

**The Wilderness Society * Natural Resources Defense Council * Sierra Club *
League of Conservation Voters * Environment America * Defenders of Wildlife *
Earthjustice * National Wildlife Federation * Pew Environment Group *
Republicans For Environmental Protection * Campaign for America's Wilderness *
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance * Alaska Wilderness League * Grand Canyon
Trust * Oregon Natural Desert Association * New Mexico Wilderness Alliance *
California Wilderness Coalition * Grand Canyon Wildlands Council * Friends of
Nevada Wilderness * Arizona Wilderness Coalition * Colorado Environmental
Coalition * Idaho Conservation League * Wyoming Outdoor Council * Montana
Wilderness Association * Biodiversity Conservation Alliance * Californians for
Western Wilderness**

Dear Secretary Salazar,

We are writing to ask that you use the authority granted to you by the Congress under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act to protect the nation's remaining BLM unprotected wilderness landscapes via use of your existing statutory authority to inventory wilderness values and designate new wilderness study areas. Together, we represent over five million Americans who—like you— care deeply about the protection of our nation's remaining BLM-managed wilderness lands. These lands offer a respite from the sight and sound of modern society, a refuge for wildlife, and opportunities to hunt, camp, fish, horseback ride, climb and hike. Protecting these lands in their natural, undeveloped state has recently been confirmed to be critically important to combating the effects of global warming on native ecosystems.

After nearly a decade of mismanagement and neglect, the West's wilderness quality yet unprotected public lands are in dire circumstances. Bush administration policies and decisions, such as resource management plans and off-road vehicle travel plans, prioritized conventional oil and gas development and motorized vehicle use over all other uses of the public lands. Wilderness study area designation under BLM's planning authority was entirely abandoned through the Norton-Leavitt settlement agreement and millions of acres of wilderness quality lands will be lost in the coming years without immediate corrective action on your part.

Now is the time for decisive action to protect these remarkable landscapes—places like the Vermillion Basin in Colorado, Labyrinth Canyon in Utah, Adobe Town in Wyoming, Owyhee Canyonlands in southeastern Oregon, Granite Range in Nevada and Quayle Draw in Arizona. These lands deserve to become part of the National Landscape Conservation System via designation as Wilderness Study Areas and put on track to become congressionally designated Wilderness.

At this critical juncture in your tenure as Secretary of the Department of the Interior, we ask that you prioritize the protection of wilderness on the western public lands. Every administration except for the last one has recognized the BLM's authority to establish WSAs under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. This is a tried and true method of protecting special landscapes and one that we ask you to reinvigorate. We stand ready to work with you to preserve these incomparable landscapes for current and future generations.

Sincerely –

(reverse)

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