

**Statement of
Luke Johnson, Deputy Director
Bureau of Land Management
Before the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests
S. 832, Turnabout Ranch, Utah Land Conveyance
February 27, 2008**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S. 832, a bill to convey approximately 25 acres of lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to Turnabout Ranch in Utah. The BLM supports this legislation.

Background

Turnabout Ranch is both a working ranch and a residential treatment center for troubled teens. Located north of Escalante, Utah the ranch is adjacent to Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (Monument). Several years ago, the owners of Turnabout Ranch realized that they were using a field that is on BLM-managed lands within the Monument for pasture and a corral and approached the BLM about purchasing these lands. It is clear that this long-standing trespass was inadvertent. (These lands were originally owned by the state of Utah and were exchanged to the BLM following the Monument designation under the provisions of Public Law 105-335.) These approximately 25 acres, which are on the edge of the Monument, are critical to the effective functioning of the ranch and treatment center. The BLM cannot undertake a sale of this parcel to the Ranch because the acres are within the Monument boundary.

S. 832

S. 832 provides for a legislated sale of the 25 acres on which Turnabout Ranch is in trespass to the ranch for appraised fair market value. The bill specifies that the appraisal be completed in accordance with the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions and the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice. It further provides that all costs related to the sale be borne by Turnabout Ranch. Finally, following the sale of the land, the boundary of the Monument is modified to exclude just these 25 acres from the edge of the Monument.

The BLM has taken a close look at the land proposed for sale to the Ranch under S. 832. It is our belief that sale of these lands will not undermine the purposes for which the Monument was established. Therefore, we support this legislative remedy to clear title issues with a suggestion for one very technical modification.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I will be happy to answer any questions.