

**American Hiking Society * American Rivers *
Friends of the Earth * National Trust for Historic Preservation *
National Wildlife Federation * Sierra Club *
The Wilderness Society * U.S. Public Interest Research Group**

April 15, 2005

The Honorable Conrad Burns
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior
SD-187
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Byron Dorgan
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior
SH-713
Washington, DC 20510

**Re: Appropriation Priority Increases for the National Landscape
Conservation System and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.**

Dear Chairman Burns and Ranking Member Dorgan:

On behalf of the organizations listed above and our millions of members, we are writing to express our support for increased funding for the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS), which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). These lands are an important part of our natural and cultural heritage, and are operating with budgets that fail to meet needs ranging from law enforcement to cultural resource protection.

The NLCS is comprised of 26 million acres of spectacular National Monuments, Conservation and Wilderness Areas, National Historic Trails and Wild and Scenic Rivers, under the stewardship of the BLM. These lands have been recognized by both Congress and the President as having unique scientific and historic values that must be protected. This newest conservation system, created in 2000, provides essential opportunities for recreation, solitude, and adventure for all Americans and real economic benefits to neighboring communities across the West.

We respectfully request your consideration for the following **increases in appropriations** for these priority NLCS units:

- **Aqua Fria National Monument, Arizona: \$300,000** for cultural resource protection, visitor education and infrastructure needs.
- **Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, Colorado: \$100,000** to prevent looting and vandalism of cultural treasures.
- **Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho: \$100,000** for invasive species control.
- **Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, Arizona: \$350,000** for habitat restoration, resource monitoring, cultural and historic site research and protection.
- **Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Utah: \$400,000** for cultural and paleontological research and biological monitoring.

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- **Headwaters Forest Reserve, California: \$25,000** for wildlife survey analysis and visitor education.
- **Ironwood Forest National Monument, Las Cienegas National Conservation Area and San Pedro Riparian Area, Arizona: \$150,000** for increased law enforcement, field presence and visitor education.
- **Pacific Crest Trail, California: \$150,000** for improved trail maintenance and management.
- **Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, California: \$500,000** for tamarisk removal, watershed assessment, and visitor education.
- **Sonoran Desert National Monument, Arizona: \$385,000** for visitor management, law enforcement and education.
- **Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area, Oregon: \$60,000** for creation of new a wilderness volunteer coordinator position.
- **Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, Montana: \$300,000** for increased law enforcement.
- **Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, Arizona: \$400,000** for cultural resource protection, invasive species control, visitor education and environmental monitoring.

A total increase of \$3,220,000 for these projects should be allocated **in addition to, not in lieu of**, funding already budgeted for each unit for FY 2006 in the BLM's budget.

We recognize that this is a time of constrained budgets. However, the President's budget allocates just \$43.4 million for the BLM's NLCS. That is about \$1.67 per NLCS acre--a fraction of the funding allocated to other public lands systems. With growing numbers of Americans using and enjoying the NLCS, and with BLM working to fulfill its legal mandate to create and implement resource management plans for the System, this is a critical time to provide at least a modest increase in NLCS funding. We encourage total System funding of at least \$46.6 million, an increase of \$3.2 million over the President's FY 2006 request. These additional funds should provide for resource conservation, environmental monitoring, archaeological inventories, sound science and research, and law enforcement capability.

In addition, we strongly support appropriations for the President's FY 2006 Land and Water Conservation Fund project priorities, including those projects which will benefit BLM and the NLCS. We also support an increase of \$2,070,000, for the LWCF, for additional land acquisition needs including \$600,000 for land acquisition along Ankle Creek in Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area, Oregon; \$700,000 to acquire Soda Mountain inholdings in Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, Oregon; and \$770,000 to acquire the Calf Creek parcel in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Utah.

These purchases will help to simplify land management, reduce conflicts, and provide fair market compensation for willing sellers.

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Thank you for your attention, and for your appreciation of our interest in the National Landscape Conservation Systems' health and success. We look forward to working with you throughout the appropriations process.

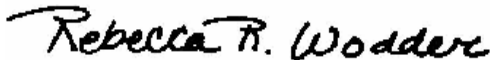
Sincerely,



Gregory A. Miller
President
American Hiking Society



Richard Moe
President
National Trust for Historic Preservation



Rebecca R. Wodder
President
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Larry Schweiger
President & CEO
National Wildlife Federation



Brent Blackwelder
President
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William Meadows
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On behalf of:

Gene Karpinski
Executive Director
U.S. Public Interest Research Group

Debbie Boger
Deputy Legislative Director
Sierra Club