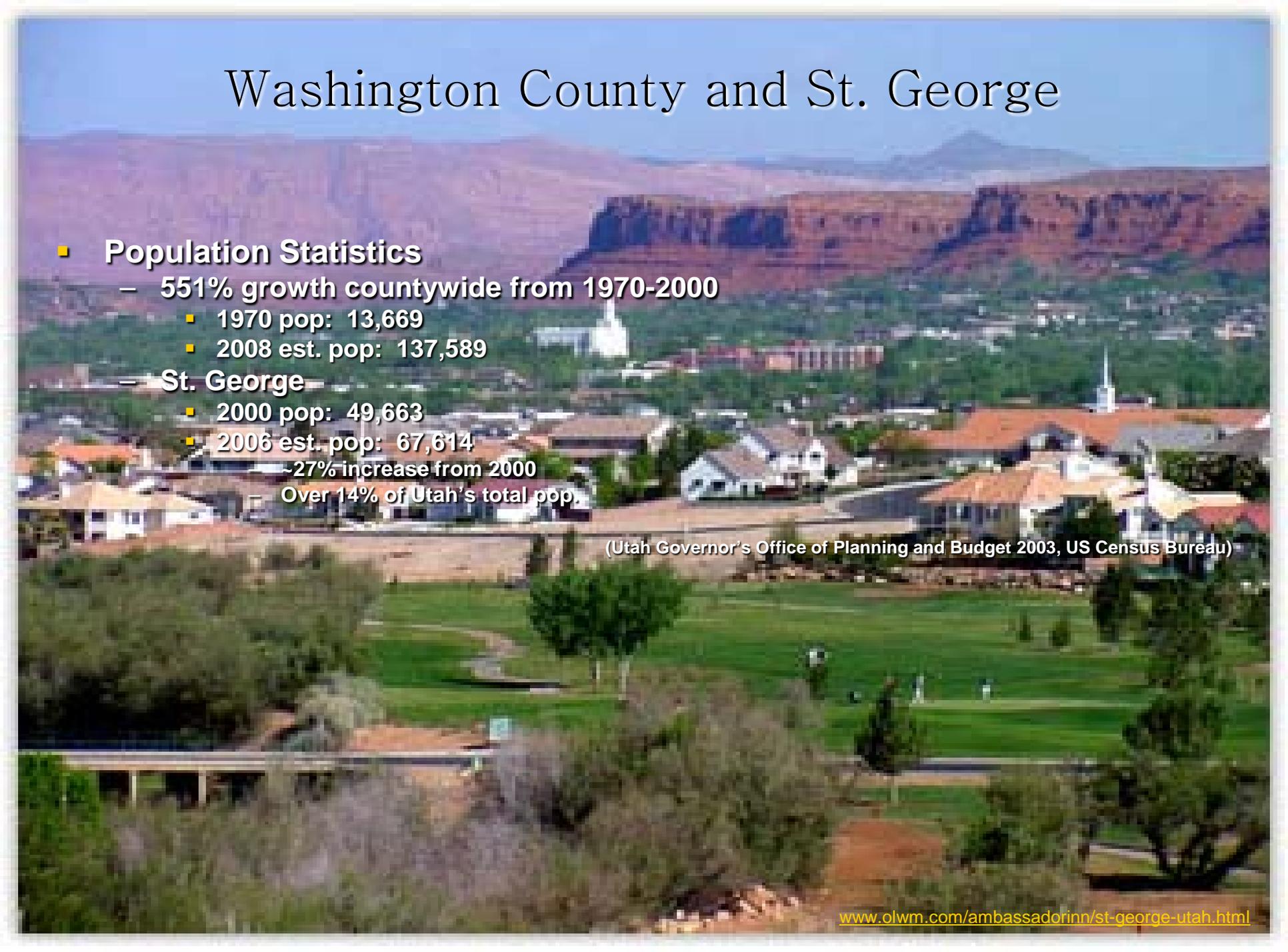
USGS Groundwater-Watch Map http://groundwaterwatch.usgs.gov/countymaps/UT_053.html

Washington County

Zion National Park
7th Most Visited Park in the Nation 2007
2,657,281 Visitations



Washington County and St. George



- **Population Statistics**

- **551% growth countywide from 1970-2000**

- 1970 pop: 13,669
- 2008 est. pop: 137,589

- **St. George**

- 2000 pop: 49,663
- 2006 est. pop: 67,614
 - ~27% increase from 2000
 - Over 14% of Utah's total pop.

(Utah Governor's Office of Planning and Budget 2003, US Census Bureau)

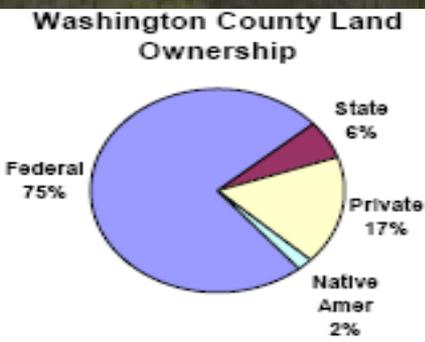
Washington County Land Ownership and Planned Uses 2003

- County Land Ownership 2003

- 40.5% BLM
- 22.1% US Forest Service
- 17.7% Private
- 8.5% National Park/Monument
- 5.4% State Trust Lands
- 0.1% Other
- 3.4% Wilderness
- 5.7% Wilderness Study Area
(Within BLM Total)

- County Planned Uses

- 3.7% Agriculture
- 2.8% US Forest Service
- 0.5% National Park
- 20.4% Open Space
- 0.7% Residential
- 64.4% No Zoning
- 5.5% Municipal



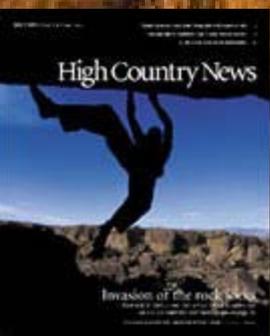
Source: Washington County, Utah Governor's Office of Planning and Budget 2003

Washington County 2004—2006

Economic Development
Vs.
Wilderness Protection

Washington County 2004—2006

- 2006 Wilderness bill sets the stage for 2009
 - Hundreds of thousands of acres of wilderness
 - Virgin River Corridor protection
 - OHV Trails Master Plan



Washington County 2006

- Bill leaves environmental groups dissatisfied
 - Too much NPS-designated wilderness, not enough BLM lands
 - 25,000 acres of BLM land to be sold to private interests for development
 - Proceeds from land sales would go to fund the Powell to St. George pipeline or leave the state
 - OHV Trails Master Plan

Washington County 2006

- Wilderness negotiations beginning from a hard freeze
 - No new wilderness since 1984
 - Utah's Wilderness Coalition seeks 9 million acres in wilderness protection from late '80's to the early '90's—stymied
 - Utah settles lawsuit with the BLM in 2003 forbidding identification of any new wilderness areas

Washington County 2006

- Citizens for Dixie's Future (CDF) forms in response
 - Fears bill will not protect scenic values vital to region's tourism
 - Fears bill will determine the future for the region's citizens

<http://www.citizensfordixie.org/>

“a grassroots coalition of local citizens committed to protecting the natural resources and quality of life in Washington County through Smart Growth planning for the benefit of present and future generations”

Washington County 2006: Envision Utah

- A public-private partnership specializing in growth planning in Utah's urban areas
 - One founder worked on the Wildlands Futures Project
 - A neutral facilitator
 - Utilizes extensive surveys, public meetings and other input to cultivate BLM EIS-style alternatives for the future based on combined public input

<http://www.envisionutah.org/>

Washington County 2006: Envision Utah

“In 1997 Envision Utah launched an unprecedented public effort aimed to keep Utah beautiful, prosperous and neighborly to future generations. As a neutral facilitator, Envision Utah brought together residents, elected officials, developers, conservationists, business leaders and other interested parties to make informed decisions about how we should grow. Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Empowering people to create the communities they want is still our goal.”

Envision Utah Vision Dixie



- Input from community
- Surveys and public comment analyzed for major trends
- Trends used to shape alternatives

Envision Utah Vision Dixie

- 4 alternatives created
 - Business as usual
 - Do nothing
 - Moderated vision
 - Ideal Vision



Envision Utah: Vision Dixie

- Citizens overwhelmingly supported open space/wilderness designation
- Supported Smart Growth options directing development close-in to communities rather than sprawl
- Implementation of smart growth plan will be voluntary, but common vision—or consensus vision—has been established

Envision Utah Vision Dixie

- Vision Dixie directly impacted the Washington County lands bill
- Consensus for the future arrived at statistically, not politically
- Diverse, powerful stakeholders could support citizen-supported parts of bill

Washington County Growth and Conservation Act 2009

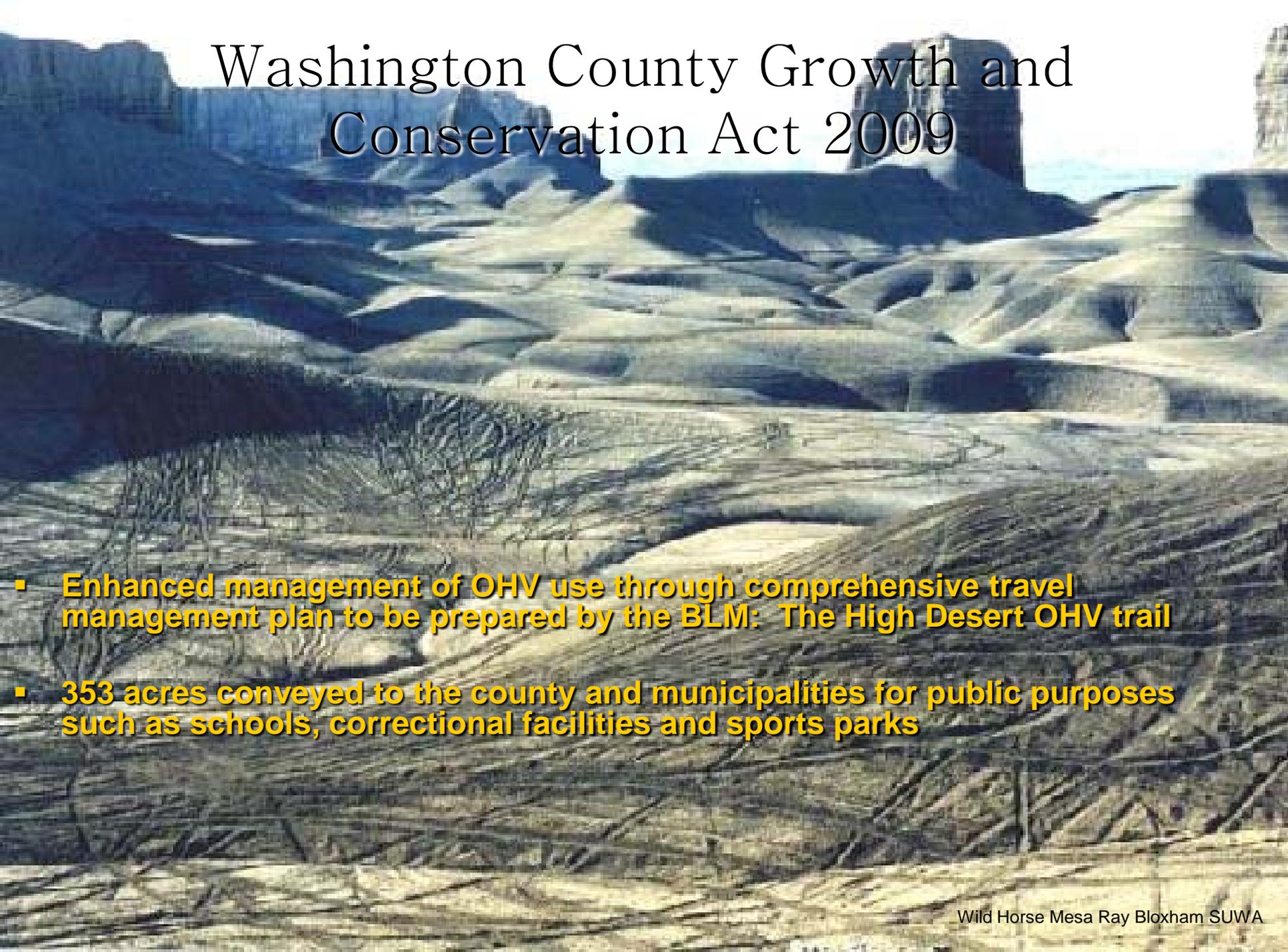
Part of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009

- 140,651 acres new wilderness designation on BLM lands
- 123,743 acres wilderness designation in Zion National Park
- Establishes 62,000 acre Red Cliffs National Conservation Area north of St. George
 - Permanent protection for endangered desert tortoise/other endangered species
- Establishes 78,000 acre Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area also protecting desert tortoise habitat

Washington County Growth and Conservation Act 2009

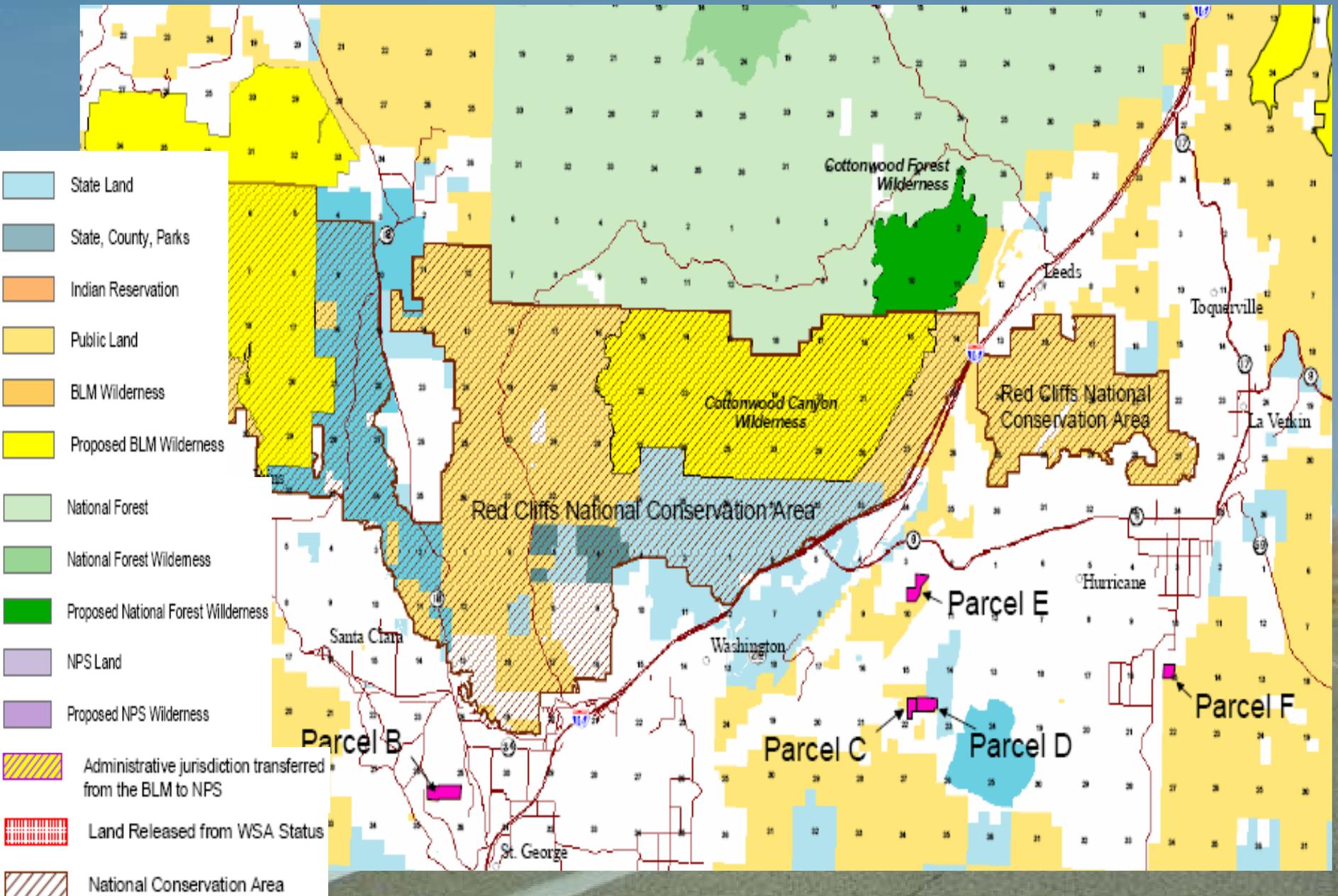
- 165 miles of Virgin River and tributaries designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, first such designation in Utah's history
- Authorization to sell 5,000 acres of BLM land identified for disposal to provide for urban growth
 - 5% proceeds go to state school trust fund
 - 95% proceeds go to acquire high priority, biologically significant lands within Wilderness Areas and National Conservation Areas

Washington County Growth and Conservation Act 2009

A photograph of a desert landscape featuring layered rock formations and sparse vegetation. The terrain is rugged and arid, with various shades of brown and tan. The sky is clear and blue.

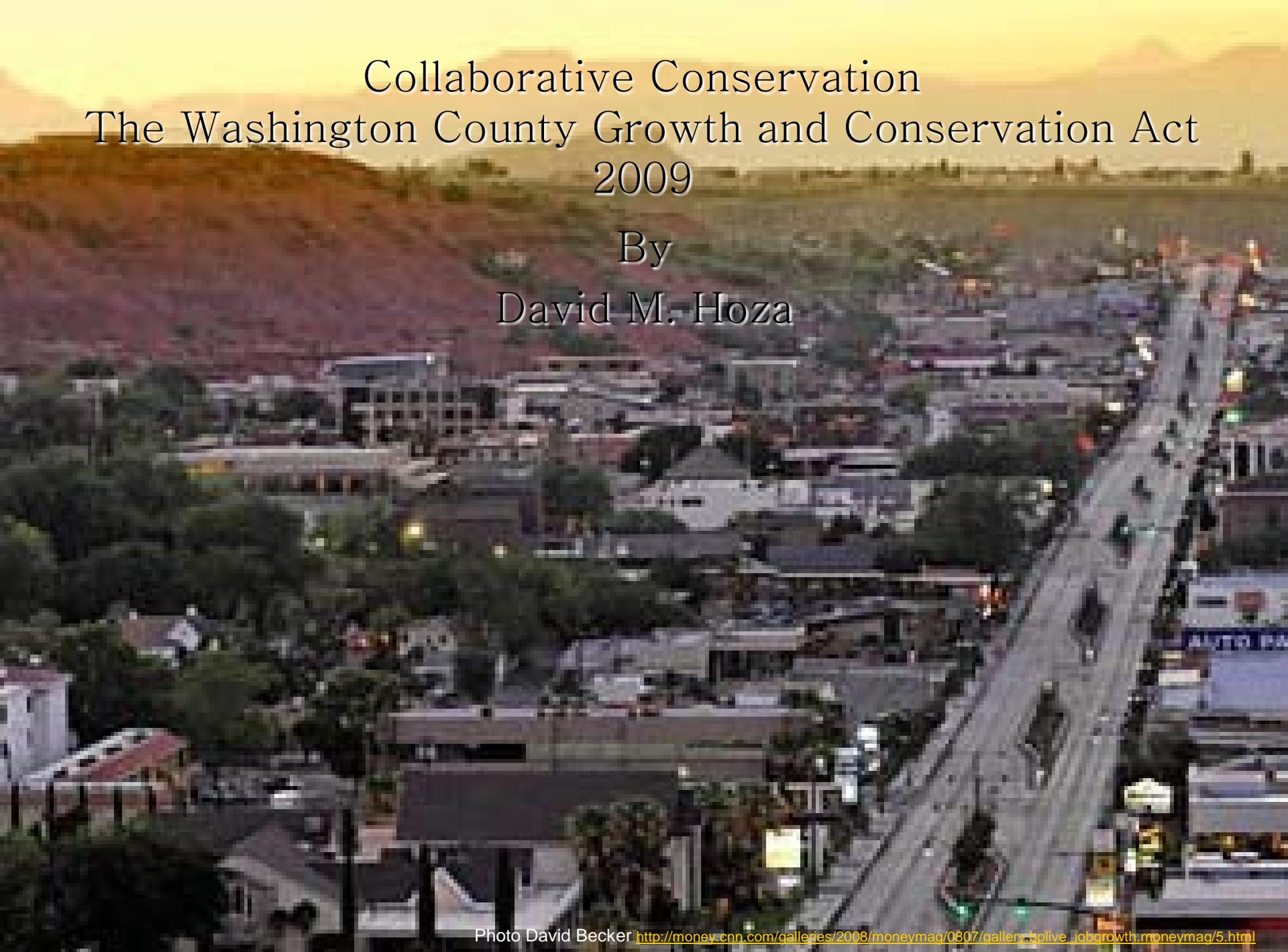
- **Enhanced management of OHV use through comprehensive travel management plan to be prepared by the BLM: The High Desert OHV trail**
- **353 acres conveyed to the county and municipalities for public purposes such as schools, correctional facilities and sports parks**

Washington County 2009



Limits to the Washington County/Envision Utah Process

- No oil or gas and negligible mining in the county
- Timber harvesting is not currently an issue
- Uncontrolled growth and unregulated use of the public lands by mostly an outlaw band of OHV users are the two largest threats to the environment next to wildfires
- Fewer and less complicated table of stakeholders
- Land swaps were relatively easy—the swap process has been duplicated in eastern Utah where school trust lands (SITLA) of high production value are swapped for those with high wilderness value
- Smart Growth provisions are voluntary, and stakeholders could defect
- Expenses for third party consultant could prove cost-prohibitive elsewhere

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By
David M. Hoza