National Center for Conservation Science & Policy

House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Representative:

As scientists representing 14 states with extensive experience in field research, particularly involving the National Landscape Conservation System, we are writing to urge you to support the National Landscape Conservation System Act (HR 2016). The bill will provide congressional recognition for the Bureau of Land Management's National Landscape Conservation System and enduring protection for the important scientific and conservation values found within the Conservation System's lands. The System was administratively designated in 2000 to *"conserve, protect, and restore these nationally significant landscapes that have outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations."*

A permanent, congressionally designated system will provide the ongoing management certainty necessary to undertake long-term scientific research projects and protect the many important cultural, archeological, social, paleontological, geological and biological resources found in the System's 26 million acres of National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Scenic and Historic Trails, wilderness, and wilderness study areas.

Important recourses contained within the system include:

• **Cultural**: Extensive evidence of 13,000 years of human history can be found on BLM-administered lands. Scientific examination and study of these resources is providing insight into how people, ranging from prehistoric Native Americans to 19th and 20th century pioneers, lived on and with the land. Archaeologists estimate there are likely to be 4.5 million cultural sites on all BLM-administered lands.

• **Paleontological**: Fossils found on BLM-administered lands provide important insight into the evolution of plant and animal communities, the systematic relationship between species, and the response of ecosystems to global changes in their environment. The understandings gained from study of these paleontological resources can help us predict impacts and responses likely to occur in our future and that of our grandchildren in the face of current global climate changes.

• **Biological**: Numerous unique plant and animal species are found on BLM administered lands, including 228 plant and animal species listed as threatened or endangered and more than 1,500 additional "sensitive" species that are at some risk due to a reduction in the number of individuals or a naturally limited distribution. In addition, BLM administers 144,000 miles of streamside riparian

areas and 13 million acres of wetlands – providing water resources that hold an especially critical place in the ecological web of life, supporting hundreds of other species such as pronghorn, mule deer, bighorn sheep, elk, and migratory birds.

Unlike National Parks and Wildlife Refuges, the Conservation System currently has no Congressional recognition. The fact that each unit in the System stands alone leaves each unit, and the System as a whole, vulnerable to being dissolved and mismanaged. A stamp of approval by Congress would help ensure that the Conservation System is recognized as a single, unified system within the BLM, ensuring consistent management in keeping with the System's conservation mission and each area's establishing legislation or proclamations. This would provide the long-term management stability necessary to conduct ecological studies, provide protection to important fish and wildlife habitats, and result in greater protection of cultural resources.

The National Landscape Conservation System Act will provide critical and long overdue congressional recognition for the System. Importantly, this legislation will establish a coherent, much-needed system-wide identity. Permanency undoubtedly will trigger the maturation of a national perspective for the Conservation System that is greater than the BLM districts separately charged with management of individual units. From a scientific perspective, a system-wide viewpoint likely will induce researchers to examine broad issues (e.g., climate change, invasive species) and encourage managers to share and apply the results of these scientific findings on an agency-wide basis – as well as allow researchers and managers to continue to benefit from the pursuit of answers to unit-specific research questions.

The National Landscape Conservation System contains resources of national conservation and scientific importance. Securing permanent recognition of the Conservation System is critical. With permanent recognition, we will have an opportunity to enjoy and learn the most we can from these natural and cultural treasures.

Sincerely,

Kenneth J. Bagstad M.S. (Ph.D. Candidate)
University of Vermont
Burlington, VT

Brian Barr M.S.
Habitat Restoration Project Manager
National Center for Conservation Science and Policy
Ashland, OR

Steven W. Burr Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Recreation Resources Management
Director Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism
Utah State University
Logan, UT

National Center for Conservation Science & Policy

Tom J. Cade Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus of Zoology
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York

Gib Chase
US Fish &Wildlife Service (Retired)
Northboro, MA

Jim Cummings M.A.
Executive Director
Acoustic Ecology Institute
Santa Fe, New Mexico

James E. Deacon Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor Emeritus
University of Nevada Las Vegas
Las Vegas, NV

Dominick DellaSala Ph.D.
Executive Director of Conservation
Science & Policy Programs
National Center for Conservation
Science and Policy
Ashland, OR

Tom Fleischner Ph.D.
Prescott College
Prescott, AZ

Robert R. Fuerstenberg
Senior Ecologist
Seattle, WA

Richard Hutto Ph.D.
Director Avian Science Center
Division of Biological Sciences
University of Montana
Missoula, MT

Aaron Johnston, M.S. (Ph.D. Candidate)
College of Forest Resources
University of Washington
Seattle, WA

William D. Lipe Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus, Anthropology
Washington State University
Pullman, WA

John M. Marzluff Ph.D.
Denman Professor of Sustainable
Resource Sciences
Professor of Wildlife Science
University of Washington
Seattle, WA

Richard S. Nauman M.S.
Conservation Scientist
National Center for Conservation
Science and Policy
Ashland, OR

Reed Noss Ph.D.
President, North American Section
Society for Conservation Biology
Department of Biology
University of Central Florida
Orlando, FL

Dennis Odion Ph.D.
University of California
Santa Barbara, CA

Gordon H. Orians Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus of Biology
University of Washington
Seattle, WA

National Center for Conservation Science & Policy

Michael S. Parker Ph.D.
Professor of Biology
Southern Oregon University
Ashland, OR

Dave Perry Ph.D.
Professor (emeritus) of Ecosystem Studies and Ecosystem Management
Department of Forest Science
Oregon State University
Corvallis, OR

Marcus Ricci M.S.
Maumee, OH

Garry Rogers Ph.D.
President, Agua Fria Open Space Alliance, Inc.
Dewey, AZ

Kevin Rohling
Southern Illinois University
Edwardsville, IL

Philip C. Rosen Ph.D.
Research Scientist
School of Natural Resources
University of Arizona
Tucson, AZ

Paula Schiffman Ph.D.
Professor of Biology
California State University
Northridge, CA

Michael Soulé Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus, University of California
Paonia, CO

Julie Stromberg Ph.D.
School of Life Sciences
Arizona State University
Tempe, AZ

John C. Tull Ph.D.
Conservation Director
Nevada Wilderness Project
Reno, NV

Mark D. Varien Ph.D.
Vice President of Programs
Crow Canyon Archaeological Center
Cortez, CO

Cindy Deacon Williams M.S.
Director of Aquatic Science and Conservation Education Programs
National Center for Conservation Science and Policy
Ashland, OR

Jack E. Williams Ph.D.
Senior Scientist
Trout Unlimited
Medford, OR