The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Interior,  
Environment and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior,  
Environment and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

Thank you for increasing funding for key accounts within the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the FY2020 Interior Appropriations bill and for your sustained oversight of the ongoing reorganization efforts at the BLM. As you prepare the FY2021 Interior Appropriations bill, we write to encourage you to build on that important work by including at least $20.131 million for BLM’s cultural resources account and at least $49.5 million for the National Conservation Lands.

The BLM manages the largest, most diverse, and most scientifically important body of cultural, historical, and paleontological resources of any federal land management agency. Yet only about 10 percent of BLM lands have been surveyed for heritage resources. We urge Congress to provide at least $20 million—an increase of approximately $1.5 million—for the BLM’s cultural resources management account to help BLM fulfill its statutory requirements to inventory and protect cultural resources, manage paleontological resources, and improve government-to-government consultation with Indian tribes. This modest increase in funding would also support ongoing collaboration with state historic preservation officers in the West to standardize and integrate cultural resources data for BLM lands through the National Cultural Resources Information Management System (NCRIMS). Thank you for FY2020’s increase of $1.5 million in this account and its direction to NCRIMS. This effort protects important cultural resources while also streamlining land-use planning and permitting by making better cultural resource data available earlier in the planning and project development process.

The BLM also needs increased funding for management of its system of National Conservation Lands, which is made up of nationally significant places designated by Congress or the President for their outstanding historic, cultural, ecological, and scientific values. The National Conservation Lands encompass more than 36 million acres, including more than 50 national monuments, national conservation areas (NCAs) and similarly designated areas on BLM lands, compared with 32 just ten years ago. In the past year alone, as a result of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, three new units and nearly 1 million new acres were added to the system. Despite this increase, funding has not kept pace to properly manage these important places. With this in mind, we recommend at least $49.5 million in FY2021—an increase of approximately $5.6 million—in base funding for the National Conservation Lands. Additional funding should be directed toward ensuring each unit of the National Conservation Lands is appropriately staffed with land managers, law enforcement, and cultural resources experts, as well as inventory and monitoring of cultural resources that contribute to the special designation of these places. We also recommend robust funding for National Scenic and Historic Trails, National Wild and Scenic Rivers, and wilderness areas that are part of the National Conservation Lands and funded through other areas of the BLM’s budget.

Finally, we encourage you to address the long-standing vacancies in key cultural resources positions stipulated in the BLM Tribal Relations Manual, including the National Curator/NAGPRA Coordinator, National Tribal Coordinator, and 10 of the 12 state office Tribal Coordinator positions.

Our nation’s public lands contain remarkable and irreplaceable ecological, historical and cultural resources that reflect thousands of years of human connection to our lands. We thank you for your consideration of increased funding for proper stewardship of these resources in the FY2021 Interior Appropriations bill.
Sincerely,

National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Conservation Lands Foundation  
Coalition for American Heritage  
National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (NATHPO)  

American Anthropological Association  
American Cultural Resources Association  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
The Archaeological Conservancy  
Archaeological Institute of America  
Crow Canyon Archaeological Center  
Earthjustice  
Earthworks  
Endangered Species Coalition  
Friends of the Earth US  
Gray & Pape Heritage Management  
Great Old Broads for Wilderness  
GreenLatinos  
Greenpeace  
Hispanic Access Foundation  
Hispanic Federation  
National Audubon Society  
National Parks Conservation Association  
Patagonia  
Society for American Archaeology  
Society for Historical Archaeology  
Society of Vertebrate Paleontology  
The Wilderness Society  
WSL PURE  

Arizona  
Archeology Southwest  
Cienega Watershed Partnership  
Friends of Agua Fria National Monument  
Friends of Arizona Joshua Tree Forest  
Friends of Ironwood Forest  
Friends of the San Pedro River, Inc.  
Grand Canyon Trust  
Phoenix Area Chapter of International Dark Sky Association  

California  
Amargosa Conservancy  
California Wilderness Coalition  
Californians for Western Wilderness  
Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve  
Friends of the Desert Mountains  
Friends of the Inyo  
Friends of the Lost Coast  
Mattole Restoration Council  
The Mattole Salmon Group  
Mojave Desert Land Trust  
Native American Land Conservancy  
Sanctuary Forest, Inc.  
Save Our Heritage Organisation  
Society for California Archaeology  
Tuleyome
Colorado
Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists
Colorado Historical Foundation
Conejos Clean Water
Dolores River Boating Advocates
Rig To Flip
Western Slope Conservation Center

Florida
Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse & Museum

Idaho
Birds of Prey NCA Partnership

Iowa
Association of Iowa Archaeologists

Maryland
Chesapeake Conservancy
Preservation Maryland

Montana
Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument
Montana Wilderness Association
Montana Wildlife Federation

Nevada
Friends of Gold Butte
Friends of Nevada Wilderness
Friends of Red Rock Canyon
Friends of Sloan Canyon
Get Outdoors Nevada
Nevada Preservation Foundation

New Mexico
Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
Nuestra Tierra
Site Steward Foundation, Inc.

Ohio
Heritage Ohio

Oregon
Friends and Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area
Friends of the Owyhee
Friends of Yaquina Lighthouses
Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center
Oregon Natural Desert Association
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council

Utah
Amazing Earthfest
Conserve Southwest Utah
Friends of Cedar Mesa
Grand Staircase Escalante Partners
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Utah Dine Bikeyah