

Our Wish List for the BLM in 2013

The returning administration has the opportunity in 2013 to solidify its policies for balanced land management, such as wilderness inventory and protection and oil and gas leasing, and ensure these important policies endure over the long term and lead to meaningful protections for our western landscapes. But there is much work to be done this year to build off the positive momentum of the past year and more, and once again we have high hopes for the conservation of our wildest public lands, the continuation of a balanced approach to energy development and the sound stewardship of our National Conservation Lands. Here are The Wilderness Society's top priorities for BLM lands in the coming year.

Promote protection of wilderness quality lands, other natural values, and cultural resources.

- Update Manual 6320, BLM's current **guidance on managing lands with wilderness characteristics**, to emphasize the importance of managing lands to protect wilderness characteristics; set standard mandatory management prescriptions for lands managed to protect wilderness characteristics; and require that wilderness characteristics are evaluated prior to approving decisions that may impair wilderness values such as oil and gas leasing.
- Issue draft programmatic plans for management and protection of **greater sage-grouse** that include science-based, comprehensive measures and are coordinated range-wide to maximize the likelihood of survival for this imperiled species.
- Develop guidance for designating and managing **wildlife movement corridors** on public lands in order to safeguard habitat connectivity and facilitate adaptation to climate change. Designate and protect a series of wildlife corridors as priority biological areas in the **St. George Field Office** RMP Amendment.
- Update the agency's manual for **Areas of Critical Environmental Concern** to give land managers better direction for using this important administrative tool to designate sensitive areas and manage them for resource protection.
- Embark upon a planning process for the full **Adobe Town** complex that protects wilderness-quality lands from oil and gas leasing and development and promotes quiet recreation opportunities.
- Designate **Otero Mesa** as an ACEC in the TriCounty RMP and initiate an administrative mineral withdrawal for the area to protect its innumerable natural and cultural resources, including New Mexico's largest untapped freshwater aquifer.

Balance energy production with environmental protection.

- Incorporate into the Land Use Planning Handbook specific **Master Leasing Plan** guidance that emphasizes the Bureau's commitment to MLPs as part of oil and gas leasing reforms and provides

detailed direction on when MLPs are required and the types of decisions that MLPs should include. Incorporate MLPs into preferred alternatives in RMP revisions and amendments in Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and Montana.

- Commit to and begin a full RMP revision for northwest Colorado's **White River Resource Area**, incorporating the work that has been done for the ongoing oil and gas amendment and combining the two processes. Alternatively, adopt a final plan amendment that includes the most rigorous environmental protections and stipulations identified in the draft plan, defers leasing in all potential lands with wilderness characteristics until a new RMP is completed and designates large areas for protection from oil and gas development such as backcountry conservation areas and recreation management areas.



Bull and Spencer Draws in the White River Resource Area, courtesy Soren Jespersen

- Move forward with the **Wyoming Wind and Transmission Study**, an effort to guide wind development in Wyoming to low-conflict sites with the fewest impacts to wildlands and wildlife habitat and the best chance for successful projects. Develop a process for other states to follow suit.
- Initiate a new planning process for the **Roan Plateau** that seeks to adopt significant protective measures for the wildlife and wilderness values atop the Plateau, including by giving due consideration to citizens' management alternatives.

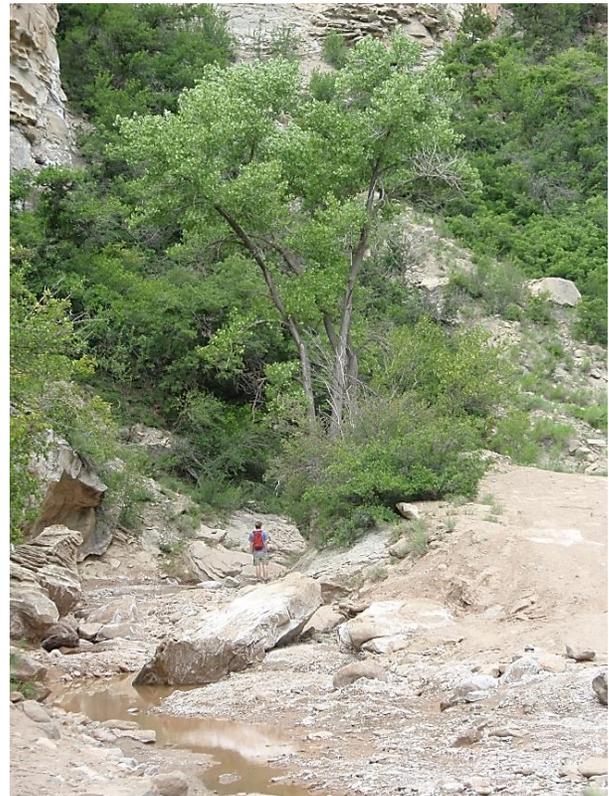
Strengthen stewardship of BLM Conservation Lands.

- Issue new guidance for National Conservation Lands that requires designation of a **minimum route network** for national monuments and national conservation areas in order to protect natural and cultural resources while providing necessary access to visitors.
- Support a process for successful collaboration on the grazing environmental impact study in **Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument** so that grazing can be appropriately managed within the Monument.
- Finalize a resource management plan for the **Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area** that protects lands with wilderness characteristics and promotes quiet recreation experiences.

- Designate **Desert Conservation Lands** in the California Desert Conservation Area that enhance the value of the broader system and are managed in accordance with BLM’s policies for the National Conservation Lands, and ensure the permanence of their designation and status.
- Draft plans for Utah’s new national conservation areas – **Red Cliffs and Beaver Dam Wash** – that prioritize the areas’ natural and cultural resources for protection over all other uses.

Protect and promote opportunities for quiet recreation that allow public lands visitors to experience wilderness, natural soundscapes and spectacular scenery.

- Formalize a “**quiet use trail systems**” program through new national guidance that directs planners to analyze non-motorized trail systems separately from motorized trail systems in order to develop travel plans that meet the needs of quiet users such as hikers and wildlife watchers.
- Provide opportunities for quality hunting experiences by designating backcountry recreation management areas in the **Jarbidge and Rock Springs RMPs**.
- Designate a comprehensive travel and transportation plan for the **St. George Field Office** that accommodates the needs of the non-motorized community and minimizes impacts of motorized recreation on quiet use experiences.



A hiker enjoys the Hunter Canyon proposed wilderness area outside of Grand Junction, Colorado

Follow through with landscape-level planning and protection efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change and adjust management of ecosystems appropriately.

- Map out an America’s Great Outdoors project for Colorado’s **Yampa River Basin** that emphasizes the **public lands** component of the America’s Great Outdoors mission, ideally one improving the ecological integrity of the riparian ecosystem while promoting sustainable recreation opportunities from the headwaters to the confluence of the Green River.
- Utilize data from the emerging **Rapid Ecoregional Assessments** to make land use planning and management decisions that are science-based, cross-jurisdictional, and responsive to climate change as well as to identify areas that are appropriate for protective management and restoration.
- Incorporate **data on lands with wilderness characteristics** – both agency and citizen inventories – into the Rapid Ecoregional Assessments and commit to including new inventories as they become available.