

March 11, 2020

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

Archaeology 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