



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

JAN 27 2010

The Honorable Gerry Connolly
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Connolly:

Thank you for your November 10, 2009, letter regarding H.R. 1925, "America's Red Rock Wilderness Act," as well as your encouragement for the Bureau of Land Management to identify new Wilderness Study Areas for lands affected by this bill.

As BLM Director Robert Abbey testified on October 1, 2009, at the hearing on H.R. 1925, BLM is very interested in working with the legislation's sponsors, the House Natural Resources Committee, and the members of the Utah delegation to resolve the remaining wilderness issues on the BLM-administered lands in Utah identified in H.R. 1925. I am pleased that you have indicated that you would like to work with BLM and others to move ahead with protection of some of these wild lands in Utah, including the possibility of more geographically focused alternatives.

The BLM is currently reviewing its policy regarding the inventory and identification of lands with wilderness characteristics under Section 201 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), as well as its policy for the use of wilderness inventory information in development of Resource Management Plans under Section 202 of FLPMA. I share your interest in these special places. That is why BLM is carefully reviewing the release of new wilderness policy, and your suggestions on how BLM could protect lands with wilderness characteristics pending Congressional action will be considered.

As Congress deliberates on the lands identified in H.R. 1925 and weighs its options regarding which lands merit full wilderness protection, BLM will continue to follow all applicable laws in the management and protection of the public lands.

I look forward to working with you and others on H.R. 1925 as well as the identification and designation of future additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Identical letters have been sent to each of the signatories of your letter.

Sincerely,

Ken Salazar