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## Balance in the wilderness

### The new interior secretary moves quickly to preserve pristine lands

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One of the final decisions of the Bush White House involved opening 130,000 acres of public lands in Utah to leases for oil and gas drilling. The sorry choice reflected a blind determination to promote such drilling in the Mountain West, Alaska and off the east and west coasts, the Bush team becoming more aggressive after oil prices soared.

On Wednesday, thankfully, the Obama administration shifted course. Ken Salazar, the interior secretary, canceled 77 leases. The department will conduct a full review of the proposals, especially in light of the pristine areas in the vicinity, including Arches National Park and Dinosaur National Monument. The Bush decision put such natural treasures in jeopardy, paying too little heed to the potential for air pollution and other disruptions.

Salazar rightly talked about restoring balance to department decision-making about oil and gas drilling on public lands. In the Utah matter, the Bureau of Land Management barely consulted the National Park Service. The criteria shouldn't stem from a mere thirst for fuel. Science should play a prominent role. What would be the environmental impact? More, care must be taken to preserve the legacy of national parks, Teddy Roosevelt highlighting the responsibility of one generation to another.

Many Ohioans have made the trip West and admired the majestic terrain, the desolate, beautiful patches of wilderness. They have been able to do so because of past stewardship. Now it is the duty of this generation, which is precisely the balance that the decision of Ken Salazar seeks to strike.

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