

February 15, 2011

The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Edward Markey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings, and Ranking Member Markey,

On behalf of the millions of Americans who care about our public lands, we write in support of the Department of Interior's commitment to its multiple-use mission as elucidated in Secretarial Order 3310. Conservation has always been central to this mission. Conservation of wilderness signals our national commitment to conservation of our public lands, clean waters, healthy wildlife, and cultural and historic resources.

Secretarial Order 3310 reverses the flawed, unilateral decision by former Secretary Norton and the state of Utah that affected millions of acres of public land and effectively silenced the voices of millions of Americans. By issuing this Order, the Administration recognizes its legal requirement to comply with existing law regarding the identification and protection of wilderness quality lands. Furthermore, it restores the voice of the American people, who again have a public process to participate in that encourages and supports open dialogue about wilderness on our public lands.

This Order does not in any way remove the important role that Congress plays in the decision to make permanent any area as wilderness. Wilderness designation remains the prerogative of Congress. The Order acknowledges Congressional intent and the law that requires the Department of Interior to conduct periodic assessments of our public lands to determine suitability for protection as wilderness. This policy restores the previous policies pursued by both Republican and Democratic Administrations since 1976.

We believe this fundamental tool for the protection of our public lands should be supported by the Congress and encourage the members of this committee to show its support for public process on the issue of the wild character of our public lands.

Thank you for your commitment to our public lands and waters.

Sincerely,

William H. Meadows
President
The Wilderness Society

Frank Hugelmeyer
President & CEO
Outdoor Industry Association

Michael Brune
Executive Director
Sierra Club

Rebecca Wodder
President
American Rivers

Gene Karpinski
President
League of Conservation Voters

Cindy Shogan
Executive Director
Alaska Wilderness League

Brent Fenty
Executive Director
Oregon Natural Desert Association

Brian O'Donnell
Executive Director
Conservation Lands Foundation

Katie Blackett
CEO
The Colorado Mountain Club

Phil Powers
Executive Director
American Alpine Club

Kristi Davis
Executive Director
California Wilderness Coalition

Michael J. Painter
Coordinator
Californians for Western Wilderness

Dave Willis
Coordinator
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council

Frances Beinecke
President
Natural Resources Defense Council

Rodger Schlickeisen
President and CEO
Defenders of Wildlife

Trip Van Noppen
President
EarthJustice

John Sterling
Executive Director
The Conservation Alliance

Garry F. Rogers
President
Agua Fria Open Space Alliance, Inc.

Scott Shlaes
Executive Director
Oregon Wild

Stephen Capra
Executive Director.
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

Megan Graham
Executive Director
San Juan Citizens Alliance

Bill James
President
Friends of Sloan Canyon

Kevin Bixby
Executive Director
Southwest Environmental Center

Rob Sisson
President
Republicans for Environmental Protection

Sara Husby
Executive Officer
Tuleyome

Scott Groene
Executive Director
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance

Jeff Williamson
President
Arizona Zoological Society

Nancy Hall
Executive Director
Friends of Gold Butte

Greg Dyson
Executive Director
Hells Canyon Preservation Council

Thom Hulen
Executive Director
Friends of Sonoran Desert National
Monument

Dennis Tighe
Board President
Friends of the Upper Missouri River Breaks
National Monument

Barbara Dobos
President
Alliance for Historic Wyoming

Kerry Fee
Executive Director
Park County Environmental Council

Kelly Burke
Executive Director
Grand Canyon Wildlands Council

Laurie Milford
Executive Director
Wyoming Outdoor Council

Shaaron Netherton
Executive Director
Friends of Nevada Wilderness

Veronica Egan
Executive Director
Great Old Broads for Wilderness

Charlotte Overby
Executive Director
Nevada Wilderness Project

Rick Johnson
Executive Director
Idaho Conservation League

Lahsha Brown
Executive Director
Friends of Ironwood Forest

Brian Sybert
Executive Director
Montana Wilderness Association

Mike Clark
Executive Director
Greater Yellowstone Coalition

Gretchen Gutierrez
CEO
Friends of the Desert Mountains

Stephanie Meeks
President
National Trust for Historic Preservation

Cc: The Honorable Rob Bishop; The Honorable Raul Grijalva