



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

FEB 22 2010

The Honorable Doc Hastings
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Hastings:

Thank you for your letter dated February 18, 2009, cosigned by Representative Rob Bishop, expressing concern over reported efforts by the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of the Interior to protect and conserve America's unique natural landscapes.

I believe it is important that the Department of the Interior serve as a wise steward of the places that matter most to Americans. Indeed, the Department is a primary steward of our Nation's natural, historical, and cultural landscapes. In connection with that solemn responsibility, I have asked the Department's bureaus to think about what areas might be worth considering for further review for possible special management or congressional designation. The preliminary internal discussion draft reflects some brainstorming discussions within the Bureau of Land Management, but no decisions have been made about which areas, if any, might merit more serious review and consideration.

I also believe that any new designations and conservation initiatives work best when they build on local efforts to better manage places that are important to nearby communities. Given my own introduction of individual landscape conservation bills and my involvement while in the U.S. Senate in the crafting of the omnibus public lands bill that ultimately became law last year, I recognize and respect the importance of public and congressional support in considering protections for our natural, historic, and cultural treasures.

I look forward to a new public and congressional dialogue on the American value of protecting and conserving the important natural, historic, and cultural landscapes of our Nation. Successful congressional proposals such as last year's S. 2834, Utah's Washington County Land bill, S. 2229, the Wyoming Range Withdrawal Act, and the bipartisan annual land acquisition and protective designation appropriations and authorization bills, are a few excellent examples of landscapes deserving of public discussion over their protection and conservation. As Secretary of the Interior, I welcome and encourage this public dialogue.

Sincerely,


Ken Salazar