

## Two Measures Help Protect Salt Lake Backcountry

Contributed by Lydia Johnson  
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Good news on two fronts means that the canyons of Salt Lake will remain safe and open to the public for backcountry skiing and other activities at least a little longer.

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Good news on two fronts means that the canyons of Salt Lake will remain safe and open to the public for backcountry skiing and other activities at least a little longer. Solitude Mountain Resort has been denied its proposal to expand into Silver Fork Canyon, and the Wasatch Wilderness and Watershed Protection Act received its first hearing presented by Utah Congressman Jim Matheson.

Solitude's plans in Silver Fork Canyon would have expanded the resort but denied public access to that land. Additionally, there were concerns that the expansion would interfere with the ecosystem of the area. In speaking with Save Our Canyons, a local organization dedicated to protecting the Wasatch wilderness, the U.S. Forest Service said that they ultimately rejected the proposal because it was inconsistent with watershed management and the planned directions set out in a 2003 Forest Plan. For the moment, at least, Silver Fork Canyon remains open to the public for skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing and other outdoor recreation activities.

The Wasatch Wilderness and Watershed Protection Act is intended to protect the Wasatch watershed and expand its wilderness designation by 26,000 acres. Matheson introduced the idea at a press event on April 1 with the support of the following speakers: Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker, Sandy Mayor Tom Bolan, Save Our Canyons Executive Director, Carl Fisher, Snowbird Ski Resort Manager Bob Bonar and CEO of Black Diamond, Peter Metcalf. It is the beginning of a long process that may result in an expansion of non-developable land in the Wasatch backcountry.

Save Our Canyons was founded in 1972 and now works with the government at the city, county, state and federal levels. To date, they have successfully lobbied for wilderness designation for the Lone Peak, Twin Peaks and Mt. Olympus areas. Read Backcountry Magazine's interview with Executive Director Carl Fisher to learn more about Save Our Canyons.

Source: [saveourcanyons.org](http://saveourcanyons.org)