



State of New Mexico  
*Office of the Governor*

Bill Richardson  
*Governor*

September 17, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20240

RE: Wilderness Study Areas

Dear Secretary Salazar:

I write concerning the designation of Wilderness Study Areas ("WSAs"). As you know, there are more than 2 million acres in New Mexico, nearly 6 million acres of wilderness quality land in Utah, 650,000 acres in Colorado, and more than 5.5 million acres in Arizona that the Bureau of Land Management ("BLM") could be considering for WSA designation. Yet, because of commitments made by the prior Administration the BLM has not taken action to adequately preserve these public lands.

Most of these lands are roadless and undeveloped, providing places for people to recreate and enjoy nature and where wildlife thrives. These public lands are at risk for development or from damage from off-road vehicles. The BLM can and should protect these large areas without roads and with the special attributes of nature, unconfined recreation opportunities, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical values by designating them as Wilderness Study Areas ("WSA"). With the WSA designation, the BLM could manage these areas appropriately until Congress can act to more permanently protect their wilderness values.

My understanding is that the Norton-Leavitt Settlement Agreement ("Agreement"), an Agreement undertaken by the previous Administration, is seen by some as preventing the BLM from designating new WSAs. It is my hope that the Obama Administration, through your leadership, will review this position and recognize the need for new WSA designations. I would note also, that the position taken in the Agreement is inconsistent with every prior Administration's interpretation of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. It is critical that you act to reclaim the full authority of BLM to designate WSAs to protect their values until Congress takes action.

Thank you and should you have any questions or need further information, please contact my Energy and Environmental Policy Advisor, Sarah Cottrell at (505) 476-2241 or [sarah.cottrell@state.nm.us](mailto:sarah.cottrell@state.nm.us).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Richardson".

Bill Richardson  
Governor

BR:spk