

**STATEMENT OF CHRIS FRENCH
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**Before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS, FORESTS, AND MINING**

Regarding

S. 1870 - MIRACLE MOUNTAIN DESIGNATION ACT

September 16, 2020

Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Wyden and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the “Miracle Mountain Designation Act” (S. 1870). My testimony today is in support of the proposed designation of a currently unnamed peak in Utah as “Miracle Mountain” following the events that occurred during the Bald Mountain Fire in 2018.

The Bald Mountain Fire originated in the Mt. Nebo Wilderness area on August 24, 2018. The fire was in very rough terrain with high risk to firefighters, due to snags, rolling rocks and debris. In mid-September, the Bald Mountain Fire expanded rapidly, responding to abundant dry fuels, low humidity and strong winds, and eventually merging with the Pole Creek Fire, which had started on September 6, 2018. The Bald Mountain Fire approached the communities of Payson, Elk Ridge, and Woodland Hills, where evacuations occurred, and threatened residences as well major utility infrastructure, transportation corridors, and natural and cultural resources. The Forest Service, alongside other federal, state and local partners responded to the fire with a coordinated response using numerous aircraft, crews, engines and heavy equipment, along with other emergency support personnel. The fire was fully contained on October 2, 2018, but not before burning approximately 19,000 acres, and costing an estimated \$11 million in suppression costs.

Section 2 of S1870 includes several findings which describe the 2018 Bald Mountain Fire and the threat it posed to Elk Ridge City, Utah. Section 2 also includes findings which indicate the fire halted its progression behind the currently unnamed mountain. Further, the findings indicate the mountain now holds special significance to residents of Elk Ridge City and is referred to locally as “Miracle Mountain”.

Section 3 would designate the mountain, located at 39° 59' 02N, 111° 40' 12W, in Utah as “Miracle Mountain”. Further, Section 3 requires any reference in law, map, regulation, document, record or other paper of the United States to be considered a reference to “Miracle Mountain”.

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN) is a Federal body established through executive order by President Benjamin Harrison and later under P.L. 80-22. The BGN, alongside the Secretary of Interior, share responsibility to maintain uniform geographic name usage throughout

the Federal government. As a general matter, the proposed designation meets the principles, policies and procedures related to geographic nomenclature established by the BGN. The currently unnamed peak is partially found on the border of the Uinta- Wasatch-Cache National Forest. USDA supports the proposed designation.