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Administration Admits it Doesn't Have Statutory Authority to Prioritize Wild Lands over other Uses

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Yesterday, during a Natural Resources Committee hearing on the Administration's "Wild Lands" order, Chairman Doc Hastings questioned Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Director Bob Abbey on the Administration's legal authority to prioritize "Wild Lands" above other multiple-uses of BLM lands.

Under the Secretarial Order No. 3310, Secretary Salazar directed BLM to re-review its land inventories to further identify lands with wilderness characteristics. Under the Secretary's order, these lands would be designated as Wild Lands and the agency's Resource Management Plans would be adapted to reflect this new category. Except in Wilderness Areas and Wilderness Study Areas, most BLM land is managed for multiple-uses in order to obtain both economic and conservation benefits as required by law. By focusing solely on Wilderness values in the Secretary's directive the Administration is elevating Wilderness areas above other multiple-purpose uses.

Director Abbey admitted that the Administration does not have statutory authority to elevate "Wild Lands" above other uses. When questioned, Abbey states, *"I'm not sure it exists statutorily."*



[Click here to watch the Q&A](#)

Designating an area as Wilderness imposes the most restrictive land use policies and places severe limitations on public access, prohibits many popular forms of recreation and severely restricts job-creating and energy-producing activities. That is why, under the Wilderness Act of 1964, only Congress has the authority to designate Wilderness areas.

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