

**Statement of
Robert V. Abbey
Director
Bureau of Land Management
Department of the Interior
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
H.R. 86, Orange County, California Rocks and Small Islands
October 1, 2009**

Thank you for inviting the Department of the Interior to testify on H.R. 86, which would add certain rocks and small islands along the coast of Orange County, California, to the California Coastal National Monument managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM supports H.R. 86.

Background

The California Coastal National Monument, part of the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System, was established by a Presidential Proclamation by President Clinton on January 11, 2000, to protect:

“all unappropriated or unreserved lands and interest in lands owned or controlled by the United States in the form of islands, rocks, exposed reefs, and pinnacles . . . within 12 nautical miles of the shoreline of the State of California.”

Covering more than 20,000 rocks and small islands spread along 1,100 miles of the California coastline, the Presidential Proclamation protects the Monument's overwhelming scenic quality and natural beauty. The Proclamation specifically calls for the protection of the geologic formations and the habitat that these rocks and small islands provide for seabirds, marine mammals, and other plant and animal life, both terrestrial and marine.

Some particularly significant public rocks and islands off the coast of Orange County in the Laguna Beach area provide important habitat for a wide variety of upper rocky intertidal species, as well as various shorebird species. Additionally, four rock locations – Bird Rock and Two Rocks off the City of Laguna Beach, San Juan Rocks off the City of Dana Point, and San Marcos Rocks off the southern portion of the City of San Clemente – provide important roosting habitat for seabirds (including cormorants and the Federally-listed brown pelican) and haul-out areas for seals and sea lions.

In the process of working with local communities on planning for the California Coastal National Monument, the BLM discovered that the rock features off the coastline of Orange County were under Congressional withdrawals dating from the 1930s and, therefore, were not included within the Monument. These withdrawals include more than 40 offshore rocks, small islands, exposed reefs, and pinnacles located within one mile of the coast of Orange County, California, totaling approximately two acres above mean high tide. More than 70 years old, the withdrawals were originally intended to temporarily reserve the Orange County offshore rocks and small islands for “park, scenic, or other public purposes” (1931 Act), and reserve three specific offshore rock

clusters for the possibility of future lighthouses (1935 Act), which were never built. These withdrawals were ultimately never utilized and are no longer needed.

The Laguna Ocean Foundation has led a community-wide effort to include these significant areas within the California Coastal National Monument. The Foundation has worked with the City of Laguna Beach and other local groups, including the Audubon Society and the Surfrider Foundation, on a variety of city and area-wide coastal protection and monitoring projects, which resulted in H.R. 86.

H.R. 86

H.R. 86 would eliminate the existing withdrawals on these public lands off the coast of Orange County and place these features within the existing California Coastal National Monument. The BLM supports the revocation of the old withdrawals and the inclusion of these rocks, islands, and exposed reefs within the Monument.

The BLM has been working with partners along the 1,100 mile California coast to create a series of California Coastal National Monument Gateway community initiatives. These Gateway initiatives are a means to support organized local stewardship of various California coastal areas through the development of a consortium of the area's resource managers and advocates. The Laguna Beach community has expressed strong interest in developing a California Coastal National Monument Gateway initiative for the Orange County coastal area. Inclusion of these rocks and islands within the Monument will allow the BLM to work with the community to provide responsible, long-term stewardship of these valuable areas.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 86. We look forward to passage of this legislation which would place these significant features off the coast of Orange County within the California Coastal National Monument, thus ensuring their long-term protection and preservation, and paving the way for an important local community stewardship initiative.

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE
THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC
LANDS, OF THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R.
118, A BILL TO AUTHORIZE THE ADDITION OF 100 ACRES TO MORRISTOWN
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

October 1, 2009

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 118, a bill to authorize the addition of 100 acres to Morristown National Historical Park in the state of New Jersey. The Department supports enactment of this legislation.

H.R. 118 would amend existing law (16 U.S.C. 409g) by increasing the authorization for additional lands at Morristown National Historical Park from 615 to 715 acres. Authorizing this additional 100 acres will enable the park to begin to better protect important Revolutionary War resources as they may become available from willing sellers in the future. This legislation, if enacted, would also enable the park to quickly respond to past offers by Harding Township to donate nine acres for inclusion in the Jockey Hollow unit.

The 2003 General Management Plan for Morristown National Historical Park proposed an increase of up to 500 acres to the park's boundary, predominately through easements, to protect critical properties including those adjacent to Washington's Headquarters, Jockey Hollow, Fort Nonsense, and the New Jersey Brigade unit.

Morristown National Historical Park was the first national historical park established by Congress on March 2, 1933, Public Law 72-409. The park currently contains 1,711 acres consisting of four non-contiguous units: Washington's Headquarters with the Ford Mansion and Headquarters Museum, the Fort Nonsense Unit, the Jockey Hollow Unit, and the New Jersey Brigade Area. The Jockey Hollow Unit includes the Wick house (headquarters of General Arthur St. Clair), five reconstructed soldier huts, and approximately 27 miles of walking trails.

During two critical winters of the Revolutionary War, 1777 and 1779-80, the countryside in and around Morristown, New Jersey, sheltered the main encampments of the American Continental Army and served as the headquarters of its commander-in-chief, General George Washington. General Washington twice chose Morristown for encampment due to its strategic location, including proximity to New York City, defensible terrain, important communication routes, access to critical resources, and a supportive community. The park encompasses ground occupied by the army during the vast 1779-80 encampment, and the site of the fortification from the 1777 encampment. The Ford Mansion, where Washington made his headquarters, is an important feature of the park and recalls both military and civilian contributions to the winning of our nation's independence.

The park's museum collection includes close to 350,000 items including archeological objects from the encampments; paintings by the Peales, Stuart, Savage, Sully, and other early American

artists; 18th century furniture; archival material; Revolutionary War arms and equipment; and, a collection of items, letters and books belonging to George Washington.

Morristown National Historical Park is situated in the heavily populated region of northern New Jersey, a center for that state's continuing growth and development. It is important for the park's future viability, protection of its important Revolutionary War resources, and the enjoyment of its close to 300,000 annual visitors, that lands adjacent to its boundaries be protected from adverse development impacts. H.R. 118 will assist in ensuring the future integrity of this special place that commemorates and interprets seminal events of Revolutionary War history and the sacrifices of those who served during that time to enable the birth of our nation.

As noted at the beginning of this statement, this authorization would enable the park to acquire an additional 100 acres as they may become available in the future by sale or donation from willing landowners. It would enable the park to continue discussions on the possible donation of 9 acres to the National Park Service for inclusion in the Jockey Hollow unit. Because acquisition of these 9 acres would be by donation, the costs of acquisition would be minimal and would likely include survey and title work. The Park Service estimates that full fee acquisition of the remaining acreage authorized would be slightly less than \$6 million. However, the preferred method of acquisition would be by donation or the purchase of easements. The estimated cost for acquisition of easements would be approximately \$4.8 million or approximately 80 percent of the full fee acquisition cost. The 9 acres, referenced above, is open space adjacent to the park boundary with no structures. There would be no costs for capital improvements or annual operations and maintenance as the open space would remain in its natural state. Posting new boundary markers for the full 100 acres, if acquired in fee simple, would cost approximately \$50,000. Regardless, any funding necessary for these acquisition and related costs would be subject to National Park Service priorities and the availability of appropriations.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or members of the committee may have regarding the Department's position on H.R. 118.

**Statement of
Robert V. Abbey
Director
Bureau of Land Management
Department of the Interior
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
H.R. 1925, America's Red Rock Wilderness Act
October 1, 2009**

Thank you for inviting the Department of the Interior to testify on H.R. 1925, America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. The Department strongly supports the constructive resolution of public lands and wilderness designation issues in Utah and across the western United States. The passage by Congress and signing by the President of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act (Public Law 111-11) earlier this year constituted a very positive sign that we are moving these issues forward. While BLM has not had an opportunity to review many of the proposed designations, we would welcome the opportunity to work cooperatively with the sponsors of the legislation, the Committee and the members of the Utah delegation to resolve wilderness issues in Utah. We suggest an approach that is more geographically focused. The Washington County Act's wilderness provisions in Public Law 111-11 may provide a good example.

America's wilderness system includes many of the Nation's most treasured landscapes, and ensures that these untrammelled lands and resources will be passed down from one generation of Americans to the next. Through our wilderness decisions, we demonstrate a sense of stewardship and conservation that is uniquely American and is sensibly balanced with the other decisions we make that affect public lands.

Background

Substantial work on this proposal has been undertaken in Utah by citizen volunteers who care deeply about the land and its protection. The history of wilderness proposals in Utah is a contentious one. Resolution and certainty will serve all parties — including the conservation community, extractive industries, OHV enthusiasts, local communities, State government, and Federal land managers. An important milestone in this effort was reached with the inclusion of the wilderness designations within the Washington County Act as part of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, which was enacted earlier this year. We hope that this collaborative model can be extended to the rest of Utah.

H.R. 1925

H.R. 1925 proposes to designate 218 units of BLM-managed lands, comprising 9.4 million acres, into the National Wilderness Preservation System. These designations span the State of Utah, from the Great Basin region of western Utah, to the Canyonlands in the southeast; from the Uinta Basin and Book Cliffs in the northeastern corner of the State, to the Mojave Desert in southwestern Utah. Many of these lands are extraordinary, with unmatched wild land resources. The legislation breaks these designations into ten distinct areas:

Great Basin wilderness areas (44 areas)
Zion and Mojave Desert wilderness areas (14 areas)
Grand Staircase-Escalante wilderness areas (52 areas)
Moab-La Sal Canyons wilderness areas (15 areas)
Henry Mountains wilderness areas (11 areas)
Glen Canyon wilderness areas (9 areas)
San Juan-Anasazi wilderness areas (12 areas)
Canyonlands Basin wilderness areas (14 areas)
San Rafael Swell wilderness areas (21 areas)
Book Cliffs and Uinta Basin wilderness areas (26 areas)

The BLM reviewed some of the areas proposed for designation under H.R. 1925 through its recently-completed resource management plans. However, given the scope of the bill, the BLM has not undertaken a detailed analysis of each proposed designation in the context of designated wilderness. Should the Committee wish to move forward with the legislation, the BLM would carefully review each of the 218 areas to assess wilderness quality, boundary manageability, and conflicts with current uses, including motorized recreation and energy resource development. In addition, detailed mapping is necessary. Undertaking such a review and creating maps of these areas is both critically important to moving forward and a monumental task.

Below are a few examples of areas that an initial review, based on available information, indicates may deserve protection.

Desolation Canyon in eastern Utah, proposed for designation under section 110(b)(6) of H.R. 1925, is an extraordinary treasure, and is deeper in places than Arizona's Grand Canyon. This adventure destination draws visitors to study, explore, float, and hike through spectacular landscapes. Red rock canyons, white sand beaches, and cottonwood groves define this exceptionally picturesque area that supports a vibrant river outfitting community. The remoteness and simplicity of the area enhance its appeal.

Section 109 designates a number of wilderness areas throughout the San Rafael Swell. The unique character of the San Rafael Swell area began to form 50 million years ago when a massive uplift formed a geologic structure called an anticline. This bulge in the earth's crust was later eroded to leave high mesas, deep canyons, domes, and spectacular arches and spires. The terrain varies from sheer cliffs and dazzling canyons to more gently eroded badlands broken by shallow washes. San Rafael Reef extends through the southeast side of the area with dramatic sheer-walled cliffs, pinnacles, knobs, twisted canyons and valleys of stunning colors. It is a geological classroom of amazing proportions.

On the western edge of Utah, the Deep Creek Mountains, addressed in section 101(b)(10) of the proposed legislation, are a mountain oasis isolated within the Great Salt Lake Desert. Rising dramatically from the desert, granite canyons lead upward to snow-capped peaks. The vertical extremes have created rare ecological niches with exceptional biological diversity. In addition, numerous archaeological sites from a wide span of history are prevalent in the area.

Southeastern Utah's Grand Gulch, addressed in section 107(b)(6) of the proposed legislation, is another remarkable area. One of Utah's most popular wild land hiking areas, the Grand Gulch is home to rock art, ancient cliff dwellings, and other ceremonial structures that are located throughout the cliff-face area. More than 1,000 years ago the ancestors of modern Puebloan people inhabited much of the Grand Gulch, and today the preserved cultural resources are protected in this remote, primitive setting.

We also know that some of the areas proposed for designation present serious challenges because of existing and conflicting uses. For example, recreational use has exploded on public lands throughout the West, including in southern and eastern Utah. While many recreational activities, such as hunting and hiking, are compatible with BLM wilderness designation, others, such as mountain biking and OHV use, are not.

One use that conflicts with wilderness is mountain biking; an increasingly popular outdoor activity on BLM lands. In the Moab area, for example, both BLM's Bar M Mountain Bike Focus Area and parts of the Klondike Bluffs Mountain Bike Focus Area are within the Arches Adjacent area proposed in section 104(b)(1) of the legislation. Both of these areas, specifically designated by the BLM for mountain biking, receive substantial use -as many as 20,000 bikers annually on a single bike trail - which would be inconsistent with wilderness designation.

OHV use, either in designated motorized use areas or on designated road networks, also presents serious conflicts in a number of wilderness areas proposed in H.R.1925, including Goldbar Canyon (section 104 (b)(8)) and Duma Point (section 108 (b)(5)). About 70 percent of the proposed Goldbar area is within BLM's Gemini Bridges/Poison Spider Mesa Backcountry Motorized Touring Focus Area; as many as 800 vehicles per day access this area. Similarly, we estimate that over 21,000 OHVs use the Duma area annually.

Some existing or proposed energy development activities may pose inherent conflicts with some of the designations in the bill. In the Uinta Basin in eastern Utah, oil and gas development has increased dramatically over recent years. Some of the proposed wilderness areas include existing leases, some of which are currently producing, and others that we expect will produce in the future. Areas with these conflicts include Winter Ridge (section 110(b)(25)), Lower Bitter Creek (section 110(b)(13)), and Cane Spring Desert (section 106(b)(1)). In some cases the production areas could be carved out of the boundary of the proposed wilderness, but in others it may make designation impractical.

In addition, the recently-designated Westwide Energy Corridors may overlap portions of a number of the areas proposed for designation. In the case of the Upper Kanab Creek (section 103(a)(2)(N)), a 3½ mile segment of the corridor bisects the wilderness area proposed in the bill.

Utah's west desert has potential for solar, wind, and geothermal development that the BLM would like to further review as well, and we hope that the Committee will consider this potential. For example, locations within the Antelope Range (section 101(b)(1)) and San Francisco Mountains (section 101(b)(34)) are currently under consideration for wind energy development. High-potential geothermal sites intersect the Crater Bench (section 101(b)(7)), Cricket Mountain

(section 101(b)(9)), Drum Mountains (section 101(b)(11)), Sand Ridge (section 101(b)(35)) and Granite Peak (section 101(b)(15)) areas.

Finally, section 102(b) of the bill provides for wilderness designations in the Zion and Mojave Deserts of southwestern Utah. We note that Title II, subtitle O of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act, Public Law 111-11, designated nearly 130,000 acres of BLM wilderness in this same area and many of the proposed designations in this subsection appear to overlap with the provisions of that law.

Conclusion

The beauty and power of Utah's red rock canyons, mountains, deserts and plateaus defy easy description. These extraordinary natural features include an expansive range of ecosystems. We support moving the discussion on designating wilderness in Utah forward. Our hope is that this hearing will be the impetus for the hard work that needs to be undertaken in order to make thoughtful decisions about these important lands. The Department of the Interior looks forward to working cooperatively with local and national constituencies, this subcommittee, the sponsor of the bill, and the Utah Congressional delegation toward that end.

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE
THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC
LANDS, OF THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R.
2689, A BILL TO AUTHORIZE THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO STUDY
THE SUITABILITY AND FEASIBILITY OF DESIGNATING THE NATIONAL D-DAY
MEMORIAL IN BEDFORD, VIRGINIA, AS A UNIT OF THE NATIONAL PARK
SYSTEM

October 1, 2009

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 2689, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability and feasibility of designating the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Virginia, as a unit of the National Park System.

The Department recommends deferring action on H.R. 2689 to allow the National Park Service to complete a report on a preliminary assessment, requested by Secretary Salazar, as to whether the D-Day Memorial would be eligible for inclusion into the National Park System. This would also give the Secretary an opportunity to review the report and to share its contents with the members of the Virginia delegation.

H.R. 2689 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to determine the feasibility and suitability of designating the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Virginia as a unit of the National Park System. The study also would include cost estimates for any acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of the area and identify alternatives for management, administration, and protection of the area. We estimate that this study would cost approximately \$250,000.

The landing of Allied forces on the beaches of Normandy, France on June 6, 1944 was a seminal event in World War II and in the American military chronicle. It marked the greatest amphibious landing in history, the beginning of the liberation of France, and led to the eventual defeat of Adolph Hitler's Germany. On that day, too, some 4,500 Allied servicemen were killed displaying their valor and fidelity while making the ultimate sacrifice. In the rural community of Bedford, Virginia, families learned that 19 of their 34 sons landing on the beaches did not survive the day.

The National D-Day Memorial is located on an 88-acre site in Bedford, Virginia. It rises from a hill overlooking the community and commemorates the sacrifices of all who lost their lives on June 6, 1944. It consists of a series of plazas and architectural and sculptural features commemorating the planning of Operation Overlord, the English Channel crossing, the landings, and the march into France and ultimate victory. The major feature at the center of the memorial is the 44.5 foot granite veneered Overlord Arch. A water feature depicting the landing approach is designed to emit spurts of water simulating the gun fire encountered by those approaching the beaches. Numerous bronze plaques devoted to involved military units and individuals, as well as memorial donors, are placed against walls. The names of those who died on June 6, 1944 are

contained on a separate necrology wall. A small visitor contact station and book store is adjacent to the memorial.

The memorial was designated a National Memorial by Congress in Title X, Section 1080 of the National Defense Authorizations Act of 1997 (Public Law 104-201). It was largely constructed through private fund raising efforts of the National D-Day Memorial Foundation (Foundation) and was dedicated on June 6, 2001 by President George W. Bush. The Foundation continues to complete construction and manage the memorial, but has encountered severe financial difficulties in meeting its close to \$2.4 million annual operational costs. The memorial is open for visitation 362 days a year and received approximately 80,000 visitors between July 2008 and June 2009. Approximately 19,000 of these visitors came during the month of June due to the observance of the 65th anniversary of D-Day. The Foundation records revenues of \$509,653 and slightly over \$1 million in contributions for this 12-month period.

On June 25, 2009, ten members of the Virginia congressional delegation, including this bill's sponsor and co-sponsors, wrote to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar requesting that he work with President Barak Obama to establish the D-Day Memorial as a National Monument pursuant to the authorities granted to the President by the Antiquities Act of 1906, and that management of the monument be undertaken by the National Park Service. Secretary Salazar responded to the request on August 6, 2009 indicating that he had asked a team of National Park Service representatives to conduct a site visit to the memorial to undertake a preliminary assessment as to whether it may be eligible for inclusion into the National Park System. The Secretary further indicated that he would share the team's report with the delegation once it was completed.

On August 25 and 26, a National Park Service team toured the site and met with Foundation staff, including its executive director. The team received a great deal of information regarding the design and construction of the memorial, current visitor services and interpretation, and maintenance and operational protocols and costs. The team is currently in the process of analyzing the documents provided and expects to complete its report to Secretary Salazar this fall.

In light of this current analysis, the Department believes it is premature to consider the authorization of a Special Resource Study. We respectfully request that the committee defer action on this bill until the Secretary has had an opportunity to review the National Park Service team report and to share its contents with the members of the Virginia delegation.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or members of the committee may have regarding the Department's position on this legislation.

**Statement of
Robert V. Abbey
Director
Bureau of Land Management
Department of the Interior
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
H.R. 2781, Molalla Wild and Scenic River
H.R. 2888, Devil's Staircase Wilderness Act
October 1, 2009**

Thank you for inviting the Department of the Interior to testify on H.R. 2781, designating portions of the Molalla River in Oregon as components of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System and H.R. 2888, the Devil's Staircase Wilderness Act of 2009. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) supports both of these bills as they apply to lands we manage, and we would like to work with the sponsors and the Committee on minor refinements to both bills.

H.R. 2781—Molalla Wild and Scenic River

The Molalla River begins its journey to the sea on the western slopes of the Cascade Mountains of Oregon. At an elevation of 4,800 feet, the Molalla flows undammed for 49 miles west and north until it joins the Willamette River. For years, the Molalla suffered from too much negative attention from its visitors, including vandalism. To address these problems, local residents joined together several years ago and formed the Molalla River Alliance (MRA). The MRA, a nonprofit all volunteer organization, has over 45 public and private partners, including Federal, State, and local government agencies, user groups, and conservationists. Working cooperatively with BLM's local field office, the MRA has provided the Molalla the care it needed. Today, we are pleased that this subcommittee is considering designating approximately 21 miles of the river as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The Molalla River is home to important natural and cultural resources. Protection of this watershed is crucial as the source of drinking water for local communities and the important spawning habitat it provides for several fish species, including salmon and steelhead. Within an hour's drive of the metropolitan areas of Portland and Salem, Oregon, the Molalla watershed provides significant recreational opportunities for fishing, canoeing, mountain biking, horseback riding, hiking, hunting, camping, and swimming. A 20-mile hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian trail system draws over 65,000 visitors annually.

H.R. 2781 proposes to designate 15.1 miles of the Molalla River and 6.2 miles of the Table Rock Fork of the Molalla as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. In earlier planning analyses, the BLM evaluated the Molalla River and the Table Rock Fork of the Molalla River and determined that most of these two rivers should be considered for designation as wild and scenic rivers. As a result, the designation called for in H.R. 2781 would be largely consistent with management currently in place, and would cause few changes to BLM's current administration of most of this area. The 5,500-acre Table Rock Wilderness, designated by

Congress in 1984, is embraced by the Molalla and Table Rock Fork, and designation of these river segments would reinforce the protections in place for the wilderness area.

Wild and scenic rivers are designated by Congress in one of three categories: wild, scenic, or recreational. Differing management proscriptions apply for each of these designations. H.R. 2781 does not specify which classification the river should be given. The BLM recommends a recreational classification of the river segments identified in the legislation. This classification is consistent with the strong recreational values of this area, as well as the presence of roads along the course of the river segments and numerous dispersed campsites along its shorelines.

H.R. 2888, Devil's Staircase Wilderness Act

The proposed Devil's Staircase Wilderness, near the coast of southwestern Oregon, is not for the faint of heart. Mostly wild land and difficult to access, the Devil's Staircase reminds us of what much of this land looked like hundreds of years ago. A multi-storied forest of Douglas fir and western hemlock towers over underbrush of giant ferns, providing critical habitat for the threatened Northern Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet. The remote and rugged nature of this area provides a truly wild experience for any hiker.

H.R. 2888 proposes to designate nearly 30,000 acres as wilderness, as well as portions of both Franklin Creek and Wasson Creek as components of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The majority of these designations are on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The Department of the Interior defers to the U.S. Department of Agriculture on those designations.

Approximately 6,100 acres of the proposed Devil's Staircase Wilderness and 4.2 miles of the Wasson Creek proposed designation are within lands managed by the BLM. The Department of the Interior supports these designations and would like to work with the sponsor and the Committee on minor boundary modifications to improve manageability.

We note that while the vast majority of the acres proposed for designation are Oregon & California (O&C) lands, identified under the 1937 O&C Lands Act for timber production, however, the BLM currently restricts timber production on these lands. These lands are administratively withdrawn from timber production by the BLM, either through designation as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern or through other classifications. Additionally, the BLM estimates that nearly 90 percent of the area proposed for designation is comprised of forest stands that are over 100 years old, and provides critical habitat for the threatened Marbled Murrelet and Northern Spotted Owl.

The 4.2 miles of Wasson Creek would be designated as a wild river to be managed by the BLM under H.R. 2888. The majority of the acres protected through this designation would be within the proposed Devil's Staircase wilderness designation, though 752 acres would be outside the proposed wilderness on adjacent BLM lands.

The designations identified on BLM-managed lands under H.R. 2888 would result in only minor modification of current management of the area and would preserve these wild lands for future generations.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of these two important Oregon designations. The Department of the Interior looks forward to working with the sponsors and the Committee on minor modifications to the legislation and to welcoming these units into the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System.

