Bureau of Land Management Seeks Input on Voluntary Winderness Protection

Local News

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Washington - As part of Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar’s push to build a bipartisan wilderness agenda that can be enacted in the 112th Congress, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) state offices will solicit suggestions and recommendations from state and local elected officials, Tribes, and other federal land managers on areas that deserve wilderness protection and that have broad support for congressional designation.

“The focus of this effort is to identify lands that have strong backing for protection as wilderness and that might be appropriate for congressional action,” BLM Director Bob Abbey said. “The best ideas for conservation come from the ground up, and we hope this effort will help lay a foundation for a bipartisan wilderness agenda in this Congress. We’ve heard from the public and many people have expressed how much they value wilderness areas.”

This effort is an extension of Secretary Salazar’s June 10, 2011, letter to Members of Congress requesting their ideas on “crown jewel” areas of public lands that have strong local support for permanent protection as Wilderness under the Wilderness Act.

This fall, the Department of the Interior will submit to Congress a list of “crown jewels” that it believes are ready for Wilderness designation by Congress based on the combined input from Congressional, state, local and tribal partners.

In addition, the BLM will issue updated guidance to its offices affirming – as directed by a June 1, 2011 Secretarial memo – that pursuant to the 2011 Continuing Resolution, the BLM will not designate any lands as “Wild Lands.” As required by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), the BLM will continue to maintain inventories of public lands and their resource and other values, including lands with wilderness characteristics. Also, consistent with FLPMA and other applicable authorities, the BLM will consider the wilderness characteristics of public lands, in accordance with its multiple-use mandate, when undertaking land use planning and when making project-level decisions.

Secretary Salazar has directed Deputy Secretary David J. Hayes to work with the BLM and interested parties to develop recommendations regarding the management of BLM lands with wilderness characteristics.

The BLM’s Instruction Memoranda is available at http://on.doi.gov/mUeSTZ .