



A Bureau of Land Management for the 21st Century

The BLM as the Nation's Premier Protector of Public Landscapes

Editor's Note: The following article is excerpted from Secretary Babbitt's remarks to BLM employees at an Interactive Town Hall Meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, on March 24.

I've been wanting for some time to come talk directly with the Bureau of Land Management staff to share a few thoughts on the BLM's past, present, and future. I believe we find ourselves in a moment the likes of which we haven't seen for many years: the opportunity for multiple, major, lasting land conservation achievements.

The bureau now has an opportunity to play a lead role in this moment of conservation history, and I want very much to work with you to make sure that we do not let this opportunity slip away.

Before getting started, however, I want to retire that bureaucratic mule that I trotted out in my Denver speech a few weeks ago. My scrambled metaphor brought not a little criticism, including one BLMer who told me, "That dog won't hunt. Put it away," which I hereby do.

I am, however, going to return throughout this speech to the important issues behind the metaphor—the institutional history of the BLM and, more importantly, its future in generations to come.

The public lands, more than 600 million acres in all, are a unique and priceless part of our American heritage. Of the public land agencies, the BLM is the largest—it manages nearly twice as many acres as the U.S. Forest Service; three times as many as the National Park Service or the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The bureau is the steward of many of the great landscapes of the American West. Having such an extraordinary set of resources under its care requires us to think far into the future about managing those resources.

In the 21st century, the BLM faces a choice. It can become the greatest modern American land management agency—the one that sets the standard for protecting landscapes, applying evolving knowledge and social standards, and bringing people together to live in harmony with the land. Acting with public and private partners, the bureau can be the paradigm of the Interior Department's 150th anniversary motto: *Guardians of the Past. Stewards for the Future.*

Or it can become a relic, a historical artifact, its most desirable lands carved up and parceled out to other land management agencies, with the remainder destined for the auction block of divestiture. Lest anyone think this alarmist, I invite you to consider the record of the past half century:

Unlike the National Park Service, with its beginning around the mythic campfire in the heart of Yellowstone, and unlike the National Wildlife Refuge System, initiated by Theodore Roosevelt at Pelican Island in Florida, the BLM began life at a bureaucratic confluence. As most of you know, the bureau came to life in 1946 in an administrative merger of the old General Land Office and the Grazing Service, which came out of the Taylor Grazing Act. Lacking a general mandate derived from an organic act, the bureau simply carried forward, under a new name, the old resource exploitation traditions of the 19th century.

Practically from the beginning, a pattern developed—each time a local movement sprang up to protect a piece of the BLM landscape, the newly discovered crown jewel was eventually pried away from the bureau and pasted onto the crown of the National Park Service. For half a century, from 1946 to 1996, every single large new national monument established under the Antiquities Act was taken away from the Bureau of Land Management.

Forty-five years ago, the BLM managed more than 500 million acres of public domain. Today, two generations later, that number is down to 264 million acres. Were the process to continue at this rate, the bureau would be out of business in the year 2047.

I think it's time to think more directly about the land conservation mission of the BLM, about systems and approaches that can bring together the agency's specially protected units across the landscape in a way that is appropriate for these lands, this agency, and this time in history. It's not only appropriate—it's an absolute necessity that this be done.

The inescapable truth is this—for the BLM to keep its special areas within the agency and not ultimately have them transferred to others, the bureau must show it is committed to, and capable of, delivering on the conservation part of its existing legal mandate. The American people are, after all, the ultimate arbiters of whether a vast expanse of America's greatest heritage and crown jewels shall remain and flourish with the direct descendent of the old General Land Office.

The search for a vision comes down to this. The landowners, the American people, want their lands held and managed for clean water, for the protection of endangered species, for abundant wildlife, for productive fisheries, for open space, and for the protection of our heritage and God's creation. If we manage our

lands primarily for these purposes, we will have public support; if not, we will neither have nor deserve their support.

The new BLM must have at its core a system of specially protected and managed conservation units, including landscape monuments and national conservation areas. It is a system that both protects our own crown jewels and interprets them to the public. It is a system that stands proudly alongside parks and refuges as part of our national heritage. And this system of BLM conservation areas is the main subject of my remarks to you today.

The idea of a BLM system of specially protected areas is hardly new; in fact, it is already taking shape. Witness the establishment of new BLM national monuments, national conservation areas, wilderness tracts, wild and scenic rivers, and other designations. Our task is to recognize what is happening, to embrace the concept, and by our management vigilance, to bring this conservation system forward for public understanding and acceptance.

The seeds of a BLM land protection system were planted in 1970 when Congress created the King Range National Conservation Area on the Pacific coast of northern California. In 1988, Congress designated the San Pedro River National Conservation Area in southern Arizona, and since then, has added seven other national conservation areas, including Red Rocks in Nevada and Birds of Prey in Idaho.

In many cases, these areas came to the attention of the Congress through the inspired efforts of BLM managers—such as the leadership of Ed Haste and Jim Ruch in the California desert and the initiative of Dean Bibles in assembling the San Pedro unit.

With these designations, a pattern emerged—the national conservation area is a special area where conservation and restoration of the landscape and its biological diversity is the overriding objective. The lands are withdrawn from mineral entry, grazing is subordinated to biological restoration, and appropriations are authorized (if not always made) to provide more intensive management, handle more visitors, and expand interpretation.

It remained for President Clinton to give this evolution a dramatic push forward, with the bold stroke of establishing the first national monument administered by the BLM and the largest national monument in the continental United States—the Grand Staircase-Escalante Monument. Though its beginnings were controversial, the monument has proven to be a great success by almost every measure. Consider what happened within 3 years of its creation:

Extensive development rights in the monument have been purchased, traded, or canceled. Every acre of state lands within its borders (some 180,000 in all) has been exchanged in the largest such swap in U.S. history. Congress has in effect endorsed the

President's action by making minor boundary adjustments. And a unified land conservation strategy—in the form of a comprehensive management plan—has been developed after an intensive public participation process. With a lot of commitment, partnerships, and good old-fashioned effort, the BLM is making it work.

To build on this success, the President asked me in 1998 to recommend to him other areas of predominantly public land that might be suitable for special conservation protection. As you know, I responded in December of 1999 with a recommendation for three new BLM national monuments—Agua Fria National Monument, an archaeological wonder just north of Phoenix; the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument on the western part of the North Rim of the Grand Canyon; and the California Coastal National Monument, an archipelago of rocks and islands off the coast of California of prime importance for nesting seabirds and other wildlife.

While we continue to cast a careful eye across the landscape and look at other areas in need of protective measures, the BLM is already in the spotlight to show what it can do as a manager of national monuments. History is being written; all eyes are upon you.

While to some extent the management of each of these areas is crafted individually to fit the needs of protection and long-standing community uses of that place, BLM conservation areas share some common themes:

As with parks and refuges, the designation of a BLM conservation area removes that location from the operation of the Mining Act of 1872 and various other general lands laws that are incompatible with long-term protection of our natural environment. And similar to parks and refuges, the designation makes permanent the primacy of conservation of natural values. But unlike most units of the park and refuge systems, BLM areas typically permit the continuation of such traditional uses as hunting and grazing, recognizing that in many instances, they can be compatible with good wildlife management, protection of biodiversity, and natural values.

As we all know, the proliferation of roads and use of off-road vehicles is increasingly recognized as a major cause of the degradation of fragile, arid western landscapes. We can expect monuments and conservation areas to include within their boundaries wilderness areas and wilderness study areas where motor vehicles are, and should remain, excluded under the provisions of the Wilderness Act. Outside such areas, the maintenance of roads and use of motor vehicles will be carefully regulated and off-road use prohibited to prevent the destruction of fragile soils, riparian areas, and other plant communities and wildlife habitat.

A BLM monument (and its legislative cousin, the national conservation area) will be managed in partnership with surrounding communities. The BLM will not provide food, lodging, and visitor services within the monument. Instead, visitors will be encouraged to see the landscape in the context of the history and tradition of the entire region.

Yet the fact remains, though much of the BLM's land is today in some kind of special conservation status, that reality is not reflected in the organization, the budget, or sometimes even the self-identity of the agency.

To guide and shape this emerging system of conservation units, we must now make some important management adjustments and changes. Interim guidance is needed immediately; and ultimately, new management plans should be prepared, or existing plans reviewed and updated, to reflect the paramount importance of the conservation principles for which the place has been recognized.

Special areas also need special budgetary recognition if sufficient support is to be provided. And they need backup and support all the way up the chain of command.

In short, the BLM must reflect the importance of this growing part of its portfolio in the organizational management and structure. Accordingly, today I am asking BLM Director Tom Fry to create an office of special areas to coordinate the management of the monuments, national conservation areas, and other important conservation areas. It is time we formally recognized, in the BLM's institutional structure, that you have a system of land that can be managed in a special way.

Let me hasten to add that recognizing a system of conservation lands will not detrimentally affect how the BLM manages its other lands. Rather, it recognizes that the bureau has a special opportunity and responsibility for areas designated for conservation purposes. The office of this national landscape conservation system, which will report directly to the BLM director, will ensure that there is consistency between special areas where appropriate, that these areas receive appropriate budget consideration, that problems and issues particular to the areas have an advocate, and that the areas receive a higher profile and increased recognition.

An annual meeting for conservation unit managers is clearly appropriate, and I understand that one is currently scheduled for the first week of June. Establishing "friends" groups and separate donation accounts are also ideas whose time has come.

Finally, now may also be a good time to review the management plans for national conservation areas and other special categories to ensure that their quality reflects the reasons they were established and that the promise is being carried out on the ground.

The creation of an office of special areas is important to the BLM's conservation system, but it is not nearly as important as the actual management that will be done in your states, your area offices, and your communities. The director and his colleagues in Washington can set the tone, pull people together, provide encouragement, direction, and support.

But each of these places is different, and each of the state directors needs to provide leadership and accountability to meet the test of time; to fulfill the aspirations and expectations of the public and supporters of public land everywhere.

It will take time, resources, commitment, and good faith. But we've proved it can be done, and I believe the BLM can prove that it can be counted on to protect the marvelous landscapes it has been entrusted with. In the long sweep of history, the BLM is just beginning to meet the challenge. As you do so, you need to keep some sense of urgency about seizing the opportunity that is before you, so that one day everyone in America and around the world will know and appreciate your skills at managing conservation systems.

[photos to run in full process color]

[digitals: Babbitt-grand staircase 1.jpg] *Establishing the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument as a Bureau of Land Management conservation area marks a turning point in BLM's history.*

[digitals: Babbitt-grand staircase 2.jpg and Babbitt-grand staircase 3.jpg]

[digital: Babbitt in mountains.jpg] *Secretary Babbitt spoke with BLM employees at an interactive town hall meeting on April 24. His remarks were the first in a series of talks the Secretary will have with employees of major Interior bureaus during the next several months, reflecting on their past accomplishments and the challenges facing them in the 21st century.*



NEWS SUMMARY

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of Communications

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

PICK-UP IN ROOM 1063
FRIDAY, JULY 14, 2000

BLM mission shifts to preservation

By Jeff Barnard
Associated Press
July 14, 2000

LINCOLN, Ore. - The string of landscape national monuments created by President Clinton has given the Bureau of Land Management a new mission of preserving special places, besides just exploiting natural resources, the agency's director said Thursday.

"Some said it was the Bureau of Livestock and Mining," BLM Director Tom Fry said while sitting on a log after touring part of the newly created Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in southwestern Oregon. "Now maybe they will say it's the Bureau of Landscapes and Monuments."

With seven new national monuments, the BLM is creating a Landscape Monument Conservation System to oversee the areas set aside to protect historical and ecological values, as well as areas being considered for designation by Congress as wilderness, Fry said.

The system will include two new positions within the director's office in Washington, D.C., and will be made up of fewer than 20 people, many of them scientists, he said.

"Certainly it changes the bureau and how it looks at itself," Fry said.

Though the BLM oversees 5 million acres of wilderness within 176 million acres, its emphasis traditionally has been on managing grazing, timber, oil and gas leases, and mining.

Environmental consultant Andy Kerr said any long-term greening of BLM at the behest of Clinton and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt would depend on the outcome of the presidential election. If Texas Gov. George W. Bush defeats Vice President Al Gore, any change will be short-lived.

"The anti-environmental Republican leadership in the Congress won't change the basic law, the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act," Kerr said. "The monuments will stick. But will the greening of BLM stick in the next administration? Stay tuned."

Sharon Beck, a La Grande rancher who is past president of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, said BLM's new mission was another example of the Clinton administration cutting into the economic benefits of public

lands.

"I get so discouraged hearing this kind of stuff," she said. "The environmentalists are in charge now. They're just going to take what they can before it's all over."

Association President John Hays said he didn't like the turn BLM was taking.

"I don't think Lewis and Clark were sent out here to lock up the land, lock up the natural resources," he said from his ranch in Unity. "People came out here as pioneers and were sent out to develop this land."

Bill Marlett of the Oregon Natural Desert Association said the changes at BLM were just a "baby step" compared to the overhaul the agency needs.

Using the Antiquities Act of 1906, Clinton set aside 52,000 acres of BLM and other public lands to create the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument to protect an area where ecosystems of the Siskiyou Mountains, Cascade Range and High Desert come together to form one of the most biologically diverse places in the nation.

The monument is home to more than 100 species of butterflies, each depending on a different host plant, and 600 species of plants.

The proclamation creating the monument prohibits logging and mining, both of which are of marginal economic value, as well as off-road vehicles. Hunting and fishing are allowed. The BLM is studying whether cattle grazing is harming the ecological values. If it finds it does, grazing also will be banned.

Fry said he was particularly impressed by the diversity of the landscape inside the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument after eating lunch on Boccard Point.

"You can go out and sit on the edge of a cliff and see 50 to 70 miles, close your eyes, and hear the wind rustle through the trees," Fry said. "It gives you a special opportunity to renew the spirit."

"It's going to be a great place for people to come visit, but also for scientists to start understanding the ecosystems."

New mission for public lands

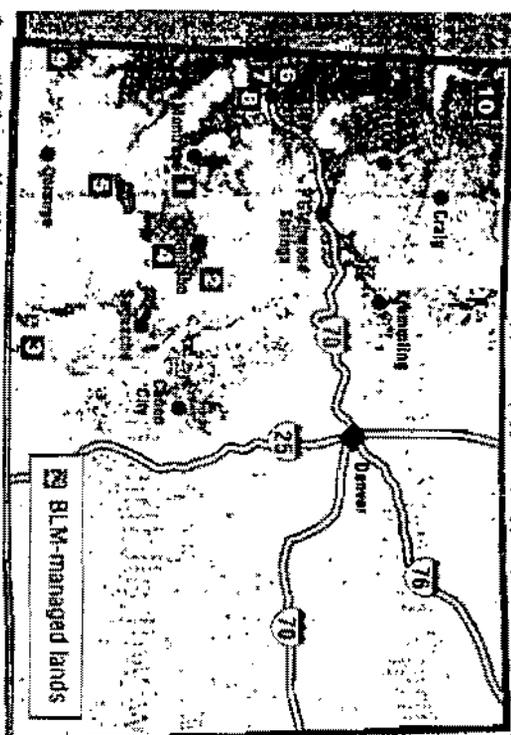
Parents of Land
...and Governors' 204 million
...12 Western states,
...many people's recreation
...historic sites and fragile
...Public Use of BLM
...then, usually, but for years
...staring and barking
...been back-siding.
...of Staff for Secretary Bruce
...is pushing the bureau, by
...conservationist best and
...new, 100,000 conservation



(Above) Spectacular views from the proposed Black Ridge Wilderness Area west of Grand Junction, part of the pending Colorado Canyon National Conservation Area. Photo: John Kador.
(Left) Congressman Bill Ritter and BLM head to the San Luis Valley to the existing Great Sand Dunes National Monument, pictured here, to create an expanded Great Sand Dunes National Park. Photo: Jean E. Smith.

OREGON BLM Lands

- 1. Lorna Doan farm, Horseshoe and Pilby canyons paddling/rafting area.
- 2. Koyukohi trail (east entrance)
- 3. Black Ridge proposed national conservation area.
- 4. Canyon of the Ancients National Monument.
- 5. Verrillan Basin (citizens proposed wilderness).



Source: U.S. Bureau of Land Management

U.S. BLM Lands



The Denver Post / Jonathan Horowitz

- 6. Lorna Doan farm, Horseshoe and Pilby canyons paddling/rafting area.
- 7. Koyukohi trail (east entrance)
- 8. Black Ridge proposed national conservation area.
- 9. Canyon of the Ancients National Monument.
- 10. Verrillan Basin (citizens proposed wilderness).

Alaska: Most of the famed Katmai dog sled trail.

Oregon: Oregon National Lanquar, Koyukohi trail, ancient redwood forest, Alabaster hills, strung for many classic western movies, Impehial Sand Dunes, Idaho: Snake River Basin of Prey National Conservation Area.

Montana: Lewis and Clark historic trail.

Utah: Wild Horse Range, Red Rocks National Recreation Area.

New Mexico: Simons Canyon, El Malpais (proposed reformation).

Oregon: The Oregon Trail, Lone Lake recreation area, Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument.

Utah: Most of the popular mountain bike trails near Moab, including Kane Creek, most of Slick Rock, The Buck City hunting area, Sawtooth trail and trail (citizens proposed wilderness).

North Park proposed conservation area.

Wyoming: Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

Wyoming: Oregon and Mormon Trails, Cutler Cave and Hole-in-the-Wall, Bushy Cabesby's beds, Maradee Mine, famed fishing area on the North Platte River.

BLM tackles role as environmental champion

By Penelope Purdy

Vast vistas. Solitude. Forests and deserts. Mountains and canyons. Rivers and history written across a landscape as big as the American West. In a dozen states from the Rockies to the Pacific to the Arctic, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management oversees the open spaces and wild places that define the West's character, economy and mythic stature.

But controversy whirls around the BLM like a dust devil. The bureau — the nation's largest land-management agency — is being transformed. The changes not only reflect the New West's economy and social attitudes, they could accelerate and enlarge that evolution.

Yet, like comedian Rodney Dangerfield, the BLM never has gotten the respect — or the budgets — that Congress and the public give the National Park Service, Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service. Per acre, the BLM receives just a fraction of the funding allocated to its sister agencies.

The combination — new duties and a lagging budget — have propelled U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt to take an unprecedented look at revamping the BLM. Colorado is front and center in the debate.

With President Bill Clinton's backing, Babbitt announced this summer that he



Denver Post editorial writer Penelope Purdy long has covered BLM and other public land management agencies.

wants to create a "national landscape conservation system" on BLM lands. There's no specific law that gives Babbitt authority to do so, but he and Clinton believe they can under existing statutes.

The new system's centerpiece is a series of national monuments, national

conservation areas, and critical wildlife habitats. A 1906 law lets the president unilaterally declare national monuments, but only Congress can designate national parks, wilderness areas and national conservation areas.

The envisioned landscape conservation system is taking clear shape in Colorado:

■ Clinton recently declared Canyons of the Ancients monument near Cortez.

■ Babbitt suggested making the Black Ridge region west of Grand Junction a national monument. But U.S. Rep. Scott McInnis, a Republican from Colorado's Western Slope, instead has proposed designating it as the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area. Political odds-makers say McInnis' bill

could pass this year.

■ Environmental groups want a new Vermillion national monument near Meeker. Babbitt says he won't act on the proposal unless he visits the site, but such a tour isn't on his agenda because he has so many other monument plans in the hopper. Many nearby residents appear to oppose the monument idea.

■ U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette, a Denver Democrat, is sponsoring legislation to designate 49 new wilderness areas on 4 million acres of BLM holdings in Colorado. Her bill is part of a larger movement by citizen groups across the West to protect millions of BLM acres as wilderness.

■ BLM land may be added to the existing Great Sand Dunes National Monument near Alamosa to create a larger Great Sand Dunes National Park. The new park would be managed by the National Park Service, not BLM. But the inclusion of BLM parcels underscores how important BLM properties are to unique ecosystems across the West. The Clinton administration, including Babbitt, initially supported the park proposal, but last week backed off, citing concerns over federal water rights.

The Sand Dunes proposal is one of the few under which the BLM would surrender control of some of its holdings. Babbitt aims instead to strengthen BLM's commitment to conservation by raising the visibility of the scenery and ecosystems in the bureau's care.

When new monuments were created on BLM lands in the past, the National Park Service took over them. But Babbitt wants the BLM to manage the newest monuments — giving the bureau an enhanced conservation mission and America a new kind of special, protected public land.

Citing as an example the Grand Staircase-Escalante in southern Utah, which Clinton declared a national monument in 1996, Babbitt says the new BLM landscape monuments will be run much differently from the traditional monuments and parks operated by the National Park Service.

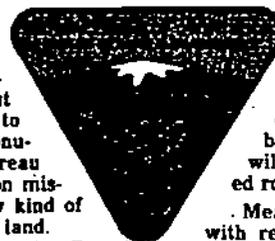
"This is not about creating a second national park service," Babbitt said.

At National Park Service lands — such as Wyoming's Yellowstone or Colorado's Rocky Mountain — there are developed campgrounds, cafes, souvenir shops, many paved roads and even some paved trails.

BLM's landscape monuments will have none of that, Babbitt said. No concessionaires, no guided ranger talks. They will remain rugged and lone-some.

"These will still be places that you can go get lost if you want to," said BLM national director Tom Fry.

Unlike the national parks, the new BLM monuments will permit livestock



grazing. In some locales, like Canyons of the Ancients, existing mineral leases will be honored. But new mineral development will be banned, and motor vehicles will have to stay on designated roads.

Meantime, DeGette has met with residents and local elected officials throughout Colorado about her wilderness bill. Her next round of town meetings and wilderness tours is scheduled for early August. Although the proposed wilderness areas lie outside her district, their future is important to Denver residents who want Colorado's wild places preserved, she said.

DeGette applauds Babbitt's efforts, but believes some public lands still should be labeled as wilderness areas. Wilderness designation usually provides more protection than either a monument or a conservation area, she noted.

But some BLM landscapes may get both designations. For example, within the proposed Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area, the magnificent landscapes and meandering canyons in the Black Ridge vicinity would be designated as a wilderness. Other parts of the conservation area, including Rabbit Valley, would remain open

Please see BLM on 6J

BLM has new mission for public lands

BLM from Page 1J

to motor vehicles and mountain bikes.

Still, the new conservation role touted by Babbitt could represent a sea-change for the BLM, an agency once seen as so pro-development that environmentalists nicknamed it the "Bureau of Livestock and Mining."

In the past, many BLM grazing allotments were overrun by domestic animals, forcing wildlife off the range, trampling grasslands into dust and polluting once pristine streams. Too, BLM let mineral companies crisscross previously wild zones with roads and rigs.

But as the West evolved, so did BLM. Created in 1946 by the merger of two existing agencies, BLM initially was told to sell or develop almost all its land. The policy proved devastating: BLM's holdings shrank from its original 500 million acres to about 264 million acres today.

In 1976, though, Congress passed the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act, for the first time giving BLM a conservation mandate.

"Up until then, no one was really sure if the BLM was going to continue to exist, or if we the public would even hang on to all these beautiful places," said Pam Eaton, director of the Wilderness Society's regional office in Denver.

The evolution begun in 1976 is accelerating. "For the first time, we really have a secretary of the interior who has really focused on the BLM and its mission," said Colorado BLM director Ann Morgan.

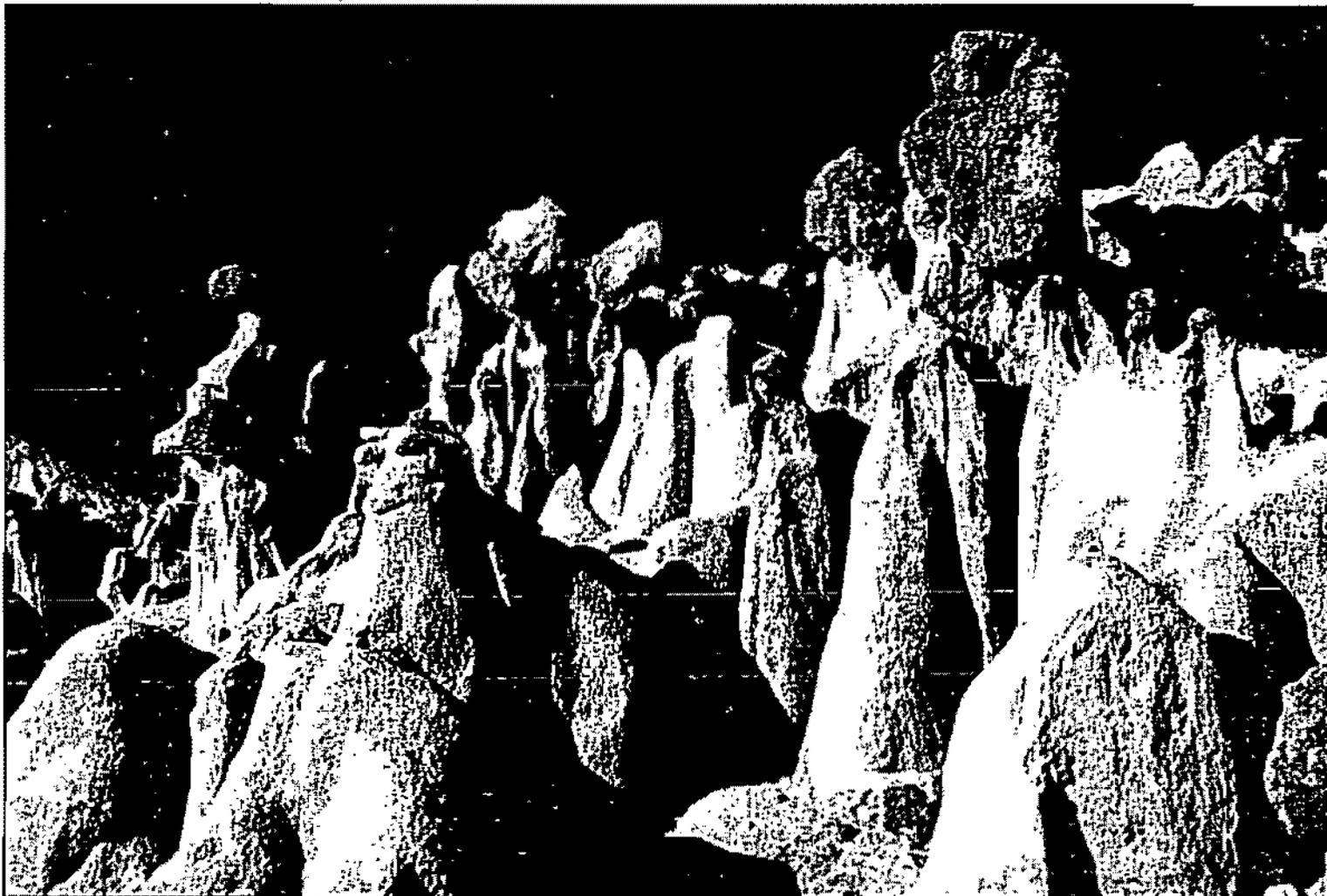
But critics fear public-lands management is being driven by a top-down, politically-charged agenda.

"I really worry about the precedent that's being set," said McInnis. Major shifts in public-lands policy ought to be debated in Congress, not imposed by administrative fiat, he explained.

The new monuments and proposed wilderness areas also would put millions of acres of public land off-limits to mineral exploration, without a thorough debate about what that decision means to America's dependency on foreign oil or to future consumer prices, said Jack Ekstrom, government affairs director for Denver-based Forest Oil Co.

By denying the industry the chance to use new technology to explore these lands, America may be shutting the door on new discoveries, Ekstrom said. By law, he notes, public lands are supposed to be open to multiple use.

"You've got... Clinton administration



The Wilderness Society / Mark Hunter

Weird geological formations in South Shale Ridge, 5 miles west of DeBeque, represent some of the magnificent scenery preserved on BLM lands.

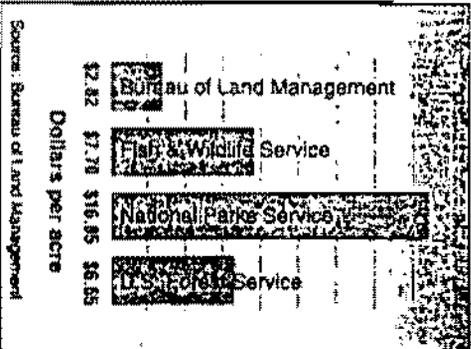
BLM funding

BLM receives less funding per acre than other land-managing agencies.



BLM TUNDING

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"You've got the Clinton administration sweeping into Colorado and these other Western states, making all these changes," said Stuart Sanderson, president of the Colorado Mining Association. "I'm not sure that it registers with the public, what it means if these lands are taken out of the federal mineral estate. Do they want us to become as dependent on foreign metals as we are on foreign oil?"

Habbitt scoffed. "These lands have been thoroughly explored for more than a century. We know what's there and what isn't."

Said the BLM's Fry: "Multiple use doesn't mean that we can allow every type of use possible on every single tract of land."

Habbitt stirred a similar fracas in the early 1990s when he tried to raise grazing fees and reduce the number of sheep and cattle on public lands. Livestock growers howled. But both the fury and the outcome may be instructive.

"The range-land reform effort was all right in its goals, but it should've come from the bottom up instead of the top down," said Jim Coleman, whose family has ranches in Colorado's San Luis Valley since about 1870.

Secretary Habbitt kinds forced that all on us, and you know how it is when people feel they are being forced: They don't take too kindly to it," said Coleman, who serves on both the Colorado Cattleman's BLM Liaison Committee and the BLM's Resource Advisory Council, a citizens' panel that helps the BLM craft management policies.

Yet early political posturing in the range-land feud quieted down, giving way to an ongoing productive discussion. Today, BLM and ranchers are identifying damaged range lands, implementing restoration plans and discussing preventive measures. For example, ranchers now rotate when they run livestock on certain pastures, giving the land time to recover, said Coleman.

About 65 percent of BLM range lands in Colorado now meet ecological goals, such as improving water quality and erosion prevention, Morgan said. The bureau is working to bring the rest up to standards.

Grazing will still be allowed in both Rabbit's new monuments and DeGelle's proposed wilderness areas. That permission also will differentiate them from national parks where livestock grazing is banned.

Meanwhile, BLM has made prog-

ORVs, ATVs, SUVs and other motorized toys can wander off the roads and established four-wheel-drive tracks. It is, Morgan acknowledged, an enormous, unsolicited headache for the BLM.

But when a national monument is declared, BLM is legally able to order all motorized vehicles to stay on paved or dirt roads or designated four-wheel-drive tracks.

In addition, BLM is crafting new, nationwide off-road vehicle use regulations. The bureau is accepting public comment on the matter until early August. Several ORV clubs, which promote responsible backcountry driving practices, are working with BLM on the issue.

Off-road vehicles aren't the only concern. Recreation users of all kinds have skyrocketed on BLM holdings, creating new, unforeseen impacts.

Ten years ago in Colorado, recreation use on BLM property hovered about 3 million visitors per year. Today, it's about 6.5 million visits annually and growing. Other states have recorded similar increases.

But when adjusted for inflation, BLM's budget actually backslid during much of the 1980s, leaving the bureau hard-pressed to keep pace with public use of the land. For example, while recreation use in Colorado grew by nearly 117 percent during the past decade, BLM's recreation management budget in the state rose from about \$1 million to \$2 million. Not only are those figures small — law-averaging BLM about 25 cents to provide services for every visitor — but that inflation doubling was partly eaten away by inflation. In real terms, then, the BLM in Colorado is losing ground financially.

Of 11 management plans for BLM dis-



Associated Press / Marc S. Hernevig



Above: Hattling, seen here on the Animas River near Farmington, N.M., and other water and adventure sports are the fastest growing segment of recreation use on BLM property. At left: Hiking has grown increasingly popular on BLM units, including Hunter Canyon 20 miles northwest of Grand Junction.

president in U.S. history to undo a national monument."

There are hints, however, about who is winning the tug-of-war over the BLM's future.

Two weeks ago, Senate Republicans helped delay a proposal to stop Clinton from declaring any more BLM monuments.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management... by the numbers

The Wilderness Society / Mark Hunter

U.S.	Colorado
Number of acres managed	6.3 million

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"Secretary Babbitt kinda forced that all on us, and you know how it is when people feel they are being forced: They don't take too kindly to it," said Coleman, who serves on both the Colorado Cattleman's BLM Liaison Committee and the BLM's Resource Advisory Council, a citizens' panel that helps the BLM craft management policies.

Yet early political posturing in the rangeland feud quieted down, giving way to an ongoing productive discussion. Today, BLM and ranchers are identifying damaged range lands, implementing restoration plans and discussing preventative measures. For example, ranchers now rotate when they run livestock on certain pastures, giving the land time to recover, said Coleman.

About 65 percent of BLM range lands in Colorado now meet ecological goals, such as improving water quality and erosion prevention, Morgan said. The bureau is working to bring the rest up to standards.

Grazing will still be allowed in both Babbitt's new monuments and DeGette's proposed wilderness areas. That permission also will differentiate them from national parks, where livestock grazing is banned.

Meantime, the BLM has made progress toward fixing two other long-standing problems. In the early 1990s, the bureau was heavily criticized for lax accounting and management practices, but in recent years has received a string of "clean audits" from outside auditors.

Too, the bureau is trying to make itself more user-friendly through a new "service-first" program. For instance, in Colorado's San Luis Valley, BLM recently consolidated offices with the U.S. Forest Service in Sagauche. The move eliminated a 100-mile round trip to Alamosa that Coleman and other area ranchers previously had to make just to finish routine paperwork.

Contrary to public perception, however, the hardest-to-control impacts on public lands today aren't being created by livestock or minerals development. The chief villain: careless, unrestricted use of off-road vehicles.

Yet, legally, half the BLM properties in Colorado are still open to cross-country travel, meaning that dirt bikes,

ORVs, ATVs, SUVs and other motorized toys can wander off the roads and established four-wheel-drive tracks. It is, Morgan acknowledged, an enormous, unresolved headache for the BLM.

But when a national monument is declared, BLM is legally able to order all motorized vehicles to stay on paved or dirt roads or designated four-wheel-drive tracks.

In addition, BLM is crafting new, nationwide off-road vehicle use regulations. The bureau is accepting public comment on the matter until early August. Several ORV clubs, which promote responsible backcountry driving practices, are working with BLM on the issue.

Off-road vehicles aren't the only concern. Recreation uses of all kinds have skyrocketed on BLM holdings, creating new, unforeseen impacts.

Ten years ago in Colorado, recreation use on BLM property hovered about 3 million visitors per year. Today, it's about 6.5 million visits annually and growing. Other states have recorded similar increases.

But when adjusted for inflation, BLM's budget actually backslid during much of the 1990s, leaving the bureau hard-pressed to keep pace with public use of the land. For example, while recreation use in Colorado grew by nearly 117 percent during the past decade, BLM's recreation management budget in the state rose from about \$1 million to \$2 million. Not only are those figures small — leaving BLM about 25 cents to provide services for every visitor — but that illusory doubling was partly eaten away by inflation. In real terms, then, the BLM in Colorado is losing ground financially.

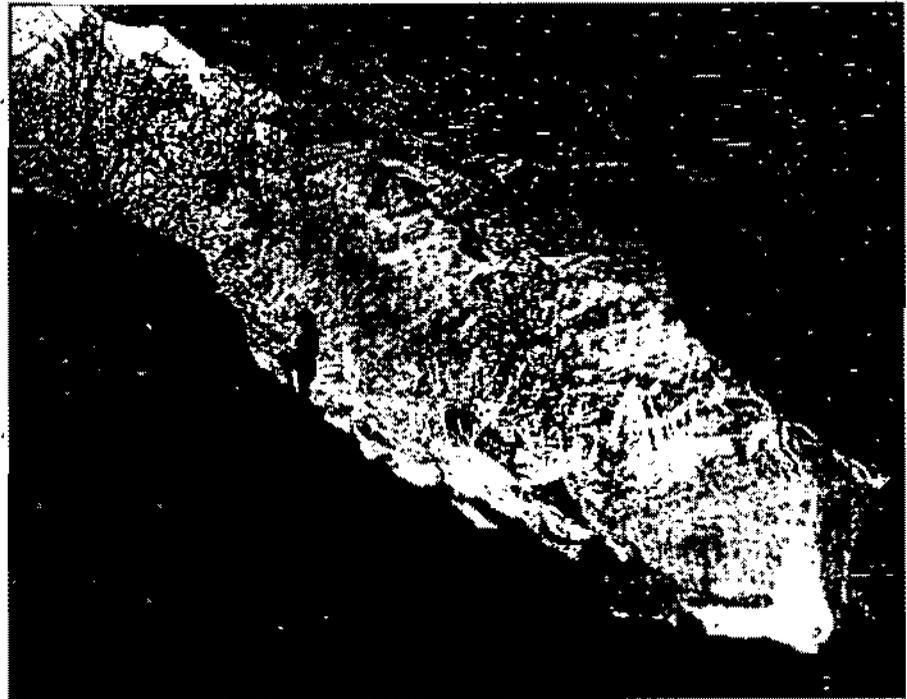
Of 11 management plans for BLM districts in Colorado, seven are more than a decade old, Morgan said. That leaves the BLM also behind the curve in dealing with new impacts affecting the public lands. Just bringing those management plans up to date could cost \$7.5 million over the next five years, she added.

Trends indicate recreation pressures will intensify. Of the 15 states with the fastest growing populations, almost all are in the West. And despite seemingly remote locations, most BLM land is within a few hours' drive of an urban area, such as Denver, Las Vegas, Los Angeles or Salt Lake City.

Still, the notion of giving BLM lands new protection remains controversial.

During his July visit to Colorado, the GOP's presumed presidential nominee George W. Bush said if elected he would consider revoking some of the recent monument declarations.

"I think that suggests just how radical his (Bush's) environmental agenda is," Babbitt countered. "He would be the first



The Wilderness Society / Mark Hunter

Above: seen in Animas National Monument, N.M., and other water and adventure sports are the the fastest growing segment of recreation use on BLM property. At left: Hiking has grown increasingly popular on BLM units, including Hunter Canyon 20 miles northwest of Grand Junction.

president in U.S. history to undo a national monument."

There are hints, however, about who is winning the tug-of-war over the BLM's future.

Two weeks ago, Senate Republicans helped defeat a proposal to stop Clinton from declaring any more BLM monuments. Earlier, the U.S. House voted down a proposal to halt funding for the new monuments. Both votes handed important victories to the Clinton administration and to Babbitt's push for a new, national landscape conservation system.

Among the Republicans who voted to maintain funding for the new national monuments was the politically moderate McInnis. While he criticizes the Clinton program, it would be irresponsible for the government to create the monuments but refuse to properly manage them, McInnis explained.

Moreover, opinion polls consistently show that about 70 percent of Colorado residents, from across the state, support designating millions of BLM acres as wilderness. The backing remains solid even after pollsters told respondents that wilderness designation would bar motorized vehicles, timber cutting and mineral development.

"It's the public that's driving this boat," McInnis said.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management... by the numbers

	U.S.	Colorado
Number of acres managed:	264.2 million	8.3 million
Percentage of total land surface under BLM management:	11%	12.5%
Budget:	\$1.3 billion	\$62.9 million
Amount of revenue, leases, royalties BLM collected, 1999:	\$1.4 billion	\$90 million
Amount BLM gave treasury in excess of its own budget, 1999:	More than \$100 million	\$27 million
BLM revenue Congress allocated to local governments, 1999:	\$1 billion	\$47 million
Number of acres of subsurface minerals that BLM manages:	560 million	27 million
Number of national monuments BLM manages:	7	1
Number of national conservation areas BLM manages:	9	1, plus one pending in Congress



NEWS SUMMARY

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of Communications

PICK-UP IN ROOM 1063

TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2000

THE WASHINGTON POST

Court Backs U.S. on Land Use

By EDWARD WALSH
Washington Post Staff Writer

Resolving the latest dispute in the long-running feud between the federal government and western land interests, the Supreme Court yesterday upheld three Interior Department regulations governing livestock grazing on public lands that some western ranchers and farmers contend could pose a threat to their livelihoods.

The regulations were issued in 1996 by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and challenged by the Public Lands Council, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and other ranching and farming groups. The rules changed the definition of "grazing preference" to make it conform to land use plans, eliminated a requirement that grazing-permit holders be "engaged in the livestock business" and gave the government title to any permanent new improvements built on public rangeland.

The ranchers' main challenge was to the new grazing-preference regulation, which they argued undermined their right to graze livestock on public lands and could jeopardize their ability to obtain operating loans from financial institutions. In issuing the regulation, they said, Babbitt violated the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act, which requires him to



THE PHOTO BY NANCY ANDREWS—THE WASHINGTON POST

Justice Stephen G. Breyer wrote that ranchers may challenge the federal regulation on a case-by-case basis.

"adequately safeguard" existing grazing privileges.

But, writing for a unanimous court in the case *Public Lands Council v. Babbitt*, Justice Stephen G. Breyer said that the 1934 law gives the secretary broad discretion in administering the grazing program, and that even before the grazing-preference regulation was issued, ranchers did not enjoy "anything like absolute security" in their grazing-rights permits. He also said the ranching groups had not shown how the "relatively small differences" created by the new rule had harmed individual ranchers, who are free to challenge it on a case-by-case basis.

John Leshy, Interior's solicitor, said the ruling resolves some of the "pesky, annoying, peripheral issues"

stemming from Babbitt's attempt to streamline a program designed to restore and preserve public rangeland. He said lenders have always understood that livestock operators "do not have an absolute property right" to graze their livestock on public lands.

Chandler Keys, vice president for public policy for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, said he saw "a silver lining" in the decision. He said the case had forced the agency to clarify the key rule in a way that satisfied the cattlemen's group. "Now we'll see how they implement it," Keys said.

The federal government is by far the largest landowner in many western states, where more than 20,000 livestock producers have permits to graze cattle and sheep on 170 million acres of federal land. In his opinion, Breyer recounted how "wars" broke out between cattle and sheep ranchers, and ranchers and homesteaders, over the use of the land.

But he said resistance to federal regulation of the rangeland did not finally crumble until the 1930s, when one of the consequences of overgrazing became apparent. "The devastating storms of the Dust Bowl were in the words of one senator 'the most impressive lobbyist that has ever come to this Capitol,'" Breyer wrote.



4/2/2000

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News: Opinion

Editorial: Babbitt's push prompts Black Ridge protection

The Daily Sentinel

Sometime this month, perhaps as early as this week, 3rd District Rep. Scott McInnis plans to introduce a bill to create the Black Ridge national conservation area.

McInnis acknowledges he was prodded into this effort by U.S. Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt. That pressure aside, McInnis' plan is a sound one to give welcome protection and, it is hoped, additional resources to a spectacular natural treasure in Grand Junction's back yard.

What's more, McInnis' proposal will not infringe upon traditional users of the area. Grazing will be protected, as will hunting and current recreational activities in Rabbit Valley, the congressman said.

In addition, the bill McInnis plans to introduce will create a wilderness area protecting much of the Black Ridge, its canyons, arches and alcoves. That's something environmentalists have been advocating for years.

McInnis' plan has support from a broad environmental coalition, Club 20, the Mesa County Commissioners and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management Resource Advisory Council for this area.

Because time is limited, McInnis said he has already talked with House leaders and hopes to begin hearings on the bill shortly after the congressional Easter recess.

Babbitt announced last fall that he was interested in doing something to protect the area, perhaps by expanding the boundaries of Colorado National Monument.

Following meetings with McInnis, local leaders and federal land managers for this area, Babbitt decided that wasn't the best approach. But he left little doubt that if Congress failed to act, he would recommend President Clinton do so by executive order before he leaves office in January.

McInnis said he decided to introduce a bill creating a national conservation area in part because of the threat of administrative action.

"My concerns were: No. 1, if they write it there will be no local input, and No. 2, water rights. Because it's on the border with Utah, they can put language into an administrative order that's very difficult for this state."

His bill states that the national recreation area will not create any federal water right, either explicit or implied.

15

Using the federal Antiquities Act as a bludgeon, Babbitt and Clinton are forcing Congress either to act to protect sensitive areas around the West or sit back and let the administration do it. Some of the areas deserve protection, though a measured administrative approach would have been better than eleventh-hour coercion.

The McInnis legislation, however, offers the opportunity to demonstrate that in this corner of western Colorado, people can come together to protect an area for which there is widespread support.

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Editorials

Babbitt grazing reforms merit Supreme Court's OK

Seven years after U.S. Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt and the Clinton administration first proposed to reform grazing practices on public lands, the U.S. Supreme Court today will hear arguments over whether the Babbitt reforms are constitutional.

They should be upheld. The reforms are a measured approach for regulating grazing on public lands while recognizing the importance of protecting other values.

Much of the Babbitt reforms have already been upheld by the courts. Only three areas are disputed now. One is whether the U.S. Department of Interior must recognize those grazing allotments first approved under the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 even though it no longer allows ranchers to run as many head of livestock as the original allotments authorized.

Groups opposing Babbitt — including farm-credit agencies — argue that those original allotments must be recognized because ranchers obtain credit based on the higher allotments. It's tough to see why private lending practices for ranchers should be a primary consideration in forging policies of public-lands management.

A more arguable point of dispute is whether ranchers or the federal government should own any improvements made to a grazing allotment.

Finally, there is Babbitt's plan to allow organizations that don't raise livestock, such as the Nature Conservancy, to obtain grazing permits. The ranchers groups maintain that violates the Taylor Grazing Act.

Babbitt's first attempt to reform grazing was unquestionably overreaching. With virtually no input from ranchers or lawmakers, he proposed significantly raising grazing fees and changing the way grazing allotments are overseen.

When congressional representatives from Western states understandably cried "foul," Babbitt back-tracked. With the assistance of then-Colorado Gov. Roy Romer, he engaged ranchers, public officials, environmentalists and sportsmen in a series of roundtable discussions.

In 1996 Babbitt issued his more carefully crafted reforms. They included the establishment of revamped resource advisory councils, which currently advise the U.S. Bureau of Land Management on grazing and other matters affecting public lands, but no hike in grazing fees.

The opponents of the Babbitt reforms, led by the Public Lands Council, argued that Babbitt overstepped his authority. But a federal appeals court upheld Babbitt on all but the question of whether non-ranchers can hold grazing permits.

It is to be hoped the Supreme Court also upholds the reforms. They represent a fundamentally more balanced approach to public-lands management, developed with broad public input and a recognition that grazing must co-exist with other uses of the lands.



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Office of the Secretary

For immediate release: February 4, 1999.

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BLM Announces Utah Wilderness Re-inventory Results; Secretary Babbitt Initiates Process to Consider Designating Additional Wilderness Study Areas

The Bureau of Land Management today released a new field inventory which identifies 2.6 million acres of public lands in Utah that have wilderness characteristics.

The inventory, ordered by Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt in 1996, focused on lands within legislative Utah wilderness proposals such as HR-1500 and HR-1745.

Babbitt said today that he has directed BLM to initiate a statewide planning effort to determine if additional Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) should be established based on the new findings.

"This issue has been at a stalemate for nearly twenty years because the various interests involved are so far apart on the fundamental issue of how much public land in Utah has wilderness characteristics," said Babbitt. "We now have current, detailed information regarding on the ground conditions that will help get this issue off dead center and allow progress to be made toward ultimate resolution."

Secretary Babbitt announced the planning effort after discussing it earlier this week with Utah Governor Leavitt and members of the Utah Congressional delegation.

This new planning will determine if additional lands should be placed under special protective status as Wilderness Study Areas.

No change in the current management regimes will take place, however, until compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 202 of the Federal Land and Policy Management Act has been completed.

-more-



NEWS SUMMARY

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of Communications

PICK-UP IN ROOM 1063 WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 1999

National Conservation Area

By Jim Lamb
Green Valley News

1-13-99

SONOITA—U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, who won a reputation as committed environmentalist while he was Arizona's governor, called Saturday for creation of a National Conservation Area near Sonoita.

As he toured the Empire-Cienega Ranch he also said creation of a special designation could possibly help bring money to preserve the vacant ranch headquarters, now starting to weather away from disuse.

A foundation is now raising funds to preserve the old ranch house and corrals. Some estimate it would cost \$500,000 to preserve the structures there.

"It's very important for us to do what we can to preserve all this," he said looking out over the grassy hills that's still being ranched.

More than two dozen bureaucrats, ranchers and reporters toured part of the ranch with Babbitt Saturday morning.

The ranch is owned by the Bureau of Land Management, an Interior Department agency.

Creation of the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area would "memorialize" much of what's being done at the ranch now, said Henri Bisson of the BLM's Washington headquarters.

A citizens' group is drafting a plan to help guide the BLM's management of the 49,000-acre ranch. In fact, that group was meeting at Elgin 10 miles southeast of the ranch headquarters while Babbitt was on his tour. (See related story, 8A)

The Empire - Cienega BLM land is used for cattle grazing, hiking, hunting, biking, bird watching, off-road vehicle driving, camping, hang gliding and bird dog trials among other things.

Bisson said there should be no



(From photo by Jim Lamb)

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt (center) shares lunch and ideas with ranchers John Donaldson, left, and George Masek of Patagonia. Donaldson and his son, Mac Donaldson, ranch the Empire-Cienega, which Babbitt toured Saturday.

change caused by creation of a National Conservation Area.

Pima County Commissioners Sharon Bronson and Ray Carroll and other county officials were on hand to tout the area as an extension of its Sonoran Desert Conservation plan. The county is establishing a series of parks and other public open-space areas.

Babbitt said Congressional approval is needed to establish a National Conservation Area. There are already two similar areas in the state, a riparian area along the San Pedro River near Sierra Vista and a wooded area near Safford.

There were lots of boots and big hats and denim and flannel as about 30 gathered to listen to the plans.

John Donaldson, who ranches the Empire-Cienega with his son Mac, sat next to Babbitt for part of lunch. Later Saturday John Donaldson praised a proposal by the citizens group that would create a new way to determine how many cattle can graze on the land.

Another BLM aide from Washington said once an area is pro-

posed as a National Conservation Area and a Congressional sponsor is found generally the project moves ahead to completion.

Actually the conservation area would also include some National Forest Lands and possibly state land.

Ronald Morris, Santa Cruz County supervisor, recalled that part of the Empire-Cienega Ranch was once involved in a legal dispute with Pima County.

In the mid 1980s, Pima County proposed buying the ranch, but Santa Cruz objected because about 5,000 acres are in Santa Cruz County.

The land however wound up in BLM's hands and the suit was dropped.

Morris also recalled that Babbitt, when he was a lawyer in Arizona, had been Santa Cruz County's water lawyer for a time.

Two major water systems, Cienega Creek and Babocomari River, drain the area.

It's mostly rolling grassland, home to antelope, coyotes and numerous desert and grassland plants. To the west are the Santa Rita Mountains. The Whetstone Mountains are to the east.

Casper Star-Tribune

Babbitt praises revival of range reform plan

By CHRIS TOLLEFSON
Washington, D.C. bureau
and KERRY DRAKE
Star-Tribune capital bureau

WASHINGTON — Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt was quick to praise Wednesday's Appeals Court decision restoring most of his 1995 Range Reform proposals, but a Wyoming lawmaker predicted Thursday that the decision would spur renewed legislative efforts to block the provisions.

A Wyoming Stock Growers Association (WSGA) official, meanwhile, said he was "terribly disappointed" with the ruling and predicted it would further hurt an industry that is already suffering due to low market prices.

Babbitt issued a statement Thursday that praised the decision and claimed vindication, nearly three years after Federal District Court Judge C.A. Brimmer voided key parts of the plan.

The appeals court restored the government's plan to change rules for preferential rights for grazing leases, to take ownership of improvements made by grazing leaseholders on public land, and to allow nonranchers to hold grazing leases. "I am pleased that the courts have given us a nearly complete endorsement of rangeland reform. In this long-awaited decision, the 10th Circuit Court clearly agreed that our reform program is, with one small exception, fully consistent with all requirements of law," Babbitt said.

The one small exception refers to the court's decision to uphold Brimmer's rejection of the department's conservation use permits, which allowed people to purchase grazing leases with the intention of keeping cattle off the leased area.

Sen. Craig Thomas, R-Wyo., said Thursday that he was disappointed with the court's de-



'I am pleased that the courts

have given us a nearly complete endorsement of rangeland reform.'

INTERIOR SECRETARY BRUCE BABBITT

cision and hopes it will be appealed. Thomas said he expects the ruling to revive Republican efforts to pass an alternative to range reform.

Rep. Bob Smith, R-Ore., chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, introduced legislation earlier this year that would have raised grazing fees slightly and established grazing as the preferred use of federal lands.

That bill, opposed by most

BLM chief looks to revise land swap appraisal process

Land exchanges are important to the West — but the appraisal process needs some adjustment to be fair to the public. Appraisals must not only be done without the appearance of conflicts of interest, apparent or real, they must be accomplished independently and impartially.

The present Bureau of Land Management regulations are not clear about the appraisal process. We found that out last year when the Big Trails land exchange was attempted.

BLM Director Pat Shea has recognized that the land swap process is flawed (See Forum page, E2) and has created a team to deal with it.

He states in his commentary: "We need to consider how the appraisal process might be revised ... and what guidelines are needed when private developers and nonprofit conservation groups are involved."

We appreciate Shea's attention to important detail and willingness to seek solutions.

Casper Star Tribune
March 8, 1998

Casper Star Tribune
March 8, 1998

Land exchanges benefit America's taxpayers

Pat Shea

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Will Rogers once observed that he was investing what little he had in land because there was only so much and no one was making any more of it. That is part of the reason the public lands - the lands managed for the American people by the federal government and located primarily in the Western United States - are so valuable as a public trust and as a legacy to future generations. They can never be recreated. And that is why the decisions of public land managers to sell or exchange these lands are among the most important they will ever make.

The Bureau of Land Management, with stewardship of more than 264 million acres of land - more than any other Federal agency - completes 60 to 70 land exchanges every year. On average, these exchanges involve roughly 150,000 acres of land each year at a value of about \$50 million.

Why do these exchanges occur? What does the public have to gain, and why are states, counties and private entities such willing partners?

One reason is that land exchanges enable the BLM to change the checkerboard pattern of federal, state and privately owned lands in the West into consolidated areas that are more easily managed. This decreases the costs of managing the lands and increases the efficiency with which they are managed.

But there are more important reasons. The exchanges allow the BLM to acquire the kind of land that is suited to public ownership: land with high conservation values as habitat for wildlife including threatened or endangered species; land that offers recreational opportunities for the public; or land containing sensitive riparian areas that are critical to the health of streams, rivers and entire watersheds.

In turn, states, counties or private developers can obtain land that is better suited for local management or



The exchanges allow the BLM to acquire the kind of land that is suited to public ownership: land with high conservation values as habitat for wildlife including threatened or endangered species; land that offers recreational opportunities for the public; or land containing sensitive riparian areas that are critical to the health of streams, rivers and entire watersheds.

that will serve the development or expansion needs of growing communities.

■ Last summer, for example, the BLM's Canon City District acquired through an exchange the 1,272-acre VVN Ranch in Park County, Colo. The BLM did so with the help of the Rocky

PERSPECTIVE

Mountain Elk Foundation, which purchased the property and held it until the land exchange could be completed. The ranch contains year-round elk habitat, significant scenic, recreation, and wildlife resources; and three miles of wetland-riparian (streamside) areas which were not previously available for public use. In return, 840 acres of land within 13 scattered parcels were transferred into private ownership. The majority of these lands were grazing lands with some potential for recreation home sites.

■ In November, the BLM completed an exchange for 379 acres of high value property along the Clarks Fork and Yellowstone rivers near Billings, Mont. This acquisition ensures public access while protecting riparian areas, pheasant habitat, and fish and wildlife resources. The partner in the exchange received 7,400 acres of scattered and isolated grazing lands in south-central Montana which will be transferred to local ranchers.

■ In December, the BLM completed the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River project in Colorado. Using funding from federal and state agency partners, the BLM acquired two ranches totaling

5,850 acres. By exchanging 40 isolated, difficult-to-manage public land tracts, the BLM obtained ranch land that features more than five miles of access and streamside habitat along one of Colorado's most outstanding trout-fishing rivers. The ranches also provide significant river-based and upland-recreation benefits, as well as critical big game winter range for deer and elk. In return, some 4,200 acres of scattered and isolated public lands were transferred into private ownership. These lands included tracts encumbered by grazing leases, isolated parcels in developing rural residential areas, and other inholdings with low resource values.

The vast majority of land exchanges are like these examples – so clearly logical and mutually beneficial that they are completed without protest or controversy. Sometimes, however, proposed land exchanges do become contentious.

Appraisals can be subject to questions and criticism from those involved in a potential exchange or from outside parties. Appraisals are especially difficult and controversial in areas of rapid growth and volatile market prices. This makes the job of appraisers even more challenging.

Fortunately, our appraisers rely on an established and objective set of standards – such as comparable sales, access, existing improvements, mineral value, and other factors – in estimating land values. In cases where there is a large discrepancy in the estimation of land values, the BLM may call in a third party or ask for a new appraisal.

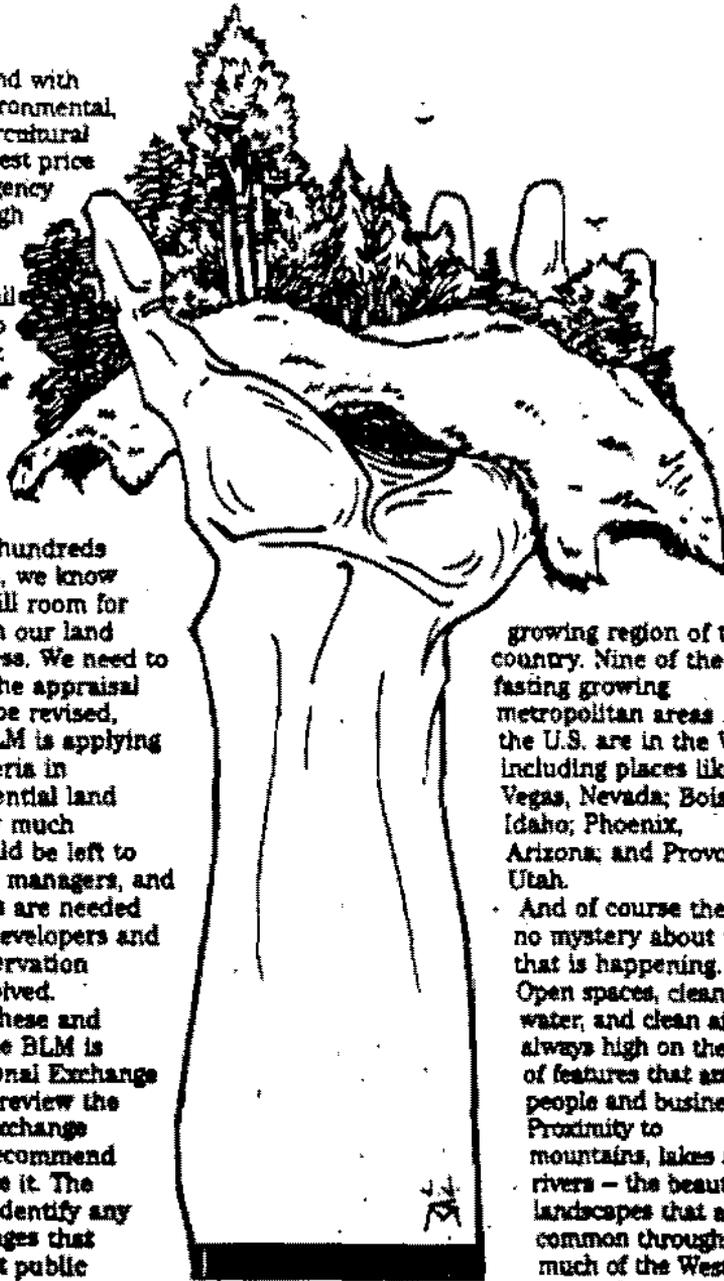
In every exchange, the BLM's objective

is to acquire land with significant environmental, recreational, or cultural values for the best price possible. The agency does that through professional appraisals and by listening to all the citizens who have an interest in any particular exchange.

Despite successes such as those I have described and hundreds more like them, we know that there is still room for improvement in our land exchange process. We need to consider how the appraisal process might be revised, whether the BLM is applying consistent criteria in identifying potential land exchanges, how much discretion should be left to local BLM land managers, and what guidelines are needed when private developers and nonprofit conservation groups are involved.

To address these and other issues, the BLM is forming a National Exchange Team that will review the agency's land-exchange program and recommend ways to improve it. The team will also identify any pending exchanges that raise significant public policy concerns. By strengthening its land-exchange policies and procedures, the BLM can continue to acquire lands with high public values while protecting the interests of American taxpayers. Indeed, because of the changes that are occurring in the West, land exchanges are becoming more essential than ever.

New data released recently by the Census Bureau for the period 1990 through 1996 demonstrate how fast the West is changing. It is the fastest



growing region of the country. Nine of the ten fastest growing metropolitan areas in the U.S. are in the West, including places like Las Vegas, Nevada; Boise, Idaho; Phoenix, Arizona; and Provo, Utah.

And of course there is no mystery about why that is happening. Open spaces, clean water, and clean air are always high on the list of features that attract people and businesses. Proximity to mountains, lakes and rivers — the beautiful landscapes that are so common throughout much of the West and particularly the public lands — is also a key element in the

choices people are making about where and how they will live.

Land exchanges are one of the tools with which we address that obvious paradox: how to preserve the values that people find so appealing and yet accommodate the need for growth and development of Western communities.

(Pat Shea is the director of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.)

Artwork by J.J. Brundage. Copyright © 1998, J.J. Brundage. Distributed by Lee Sargent Fine Studios.

including each other. Under the legislation, diverse parties would no longer have to work together toward consensus. Rather, the bill would encourage the RACs to disintegrate into special interest groups and discord would replace harmony.

Another serious concern with this legislation is the many ways it would impede the proper management of livestock grazing. Among our concerns is that the bill attaches a property right to grazing permits and leases. These lands belong to all of the American people -- they are not, must not, be the privileged domain of a few. As soon as we cross that line and imply a property right we have destroyed the multiple-use principle and have endangered all other uses of these lands.

Likewise, language in the bill on how, when and who may monitor grazing allotments (to insure that the lands are being properly cared for) are very troubling. They will decrease our flexibility, add rigid new requirements and ultimately land us in Court where precious dollars get spent on lawyers, not the land.

The RACs are a success -- we must continue to let them do their work of finding consensus among all users of our public lands, using people on the ground from the state which are affected.

- DOI -



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Office of the Secretary
For Immediate Release: July 16, 1997

Contact: John Wright
202/208-6416

The Subpoena of Documents on BLM Mining Bond Rule Unnecessary *Rule Switching Financial Burden for Environmental Cleanup from Taxpayers to Mining Companies is Focus of Committee on Resources Action*

John Leshy, Solicitor for the Interior Department issued the following statement in response to the Committee on Resources subpoena for documents relating to the Bureau of Land Management's bonding rule for hardrock mining operations.

"Today's action by the Committee on Resources to authorize the subpoena of documents which the Department has determined as privileged is unnecessary and inappropriate. The mining industry has filed a lawsuit against the Interior Department in federal district court that seeks to stop implementation of the final rule. We have provided the Committee with reams of documents not covered under attorney client privilege, and have offered the Committee unlimited opportunity to inspect the 10 remaining privileged documents, but the Majority Committee members and staff have failed to do so.

"We are prepared to provide these documents without a subpoena, if we can get assurance that they will not be funneled to the mining industry which has sued the Department. This Committee has a recent history of releasing confidential documents into the public domain and we need to make sure that doesn't happen again.

"This rule, initiated during the Reagan/Bush Administrations, relieves taxpayers from the financial burden of cleaning up health, safety and environmental hazards from hardrock mines like acid mine damage and drinking water contamination. It places the costs on the shoulders of the mining companies, where it belongs.

"We believe the Committee should reconsider its actions and its attempts to join as partners with those in the hardrock mining industry who seek to impose their costs on the taxpayers."



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 28, 1997

Stephanie Hanna (O) 202/208-6416

SECRETARY BABBITT ASKS CONGRESS TO TRANSFER PARCELS OF FEDERAL LAND TO SEVERAL CALIFORNIA TRIBES

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt today transmitted proposed Congressional legislation to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives that would allow several small parcels of Bureau of Land Management land to be transferred to California tribes throughout the State.

"The draft bill I submitted fulfils a promise made by the Clinton Administration to several California tribes with an inadequate land base that we would try to help them," Babbitt said. "This land will be used to build housing or for non-gaming businesses that will benefit their economies and those of surrounding communities."

The land being proposed for transfer has been the subject of broad local consultation and has received formal support from governing bodies of adjacent non-Indian communities. The land under consideration does not include habitat for threatened or endangered species. No disturbance of the land's sub-surface would be authorized in the draft bill.

If Congress passes legislation and the President signs it into law, the following tribes would receive land taken in trust for future benefit: 561.69 acres to the Pit River Tribe; 40 acres to the Bridgeport Indian Colony; 240 acres to the Utu Utu Gwaitu Paiute Tribe (Benton Paiute reservation); 200.06 acres to the Fort Independence Community of Paiute Indians; 5.03 acres to the Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians; 40 acres to the Morongo Band of Mission Indians; 59.20 acres to the Pala Band of Mission Indians; 1,360 acres to the Cuyapaipe Band of Mission Indians; 1000.78 acres to the Manzanita Band of Mission Indians; and 299.04 acres to the Fort Bidwell Community of Paiute Indians.

All of the parcels are adjacent to existing reservations, and will be added to the reservation lands if the draft bill is enacted. All valid existing rights will be preserved, and any grazing privileges will be maintained for two years from the date of enactment. No appropriation of funds will be necessary to accomplish the transfer, and each parcel has been subject to environmental analysis. Further environmental analysis would be required by the Bureau of Indian Affairs before any development activities could take place.

"This legislation could provide great relief and economic benefit to tribes that were never given an adequate reservation area," Babbitt said. "This is a win for the tribes and a win for nearby communities who can expect more economic opportunities as a result of these transfers. I urge Congress to move quickly to support and sponsor this draft bill."

-DOI-



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Office of the Secretary
For Release: March 11, 1997

Contact: John Wright
202/208-6416

Secretary Babbitt Directs BLM to Halt Action, Go Back to the Drawing Board With Law Enforcement Regulations

This action does not diminish the legal authority of BLM law enforcement officers on public lands

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt announced today that he has directed the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to halt further actions on a proposal to consolidate law enforcement regulations.

Babbitt's decision announced today comes on the heels of the second 30-day extended comment period, which expired March 7, 1997. The process was first initiated November 7, 1996, when BLM published a notification in the Federal Register announcing the proposal to consolidate existing regulations that inform the public regarding lawful conduct on public lands.

"My decision to stop further action on this proposal is based on the confusion and misinformation about how these regulations would affect BLM's law enforcement responsibilities under existing law, as demonstrated by the many public comments received," said Babbitt.

"This action does not diminish the legal authority of BLM law enforcement officers on public land. But it is very clear that we have not done a good job of clarifying regulations and communicating BLM's legal authority under existing federal statutes to protect health, safety and environmental resources on America's public lands.

"I've been contacted personally by Idaho Governor Phil Batt and several members of Congress, who have expressed the concerns of many," Babbitt said.

The rule proposed by BLM attempted to revise, consolidate and rewrite most of its law enforcement regulations, in an effort to help the public understand the actions BLM law enforcement officers may take to implement its existing law enforcement authority.

"We hear the users of the public lands and we will do all we can to help them understand the legal authority of BLM under existing federal statutes," said Sylvia Baca, acting director of the Bureau of Land Management. "BLM will go back to the drawing board, and any future attempt to improve existing regulations and make them more understandable by public lands users will include better public education efforts to explain the BLM law enforcement program."

MEMO

March 12, 1996

TO: Editors
FROM: Michael Gauldin, director of communications
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Public Rangelands Management Act that stalled from lack of support last fall is expected to be introduced again next week. Secretary Babbitt, as you know, has opposed this legislation because it would:

- compromise environmental protection,
- diminish public involvement in public land management,
- jeopardize multiple use management of public lands, and
- increase red tape and administrative burdens.

The new version of the bill has added window-dressing, but changes nothing in regard to these very serious issues.

For your information, I have attached a side-by-side comparison of current policies and proposed changes. Also attached is a letter signed by a very large number of citizen groups stating their position on these radical changes in grazing policy.

If my office can provide any further information, please call (202) 208 6416.

ISSUE	Public Rangeland Management Act	BLM's regulations
<p>Environmental protection</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Exempts on the ground grazing management from National Environmental Policy Act direction that the effects of federal actions on human health and the environment be assessed in a public forum (including state and local governments and the concerned public) (Sec. 106(d)).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sweeping water rights language could result in exclusion of wildlife from scarce water supplies on public lands. Appears to bar managers from asserting any control over transfer of water uses from federal land to private land (Sec. 124).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Limits managers ability to develop environmentally beneficial terms and conditions of a grazing permit or lease in order to protect site specific natural resources (such wildlife habitat and riparian areas (Sec. 134(b)).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Prevents ranchers from using restoration techniques such as conservation use (Sec. 141).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Provision is unclear, but PRMA and the grazing management changes therein, could apply to those parks and refuges where grazing is not expressly "prohibited by statute (Sec. 102(b))." Under current policy, grazing must meet strict compatibility requirements to occur in parks or refuges.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Permittees do not have to "control" subleased livestock, thus land managers cannot ensure subleased livestock meet the terms and conditions of a permit (Sec 104(21)).</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Management decisions continue to be made via a tiered decision-making process that includes the National Environmental Policy Act.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> To the extent allowed by state law, the Secretary of the Interior shall seek new water rights on public lands for livestock grazing in the name of the United States.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Terms and conditions provide basic livestock management direction while allowing managers and permittees the flexibility to tailor requirements in order to achieve multiple use objectives.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ranchers may seek to rest an allotment for up to ten years for conservation purposes.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Purposes and uses of National Parks and Refuges are not brought into question.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any livestock run on the public lands must be owned or controlled by the permittee.</p>

ISSUE	Public Rangeland Management Act	BLM's regulations
Public involvement	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Only allows limited public participation in grazing management after a decision is proposed (Secs. 121, 161, 162, 165). Only permittees, states having lands within the allotment, advisory councils, and adjacent landowners may participate in development of grazing management decisions.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Exempts on the ground livestock management from the public involvement requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (Sec. 106(d)).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Even if a party is socially or economically affected, only applicants, permittees and lessees may protest proposed decisions — virtually assuring costly appeals and litigation (Sec. 162).</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Any interested citizen, group, or organization may request "interested public" status and participate in rangeland planning and decision-making.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fully comply with the National Environmental Policy Act.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Any member of the interested public may protest a proposed decision to the responsible official.</p>

ISSUE	Public Rangeland Management Act	BLM's regulations
Multiple use	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Creates hundreds of new single use grazing advisory councils; mandates that 50% of the membership be comprised of grazing permittees. No other public land user group has mandated advisory groups (Sec. 172).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Broadly exempts grazing management from oversight, protest, analysis, disclosure, and public involvement requirements that apply to other public land users (Sec. 106, 121, 162-165).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Use of stock ponds or wells authorized by a range improvement to be controlled by a permittee or lessee; could lead to the exclusion of wildlife, wild horses, and burros from water (Sec. 122(b)(5)).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Allows ranchers to charge others to graze livestock on lands permitted to them often significantly more than they pay (without any return to the public).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Only provides for range improvement cooperative agreements between BLM and permittees. Groups such as Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, and other hunting groups are not provided for (Sec. 122(a)).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Rancher-controlled grazing advisory councils to advise BLM on grazing management, allotment decisions, the creation of objectives and expenditure of range improvement funds (Sec. 172).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Grazing advisory councils override the "balanced representation" requirements of other federal laws resulting in skewed representation of grazing permittees (Sec. 172).</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Established local citizen Resource Advisory Councils, equally comprised of commodity groups, conservation interests, and the general public, to advise BLM on land management and planning.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Grazing protests and appeals are governed by the same provisions that apply to other public land uses.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Title to future permanent range improvements held by the U.S. Permittees compensated for their interest if land is put to other purpose or if preference is transferred.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 25% of the difference between federal grazing fee and average of the private fee is assessed for authorized pasturing agreements.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> BLM may enter into a range improvement cooperative agreement with permittees/lessees and any public or private organization in order to meet objectives.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Diverse and balanced Resource Advisory Councils provide BLM advice on a wide array of issues.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Resource Advisory Councils are chartered under the balanced representation requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act.</p>

ISSUE	Public Rangeland Management Act	BLM's regulations
Red tape	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Detailed, data intensive land use plans (which generally cover 2-5 million acre areas) would need to be developed to ensure that on-the-ground management decisions are technically supportable (Sec. 106(d)).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Would require lengthy, time consuming amendments to land use plans before even minor adjustments to grazing use could be made (Sec. 111(a)(2)).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Creation and management of hundreds of new congressionally-required grazing advisory councils would cost over \$5 million per year (Sec. 172).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> May preclude imposition of terms and conditions on a permit unless developed through Allotment Management Plans (Sec. 134(a)). Only 20% of BLM's allotments have such plans today. In order to place terms and conditions on livestock grazing of public lands, BLM would need to develop plans for the other 80%.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Standards for healthy rangelands are incorporated into land use plans and applied on-the-ground through the use of the terms and conditions of a permit or lease. Grazing management is adjusted through terms and conditions.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Adjustments to grazing use are made through the grazing permit.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Twenty-four Resource Advisory Councils may form "subgroups" to address specific issues as the need arises.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Allotment Management Plans are developed as funding allows and on a-priority basis.</p>

SAVE OUR PUBLIC LANDS OPPOSE S. 1459!

March 5, 1996

Re: Public Rangelands Management Act (S. 1459)
February 8, 1996 review draft version

Dear Senator:

The undersigned organizations represent the diverse interests of millions of citizens who currently participate in the multiple use of America's public lands (National Forests, National Grasslands, and BLM-managed public lands). On their behalf, we strongly urge you to oppose S. 1459, the Public Rangelands Management Act, including the February 8, 1996 version now being circulated by Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM). This latest version of the bill, like previous versions, is an attack on balanced, multiple use management of our public lands, resource protection, and public participation. We have the following serious reservations about this draft:

- * The draft's public participation opportunities are a sham. America's public lands and the resources they contain belong equally to all citizens. The February 8 version of the bill allows members of the public to receive notice of, and to comment informally on, specified range management decisions — but that is all they can do. The new draft allows members of the public no recourse in the case of either final action or inaction by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or Forest Service officials. Only livestock grazers may protest or challenge agency decisions under this draft.

- * The draft would give livestock producers new "rights" that would make grazing the dominant use of public lands. Currently, public lands are managed for a variety of multiple uses, including grazing, mining, timber production, wildlife habitat, and other recreational and commercial activities. This draft would sacrifice those multiple uses by, for example, giving livestock permittees brand-new "rights" that will severely limit the ability of professional resource managers to adjust livestock grazing to meet the needs of other uses now and in the future. Current levels of livestock would be locked-in as a "right," rather than a privilege, regardless of environmental impacts, and permittees would get title to permanent range improvements as well as private water rights on the public's lands.

- * The new draft would result in widespread environmental and ecological damage to public lands. The current version would exempt all on-the-ground grazing activities, actions and decisions from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As a result, wildlife populations, including sport fish, game animals, and threatened and endangered species, and their habitats would be jeopardized. Other environmental impacts that would occur include increased soil erosion, declining water quality, and long-term deterioration of overall range quality.

Oppose S. 1459!

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* The new draft would continue the burden on taxpayers. This draft would cost American taxpayers millions of dollars in subsidies and lost revenues. It would create dozens of new grazing-dominated Advisory Councils and impose huge new paperwork burdens on the agencies, all at great cost. At the same time, the bill would provide a multi-million dollar subsidy to ranchers by adopting a fee formula that would charge fees far below those charged on state or private lands. Ultimately, this draft amounts to little more than another massive federal subsidy for the western livestock industry.

If enacted, the latest version of S. 1459 would set public range management and public range conditions back decades. Do not allow the Public Rangelands Management Act to turn America's public lands over to the grazing industry. Support responsible land management, prudent resource conservation, and continued multiple use of these national lands. Please oppose S. 1459, including the February 8 version.

Sincerely,

American Bass Association
Defenders of Wildlife
Public Lands Foundation
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
The Wilderness Society
Fly Fishers for Conservation
Grand Canyon Trust
Western Ancient Forest Campaign
Trout Unlimited
National Parks and Conservation Association
National Wildlife Refuge Association
Republicans for Environmental Protection
Humane Society of the United States
The Fund For Animals Inc.
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
American Rivers
The Wildlife Society
Isaak Walton League of America
Sierra Club
Friends of the Earth
U.S. Public Interest Research Group
Rivers Network
Pacific Rivers
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
American Fisheries Society
American Sport Fishing Association
American Ornithologists' Union
American Bird Conservancy

Oppose S. 1459!

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Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
The Xerces Society
American Land Conservancy
Committee for Rational Predator Management
Great Bear Foundation
Greater Yellowstone Coalition
North American Bear Society
Ornithological Council
Forest Guardians
Moriah Defense Fund
Animal Defense Council
Wilderness Study Group
Wildlife Damage Review
Headwaters
The Friends of the Nescoscope
Spring Mountains Association
Western Endangered Species Alliance
Northwest Ecosystem Alliance
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
Federation of Fly Fishers, Southwest Council
Southwest Center for Biological Diversity
Western Ancient Forest Campaign
Predator Project
Ozark Riverkeepers Network
Save Our Streams Council
BLM Lands Foundation
Voices for Animals
Help Abolish Leghold Traps
Redwings Horse Sanctuary
Citizens League for Environmental Action and Recovery, Inc.
Committee of Wilderness Supporters
The Principia Environmental Group
Friends Aware of Wildlife Needs
Endangered Habitats League
Land and Water Fund of the Rocky's
Wyoming Wildlife Federation
Tech Environmental Forum, Georgia Tech, Atlanta GA
Wildlife Society, North Dakota Chapter
Sierra Club, Dacotah Chapter, ND
Cass County Wildlife Club, ND
Yakima Valley Audubon Society, WA
Wisconsin Audubon Council
Sierra Club, New Jersey
Birmingham Audubon Society, AL
Environmental Biologists, IL

Oppose S. 1459!

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Kansas Audubon Council
Sierra Club, Sawtooth Group, ID
Clearwater Biodiversity Project, ID
Idaho Watersheds Projects
Idaho Conservation League
Swan View Coalition, MT
Oregon Natural Resources Council Action
Oregon Natural Desert Association
Trout Unlimited, Northwest Office, OR
Oregon Trout
Portland Audubon Society, OR
Siskiyou Audubon, Grants Pass OR
Rogue Valley Audubon, Medford OR
Sycamore Audubon Society, W. Lafayette IN
Soil and Water Conservation Society, The Grand Valley Chapter, MI
Sierra Club of Ft. Worth, TX
Texas Christian University Environmental Awareness Group
Many Rivers Group Sierra Club, TX
UNC-Chapel Hill Student Environmental Action Coalition, NC
Coalition for Economic Justice, NC
Orleans Audubon Society, LA
Baton Rouge Audubon Society, LA
Nevada Outdoor Recreation Association
Sierra Club, Toiyabe Chapter, NV
Great Basin Group of the Sierra Club, NV
Friends of Nevada Wilderness
Public Resource Associates, NV
America Wildlands, NV
Wild Horse Organized Assistance, Inc., NV
The Sagebrush Coalition, NV
Nevada Wildlife Federation, Inc.
Kentucky Citizens Accountability Project
Kentucky Heartwood
California Mule Deer Association
Southwest Wildlands Education Institute
Sierra Nevada Alliance, CA
Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center, CA
Range Watch, CA
Golden Trout Fund, CA
High Sierra Hikers Association, CA
Desert Fishes Council, CA
Sequoia Forest Alliance, CA
Klamath Forest Alliance, CA
Tule River Conservancy, CA
Kern Ridgecrest Audubon Society, CA

Tulare County Audubon Society, CA
California Bowmen Hunters and State Archery Association
Fresno County Quail Unlimited, CA
Fresno County Sportsmen's Club, CA
High Sierra Flyfishers Shop, CA
Organized Sportsmen of Lassen County, CA
Mono County Wildlife Council, CA
Sportsmen's Council of Central California
Sierra Club, Bay Chapter, Ancient Forest Subcommittee, CA
Fresno Fly Fishers for Conservation, Inc., CA
Northern California Council of the Federation of Fly Fishers
California Sport Fishing Protection Alliance
Friends of the Inyo, CA
California Trout, Inc.
Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society, CA
California Wilderness Coalition
California Native Plant Society
Maricopa Audubon Society, AZ
Arizona Bear Coalition
Arizona Lobby for Animals
Sky Island Alliance, AZ
Sierra Club, Rincon Group, AZ
Arizona League of Conservation Voters
Tucson Audubon Society, AZ
T & E, Inc., NM
Amigos Bravos, NM
Gila Warch, NM
Albuquerque Wild Turkey Federation, NM
Central New Mexico Audubon Society
Mesilla Valley Audubon Society, NM
Sangre de Cristo Animal Protection, Inc., NM
Sinapu, CO
Boulder-White Clouds Council, CO
Colorado Environmental Coalition
Preservation Council, UT
Superior Wilderness Action Network, University of WI

Bruce Babbitt
Secretary of the Interior

Remarks to:
The Society of Range Management
Colorado Springs
February 14, 1994

I am pleased to join with the Society for Range Management to continue the discussion of grazing reform on public lands. As you know, the initial Rangeland Reform concepts publicized by the Department last August have been subjected to extensive debate and discussion both within the Congress and in meetings held throughout the West. As a result of the many suggestions put forth in that process, the Department has made substantial modifications in the original proposals, and is now preparing draft regulations for issuance in early March.

Historical Context

At the outset, before turning to regulatory changes, I would like to express some personal perspectives on the issue of rangeland reform. I was raised in a ranching family in Northern Arizona. As a child, I spent many Sunday afternoons out on the range with my Grandfather, then in his eighties, listening to him worry about the condition of the cattle, pulling up loco weed, and scanning the skies for the first sign of summer rains. Like many ranchers I know, he was sparing with words, but he would occasionally reminisce about the old days. He arrived in the empty expanses of Arizona in the early spring of 1886, filed on a homestead in Clark's Valley and devoted his life to building a great ranch, always reinvesting his money to improve the herd and acquire land, living so simply that even as a widower in his eighties, he lived alone in a tiny walk up apartment cluttered with saddles and Navajo blankets.

I learned on those Sunday afternoons how he had developed a gravity system to bring water more than 20 miles from Cedar Ranch to the SP pasture and beyond to the winter headquarters at Spiderweb. His efforts to fence pastures and to develop water made it possible to spread cattle more evenly across the range. He was proud that his range was in much better condition than in the old days of the open range, and he always expressed his hope that the CO Bar would stay in our family for generations to come.

Last year I sold out my share of that ranch in order to become Secretary of the Interior. But my brothers and cousins still own and manage the CO Bar, and they are working together to protect and improve the land for the next generation of ranchers.

It is for all these reasons that I have expended an extraordinary amount of time over the past year, seeking to find common ground and new ways of bringing westerners together to find a new equilibrium in the form of a strong livestock industry, flourishing within vigorous healthy landscape ecosystems. I want to help preserve the range for future generations of ranchers.

In recent years, the antagonisms between ranchers and environmental advocates have escalated sharply, increasingly dividing the West against itself. And this trend bodes ill for all of us, for in the absence of western consensus, the making of Federal rangeland policy will inevitably drift outward to other regions and other groups.

Therefore, I believe that one of the core issues of rangeland reform is the process by which we make decisions. We must make a greater effort to involve the public and interest groups here in the West in decision making and consensus building. And that in turn requires some discussion of how we have been making decisions in the sixty years since passage of the Taylor Grazing Act.

The Taylor Grazing Act, enacted in 1934, explicitly recognized the importance of grazing in the local economies of the West. Congress directed the Secretary of the Interior to work closely with western livestock groups. In response, Secretary Ickes and Farrington Carpenter, the Coloradan who became the first head of the old Grazing Service, established Grazing Advisory Committees, elected by stockmen themselves, to establish allotments and to participate in the writing of regulations.

In the context of those times, the Grazing Advisory Boards were a pretty fair approximation of rangeland democracy. Except for antelope hunters and an occasional geologist looking for oil, no one had any interest in all that unwanted leftover land. However, in the years after World War II, new residents, with different interests and concerns, began settling in the West, and this "closed shop" model of range management by permittees and the BLM came under increasing scrutiny and criticism. Spurred by national environmental groups, Congress in 1974 passed the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) which terminated the Grazing Advisory Boards and established a more broadly representative institution, the District Advisory Council, to be appointed by the Secretary "from among persons who are representative of the various major citizen's interests concerning the problems relating to land use planning or the management of the public lands located within the area..."

In 1985, however, the Department of the Interior took a step back and resurrected the Grazing Advisory Boards that had been abolished by the Congress in the FLPMA legislation. So the Grazing Advisory Boards are still with us. But I am advised by the Solicitor that these boards are probably functioning without legal sanction for a couple of reasons. First, at least one Court has ruled that the Secretary cannot flout the will of Congress by turning around and recreating committees that were terminated by Congressional action. Second, and more importantly, these closed shop "rancher only" committees are functioning in clear violation of the Federal Advisory Committee Act which requires that all advisory committees have broad public membership. Moreover, in some areas the Grazing Advisory Boards have operated in open defiance of the spirit of Federal law - for example, in one state the committees have used the state share of federal range improvement funds to hand out cash grants to stockmen and to pay lawyers to file lawsuits against regulatory agencies.

The time is at hand, then, to honor the will of the people as reflected in FLPMA and to abolish the Grazing Advisory Boards.

Meanwhile, outside these old committee structures, an entirely new form of rangeland policy making is taking root in many parts of the West. These new groups bring together ranchers, environmentalists and interested citizens to meet over coffee at the kitchen table and out on the range to listen to each other, to develop mutual confidence and search for consensus in solving public land issues. These groups are as spontaneous as a pick-up basketball game, and they are as diverse as the western landscape in which they are taking root. In eastern Oregon they call themselves the Trout Creek Mountain working group, in Colorado, the Gunnison Group and the Owl Mountain CRM, in Wyoming the Sun Ranch CRM. There is a similar group at work in my hometown involving members of my own family. These groups are the true successors to the old Taylor Grazing Act committee of the 30's, for they are reinventing the old idea of local participation to fit the new realities of the American West.

Colorado Roundtable

Last December, Governor Romer of Colorado, brought a group of ranchers, environmentalists and citizens together around his conference table to hear from these local groups and to see if there are lessons that could be incorporated into Rangeland Reform. I attended an early session of the Governor's working group and was so encouraged that I agreed to return to Colorado for weekly meetings stretching across December and January.

The participants, about sixteen in all, included such diverse representatives as Reeves Brown, Executive Director of the Colorado Cattlemen's Association, Ken Spann, Chairman of the Public Lands Committee of the National Cattlemen's Association, Maggie Fox from the Sierra Club and Tom Dougherty from the National Wildlife Federation. As the discussion proceeded, I noticed how the participants gradually began to listen to each other, rather than misstate opposing positions. I sensed a gradual increase in confidence levels and a shift, under the good natured but firm prodding from Governor Romer, toward the question "how can we accommodate the needs of not one, but all, sides?" I knew that the process was really working when we took up the so called five year permit proposal. The ranchers pointed out that reducing the permit from the present term of 10 years would make it much harder to get bank financing and they illustrated their point with specific examples. Environmentalists agreed that such was not their intent: their real concern was proper enforcement of permit conditions, to which the ranchers responded, "then let's talk about enforcement measures rather than sidestepping that issue by arguing about permit tenure." We moved on to a productive discussion, and all participants eventually agreed that permit tenure be retained at 10 years. That is a recommendation that I will follow.

As the weeks went by, I began to realize that the Romer working group was itself an example of the new, participatory, consensus building style that is arising throughout the West. The draft regulations, which the Department is about to issue will incorporate the governance ideas in the Colorado report. I gratefully acknowledge the extensive investment of time,

resources and leadership by Governor Romer in producing the Colorado Report. Senator Campbell's attendance and assistance was also instrumental.

I believe that the time is now at hand for the Bureau of Land Management to listen carefully to the changes taking place out on the land in this new West and to make fundamental changes, casting off the closed shop practices of the past and moving to embrace a more open, diverse and public style of rangeland policy formulation.

Multiple Resource Advisory Councils

The beginning point for a new rangeland advisory structure is the District Advisory Committee presently required by FLPMA. The Federal Land Policy Management Act requires that members of the District Advisory Council be appointed "from among persons who are representative of the various major citizen's interests concerning the problems relating to land use planning or the management of the public lands located within the areas." This somewhat general mandate has not been effectively translated into the truly diverse and effective representation that Congress intended. In many Districts the Councils have been weighted toward commodity producers at the expense of broader public participation. In all cases, there has not been any attempt to involve Governors, interest groups and the public in identifying and nominating outstanding men and women for the councils memberships.

Therefore, the first objective of the new governance provision in the draft regulations will be to assure balanced representation of all the diverse groups and interests that have a legitimate stake in the administration of public lands. The regulations, will set up three categories of representation as follows:

*One third of the membership of the Resource Advisory Council will be representatives of commodity producing industries within the district, including grazing, mining and timber.

*One third of the membership will be representatives of bona fide environmental, conservation and sportsmen's groups.

*One third of the membership will be selected from public land users, state and local officials and members of the public who are not primarily advocates for commodity users or environmental groups. This category could include, for example, a representative from the state game and fish agency, a local elected official, a range management specialist and a member representing recreational users of public lands.

The draft regulations will invite nominations for Council membership from all interested individuals or organizations and will require the Secretary to consult directly with the Governor of the state to review proposed appointments.

(5)

These Councils will be called Multiple Resource Advisory Councils. They will be encouraged to operate by consensus to the maximum extent feasible. These Advisory Councils will be charged with the full advisory function set out in FLPMA to "furnish advice to the Secretary with respect to the land use planning, classification, retention, management and disposal of public lands within the area..." The Council will also be charged to advise the Secretary with respect to such rangeland issues as the preparation of allotment management plans and the allocation of range improvement funds.

We want to empower the Councils to be more than mere advice providers. The Councils will have the authority under our regulation to petition directly to the Secretary if they believe their advice is not being followed. The Secretary must respond within 30 days.

Rangeland Resource Teams and Technical Review Teams

In the course of meetings held in Colorado under the leadership of Governor Romer, the working group also recommended that the regulations incorporate an option for Rangeland Resource Teams, modeled on the experience of the new working groups, to encourage good stewardship, to work toward collaborative solutions and to provide information and recommendations to the Resource Advisory Councils.

The draft regulations will incorporate this recommendation by allowing the establishment of the Rangeland Resource Teams, appointed by Resource Advisory Councils, which would have five members - two permittees, one environmental representative, one member representing wildlife and recreation interests and one at large community representative. These Teams may be created at the BLM Area management level, or operate over a smaller area if desired.

The Rangeland Resource Team is intended to bring local interests together, in a consensus building mode, to develop cooperative approaches to solving specific on-the-ground range issues. The Rangeland Resource Teams will be empowered to provide recommendations to the Multiple Resource Advisory Councils for their consideration. The regulations will also authorize the Multiple Resource Advisory Councils to create, on an ad hoc basis, Technical Review Teams to investigate and develop proposed solutions to specific resource issues which may arise in the local area.

The creation of Rangeland Resource Teams, and the use of Technical Review Teams is a new departure in the continuing development of range regulation. At the outset, I anticipate that Rangeland Resource Teams will be the exception rather than the norm, and that it will be necessary to make adjustments as these concepts take hold in the western landscape. Some of these groups will probably fail. But I am certain that many will succeed and I am equally certain that rangeland management cannot succeed in the long run unless it is backed by increased communication and consensus building among all the stakeholders, especially those who live in the West.

Conclusion

With the creation of these advisory and participation structures, the Department acknowledges that given the tremendous diversity of climate, precipitation, soils, and plant communities within the vast expanses of the Intermountain West, range management and regulation must be moved closer to the land. Gifford Pinchot, a founder of modern range management, put it this way back at the turn of the century: "Wise administration of grazing...is impossible under general rules based upon theoretical considerations. Local rules must be framed to meet local conditions and they must be modified from time to time as local needs may require."

Sixty years ago, or even twenty years ago, these concepts, which will guide a new chapter of rangeland reform, might not have worked. Back then the West depended almost exclusively on commodity production. Flagstaff, where I grew up was a town where life centered around shift changes at the sawmills and spring roundup and fall shipping. There weren't any environmental advocates, at least as that term is commonly used today. In those days, it was perhaps inevitable that national sportsmen, conservation and environmental groups looked exclusively to Washington to advocate for their interests.

Today, however, the West is a different place. Flagstaff is now a community where ranchers and loggers and miners mingle with river guides and scientists who work for hi-tech manufacturers. Similar changes are occurring all over the West. You no longer have to go to Washington or New York to find skillful environmental advocates; you can find them right next door.

My wager, which will be reflected in the draft regulations, is that in the New West the stakeholders, in all their diversity, can come together and forge a new consensus for public land management. For we are neighbors, we grew up and went to school together, shared outdoor experiences that shaped our lives, and we all know that the West is a better place for having both a strong livestock industry and a healthy environment.