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Republicans Highlight Job Loss, Economic Impacts of Administration's Wild Lands Order

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today at a Natural Resources Committee hearing, Republican Members soundly rejected the Obama Administration's new "Wild Lands" order. This Secretarial Order, issued without public consultation, attempts to designate Wilderness areas without Congressional approval. Numerous state and local officials testified at today's hearing that this order could lock-up public lands, destroy American jobs, block recreational opportunities and prohibit American energy production.

"This Secretarial Order will disproportionately impact rural communities, who depend on public lands for their livelihoods. These communities have already been hit hard by onerous existing federal restrictions and by the current economic crisis. They suffer from some of the highest unemployment rates in the country. The 'Wild Lands' order threatens to inflict further economic pain. This is just one more example of the onslaught of harmful actions that the Obama Administration is imposing on rural America," **said Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04).**

"Secretary Salazar's Wild Lands proposal is a disingenuous attempt by the Administration to circumvent Congress in an effort to create new Wilderness areas. Utah, like other western states, has been the target of this Administration, and more specifically the DOI, since they took the reins in 2009. This new policy is yet another glaring omission by the DOI that they are fiercely committed to fulfilling their special interest agenda to lock up the West. While BLM officials and the Secretary himself claim that designating new Wild Lands areas will not have a detrimental impact on western industries and communities, we learned early on that it is prudent to maintain a healthy skepticism of their word. This hearing, and the testimony from elected officials today, exposes and begins to address the detrimental impact that the new public lands designation will have on western jobs and livelihoods," **said National Parks, Forest and Public Lands Subcommittee Chairman Rob Bishop (UT-01).**

"The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) controls one out of every three acres of land in Colorado. This presumptuous attempt by the Obama Administration to put much of that land off limits to the public is unacceptable. This new policy will significantly impact many existing and planned activities on BLM lands, including mining, grazing, oil and natural gas development, motorized, and other forms of recreation. These restrictions will unfairly hurt rural Coloradans who depend on access to those lands for jobs. They will hurt all Americans who enjoy recreational outings on our national lands. This arbitrary order should be rescinded immediately to restore the delicate balance between development and preservation of federal lands that Congress intended when it passed the Federal Land Policy and Management Act," **said Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee Chairman Doug**

Lamborn (CO-05).

“The Wild Lands order is just another example of how the Obama Administration overreaches with its power, ignoring the law for its own political interests. This is another verse of the same song. We have seen this overreach with the passage of Obamacare and its atrocious state mandates, to issuing just one Gulf Coast drilling permit for political purposes, and most recently with its decision to ignore current law and not defend the Defense of Marriage Act in court. We have a responsibility to manage, protect and utilize public lands in a way that ensures access to these vast natural resources for the American public, not from the public. This responsibility, however, is not met by creating a new designation of “wild lands” by administrative fiat that places a few Washington bureaucrats in the position of making decisions that affect communities, kill jobs, undermine livelihoods and stifle industries in the West and across our great country,” **said Congressman John Fleming (LA-04).**

“Denying the ability for Americans to develop American energy when we are dependent on rising foreign oil prices is nothing short of a job killer in this economy,” **said Congressman Mike Coffman (CO-06).**

“Our country already suffers from excessive government regulations. The Administration’s Wild Lands order will restrict our economic development by preventing access to valuable public lands and sources of energy, timber and minerals, and will hinder our ability to create jobs in areas with record high unemployment,” **said Congressman Jeff Denham (CA-19).**

“In the past, Congress has designated wilderness in Colorado. Colorado’s Representatives have had, and continue to have, a good relationship with wilderness management on the local level. This attempt by Interior to usurp Congressional authority trumps the voice of the citizenry, and is not well thought out,” **said Congressman Scott Tipton (CO-3).**

“The Secretary of Interior’s Wild Lands order was issued without congressional input and failed to consult the communities that will be directly and adversely affected. My Congressional District is rich with mineral resources, much of which is located on the over 12 million acres of land the BLM manages in the state of Arizona. The order will hinder Arizona’s ability to develop those natural resources, critical to our state’s economic livelihood and our nation’s long-term energy security. We can achieve a careful balance between wilderness protection and economic activity, but it must be done through the appropriate, transparent process, and within congressional authority,” **said Congressman Paul Gosar (AZ-01).**

“Secret, unilateral, unaccountable and unresponsive to local and national needs are just some of the words to describe the recent actions of this Administration when it comes to public lands policy. In a time when many western communities are fighting for their economic lives, and when the nation is reeling from its reliance on foreign sources of energy, this Administration is trying to lock up our own energy sources. This denies jobs and security to a nation in need of both and is a sad example of the out of touch decisions being forced upon us by an aloof administration. In addition, the administration is totally out-of-line with the interests of western states by denying us the right to manage our own lands and wildlife populations,” **said Congressman Raúl Labrador (ID-01).**

“The Wild Lands proposal seems to be nothing more than a backdoor land grab. Whether it’s South Dakota or any other state dependent on its land as a resource, locking more land up to be poorly managed by the federal government is exactly the wrong approach to getting our

economy back on track and creating jobs,” said **Congresswoman Kristi Noem (SD-At large)**.

“We can all agree that our Nation’s public lands should be protected; however this designation of ‘wild lands’ can be highly restrictive and have serious effects on our economic well-being, our conservation goals and national security needs. I find it puzzling that the Obama Administration, at a time of 9+ percent unemployment and gas prices at the highest ever for this time of year, would recklessly make the decision to lock up domestic energy sources and recreational opportunities that have the potential to provide much-needed jobs and contribute to the economies of local surrounding communities. This rule also circumvents Congress, our federal rulemaking process and any local stakeholders by allowing a federal agency to designate millions of acres of publicly owned lands as de facto Wilderness areas,” said **Congressman Bill Flores (TX-17)**.

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