

**Remarks of Secretary Ken Salazar  
November 15, 2010; Las Vegas, Nevada  
National Landscape Conservation System Summit**

Thank you, Bob Abbey. Your remarks reflect the spirit and commitment you have brought to the Bureau to guide its important land management missions.

I'd also like to recognize Carl Rountree, Director, Office of National Landscape Conservation System and Community Partnerships; and Ron Wenker, BLM Nevada State Director. Both are doing outstanding work and I thank them for their professionalism and dedication.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Bureau of Land Management's National Landscape Conservation System, I'd like to focus my remarks today on the value and benefits of these public landscapes for local communities, as well as their importance to the nation.

In the coming weeks, the Administration will be announcing the completion of our **America's Great Outdoors Initiative**, where we are building a 21<sup>st</sup> century conservation and recreation agenda and working to reconnect Americans – especially youth - with the outdoors.

Whether the outdoors comes in the form of great urban parks, like Golden Gate in San Francisco, or more remote areas like Yosemite, these special places are a key part in how we Americans can appreciate the outdoors and learn about our heritage.

As we work to protect our outdoor spaces and develop and support innovative ideas for improving conservation and recreation at the local

level, I believe we need look no further than NLCS for a successful model for our nation.

These truly are America's public lands, established and guided by the voices and helping hands of stakeholders, partners, tribal nations, elected officials and many, many others. Only with the engagement, support and investment of the American people can our public lands fulfill their potential for our communities and our country.

From Alaska's rivers to the coasts of Florida and across the West, the National Landscape Conservation System manages lands that Americans use, love, and cherish.

The System is one of our Nation's newest conservation initiatives, employing a multiple-use strategy that gives us the latitude – with the help of our local, tribal and state partners – to find the right balance between traditional uses of a particular landscape and the protection of its natural features.

This land management model allows us to successfully conserve these treasured landscapes while maintaining a variety of economically productive uses, such as hunting, fishing, livestock grazing, and energy development, when compatible with the values for which the land was designated.

The BLM develops this balanced approach through its extensive land use planning process and culture of engagement with local communities. This is what sets the Bureau apart from other agencies, such as the National Park Service or Fish and Wildlife Service, whose missions are more narrowly defined.

The System is not a “one-size-fits all” program. And that is its strength - providing the flexibility to meet each area’s conservation needs in balance with a community’s desires and needs.

It is an approach that can provide valuable economic investment and employment to rural communities, help preserve local history, protect cultural and ecological sites and generate important scientific information about the earth and its natural history.

At the same time, this innovative System offers families from nearby urban areas – and from around the nation – exciting recreational opportunities and unforgettable outdoor experiences.

### **Growth of the National Landscape Conservation System**

The National landscape Conservation System is a new model of conservation for the 21st Century. But it also is a logical evolution of the BLM’s history. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Bureau’s forerunners – the General Land Office and the U.S. Grazing Service – managed the use and allocation of vast western lands and resources that helped to build the economies from which today’s Western communities evolved.

Because of strong support from Western communities, the National Landscape Conservation System now has 886 units, including 16 National Monuments in eight (8) western States. The system manages 21 National Conservation Areas, 221 Wilderness Areas, 545 Wilderness Study Areas, 67 Wild and Scenic Rivers (2,419 miles), 16 National

Scenic and Historic Trails (6,007 miles), and the Conservation Lands within the California Desert.

Many of these congressionally-designated areas had been under BLM management for many years and were transferred to the System when it was created in 2000. Congress has continued to add units, designating the Nevada's Sloan Canyon Wilderness in 2002, and California's Piedras Blancas and Florida's Jupiter Inlet Outstanding Natural Areas in 2008.

President Obama expressed his support for the System in one of the first major actions of his Administration, signing the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act on March 30, 2009. This legislation not only made the system permanent but also added a million acres to it.

Under the President's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, this Administration also has invested an unprecedented \$76 million dollars for 187 projects to improve the system.

These construction and rehabilitation initiatives, which are generating more than 800 jobs, includes trail and trailhead improvements, land and watershed restoration, habitat improvements, invasive weed control, and surveys, inventory and monitoring. The investment also funds significant green energy installations in support buildings.

As a matter of fact, new BLM visitor centers are raising the bar for energy-efficient, earth-friendly facilities built to blend into the surrounding environment. The award-winning Red Rock Canyon visitor center just a few miles from here is an example. Built with funding from land sales, it won the 2010 GreenSite Award in the municipal category.

## *An Economic Engine for the New West*

The growth of the National Landscape Conservation System and success of the multiple use approach reflects the shifting demographics of our country in the last century – especially of the last few decades – when the West’s population increased at an astounding rate.

We know that healthy ecosystems and healthy economies are interrelated - and this is especially true for the West.

Many rural Western economies now rely as much or more on public lands for *tourism and recreation, open space, and an increased quality of life*, as they do for logging, mining and grazing.

Protected public spaces can serve as magnets for visitors. Though the System accounts for only 10 percent of the lands BLM manages, its lands are now welcoming more than 9 million visitors a year.

Those 9 million visitors spend money at local motels, grocery stores, and gas stations. They rent bikes and use guide services.

It is worth noting that in 2006, recreationists spent more than \$122 billion on their activities. Between travel, equipment, and licenses for activities like fishing and hunting, that is equal to 1% of the nation’s GDP.

Protected lands – and the quality of life they offer – can also help counties attract new residents and business. They are a competitive advantage for the West and, when coupled with solid infrastructure, they can lead to strong economic growth, increased property tax revenue, and attract jobs.

As more people move into smaller Western towns, income from the energy, mining, lumber, farming and ranching industries represents a decreasing share of the total personal income in these communities. In one study, it dropped from 20 percent in 1970 to only 8 percent in 2000.

In remote Kane County, Utah, where the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument is located, “nearly three-fourths of the net growth in personal income in the last 30 years has been from retirement funds, money from past investments, and other ‘non-labor’ sources.”

Another study of the economic impact of National Landscape Conservation System lands on county economies found that “real personal income grew at a rapid pace in the majority of counties adjacent to these units.”

These studies demonstrate that protecting public lands can actually help grow and diversify Western rural economies. While public lands cannot, by themselves, ensure prosperous communities, protected lands clearly are a significant part of the new formula for vibrant rural economies.

Providing access to the vast landscapes of the National Landscape Conservation System can help modern Western economies prosper well into the new millennium.

### ***Additional Benefits to Local Communities***

With smart policies and good planning, we can allow recreation and protect plants and animals. We can permit grazing and restore landscapes. We can develop energy and conserve the nation’s natural

and cultural resources. And we can promote science and research by making these resources available for study.

There are literally hundreds of examples of how the National Landscape Conservation System balances community needs and supports local economies, and I would like to note a few.

First, an example that is dear to me: The Canyons of the Ancients National Monument in Southwest Colorado. After eight (8) years of planning and considering more than 15,000 public comments, the BLM recently adopted a comprehensive management plan for the monument. It is a solid plan that accommodates the community and the users and protects the precious cultural resources and natural features of the land.

In the Monument, Native American cultural practices, including hunting and livestock grazing, exist side-by-side with a program to protect the highest known density of archaeological sites in the country, spread over more than 180,000 acres of land. The Monument also welcomes hikers, horseback riders and motorized vehicle users.

BLM's Las Cienegas National Conservation Area outside of Tucson, Arizona, supports rare desert grasslands and riparian communities that nurture a variety of wildlife, including desert songbirds and several threatened and endangered species. Yet the area, which historically hosted a large working ranch, also supports an active livestock grazing program.

***Managing for both livestock grazing and conservation*** is accomplished through a strong scientific program of monitoring and quickly adapting management to new scientific information. The process involves

working closely with partners, including local ranchers, The Nature Conservancy and an Audubon Society Research Ranch Sanctuary.

This groundbreaking work provides a model for how managed livestock grazing can be accommodated in other sensitive areas. Cattle grazing occurs on 99 percent of the lands managed in the National Landscape Conservation System. These grazing areas are managed under stringent terms and conditions that take into consideration unsuitable terrain, resource conflicts, or legislative mandates.

By demonstrating *Best Management Practices*, Las Cienegas and other uniquely managed lands in the system inform land managers from all agencies how best to balance land use and conservation.

When compatible with the ecological and cultural values for which lands are managed in the System, *oil and natural gas development* can also be permitted under the multiple use approach. Three national monuments have oil and gas development: Carrizo Plain in California; Upper Missouri River Breaks in Montana; and Canyons of the Ancients in Colorado.

Currently, about 80 percent (131,000 acres) of Canyon of the Ancients National Monument is leased for fluid minerals development. There are 125 wells, almost 50 percent of them for CO<sub>2</sub> production. And all types of lands in the System, except for wilderness areas, may permit power transmission corridors, when appropriate.

Apart from resource uses, System lands *help preserve local and regional history*, providing opportunities for Western communities to keep important cultural traditions alive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and offering

employment for local workers. These lands are America's outdoor archives, providing the details that help tell America's story.

On Nevada's Black Rock Desert/High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails, for example, you can see and experience the land as pioneers and early explorers did more than 100 years ago. When Congress designated the area in 2000, the legislation not only protected 120 miles of the trails themselves, but also protected the larger view-shed so that visitors could see for miles around. As one writer put it, "It's not just wagon ruts in a sea of development."

In New Mexico, the Pueblo de Cochiti [CO-chi-ti] shares management responsibilities for Kasha-Katuwe [ka-TOO-way] Tent Rocks National Monument. This area features spectacular cone-shaped rock formations and canyons created by volcanic explosions millions of years ago.

Through a management agreement with the BLM, Tribal members make up much of the Monument's workforce. They protect the resources, offer high-quality visitor services and have experienced increased opportunities for economic development.

In California's Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, the BLM works in conjunction with the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla [cah-WEE-uh] Indians. Together, they enhance recreation opportunities, eradicate invasive plants, and educate school children about the special relationship people have with the land.

A few miles north of Phoenix, the 70,000-acre Agua Fria National Monument is one of the most significant cultural landscapes in the Southwest. A vivid history is laid out on the land and the context – land surrounding the artifacts – is protected as well. Agua Fria contains more

than 400 recorded archaeological sites spanning 2,000 years of human history. The Monument is a visitor industry asset to the community as well as an irreplaceable cultural archive.

In addition, National Landscape Conservation System Lands serve as *oases for scientific discovery*. One of the largest and most important American cave discoveries in decades – five miles of new passageway covered in a continuous sparkling white mineral deposit – occurred in 2001 at Fort Stanton Cave in New Mexico.

Cave expert Dr. Penelope Boston described “Snowy River” as “unlike anything ever reported in any other cave in the world.” At the site, the geologic history of the area is set down in layers undisturbed by humans. This discovery will help scientists understand the precise details of how climate mechanisms interact over time.

New chapters are constantly being written in the history of dinosaurs at the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. During the past decade, scientists have discovered more than a dozen dinosaurs in the Monument – almost every one new to science.

Just last September, unprecedented revelations about the Monument’s horned dinosaurs were announced with the discovery of huge skulls belonging to two dinosaur species previously unknown to science. One of these bizarre plant eating animals, a relative of triceratops, had as many as 15 horns, making it the most ornate dinosaur known to science.

In New Mexico, fossilized prints that predate the age of dinosaurs by tens of millions of years are being preserved at Prehistoric Trackways National Monument. These footprints illustrate the actual movements of amphibians and reptiles that lived 280 million years ago.

This is the most scientifically significant track site in the entire world from that era. Its importance was recognized by amateur paleontologist Jerry MacDonald, who worked tirelessly for two decades to see the area protected. His story speaks to the power of listening to and working with local communities.

System lands also are *biological laboratories critical to ecological health*. The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area protects a rare example of a desert ecosystem; it is one of the most important riparian systems in the United States. It conserves immense biological diversity and provides habitat for rare desert fish as well as 250 species of migratory birds.

Cascade Siskiyou National Monument in Oregon is the first monument set aside solely for the preservation of biodiversity. It contains an unusually high variety of species in a geographically small area.

And California's Headwaters Forest Reserve protects a large stand of increasingly rare old-growth redwood forest. The BLM has done much work to improve water quality and habitat for old growth wildlife species, including the spotted owl. The bureau also has worked closely with downstream partners to protect salmon and steelhead spawning grounds in what has been called a "headwaters-to-tidelands" approach.

*In closing*, I want to stress that though the lands managed in National Landscape Conservation System are diverse in scope, theme, and scale, they all have one important thing in common -- tremendous public support.

Public support and involvement is a great strength of NLCS that must also be the foundation of our America's Great Outdoors initiative. That is why we held listening sessions across the United States this summer, hearing from people about solutions for building a 21<sup>st</sup> century conservation and recreation agenda.

Like NLCS, we must work with local communities, tribal nations, stakeholders, and public servants to create this important new chapter in America's conservation story.

Today, we have an active army of Friends Groups, volunteers and other partners who strongly support our newest conservation system. Many of you are here today, and I would like to thank you for your support and for coming here to share your ideas for the future.

Through your active participation, here and in your communities, you are helping to define the future of the National Landscape Conservation System, enabling us to leave a lasting legacy of spectacular landscapes to future generations of Americans.

As we mark the first decade of this dynamic conservation strategy, we at Interior must underscore the vital role of community and stakeholder support. In these difficult economic times, we must continue to develop programs to ensure that these lands not only protect priceless ecological and cultural treasures but also benefit host communities and local economies.

The BLM has a proud history of helping Western communities prosper and the National Landscape Conservation System must find ways to enhance this tradition in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I am confident we can meet

this challenge. The future of the System depends on the quality and creativity of our response.

Thank you.