

News Release



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Western Energy Alliance Applauds Secretary Salazar's Local Wilderness Initiatives

(Denver)- Western Energy Alliance is pleased that Interior Secretary Ken Salazar has issued a memorandum expressing support for local initiatives to designate wilderness areas. Rather than top-down directives, local initiatives enable common-sense protection of lands truly worthy of wilderness designation that garner support from local communities and stakeholders.

“Many proposals for wilderness designation have failed in Congress because far-away politicians and special interest groups propose them without regard to local communities that would be directly impacted,” said Kathleen Sgamma, Director of Government & Public Affairs. “For example in Utah, the Red Rocks Wilderness Act has failed over two decades because politicians outside the West propose huge areas without consideration of conditions on the ground, such as whether the lands even meet wilderness criteria, or the impacts on jobs, economic activity, and local recreation. On the other hand, Utah also provides us with a positive example of local communities and stakeholders coming together to protect over 130,000 acres in Washington County after several years of building support within the communities directly impacted.”

Secretary Salazar also reconfirmed the use of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) to analyze and inventory wilderness characteristics areas as part of the land management planning process. The FLPMA process enables sensible analysis of lands in an open and public manner.

“Again Utah provides the example and the caution. From 2001 – 2008, the Bureau of Land Management conducted environmental analysis and land use planning in an open, public process. They analyzed about 2.8 million acres for wilderness characteristics, and determined that 446,000 met the criteria for special protection,” continued Sgamma. “However, the Interior Department has chosen to disregard that analysis. We hope that today’s acknowledgement of the proper use of land planning to protect wilderness quality lands will enable the government to proceed with the balanced management of public lands in Utah.”

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Western Energy Alliance, founded in 1974, is a non-profit trade association representing more than 400 companies engaged in all aspects of environmentally responsible exploration and production of oil and natural gas in the West. More information on Western Energy Alliance and its members is available at www.westernenergyalliance.org.