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Interior Secretary Formally Designates BLM Lands the
National System of Public Lands

Washington, D.C. – Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne today signed a Secretarial Order to officially designate the 258 million acres of lands managed for multiple-use by the Department’s Bureau of Land Management as the National System of Public Lands.

“These lands constitute an invaluable recreational, cultural, economic, and environmental legacy for the nation,” Kempthorne said. “And yet, those who own these lands – the American people – remain largely unaware of their critical importance to our quality of life, their value to present and future generations, or even the purpose for which these lands are preserved in public ownership.”

As the principal steward of the public lands, the Bureau of Land Management is directed by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 to manage the public lands for multiple use including recreation, conservation, wildlife habitat, and economic activities such as development of timber and forest products, livestock grazing, and energy and mineral production.

“It’s time these great lands and resources, whose historical roots date back to the earliest days of our nation, are given their due by recognizing them officially,” BLM Director James Caswell said. “This official designation will ultimately make it easier for the public to identify these lands and more readily understand the multiple-use mission that Congress has given to the BLM.”

While providing BLM-managed lands an official designation confers no change in land status, Caswell said that it will underscore several principles that are important to the stewardship of these lands.

“Calling these lands the National System of Public Lands implies that all of our lands and resources are linked in some capacity,” Caswell said. “This linkage is at the heart of our landscape approach to land management.”

He also said that the designation will emphasize the interconnectedness

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and interdependence of the public lands and all who benefit from them; better convey the diversity of interests and values associated with the public lands and how these are served through balanced, comprehensive, management;

and increase the critical importance of enlightened citizen stewardship to the preservation of these lands and to the success of BLM's work on behalf of the American people.

Caswell said that the BLM will minimize any costs associated with the designation by institutionalizing it over time and incorporating the identity in publications, signage and other materials in the normal course of renewing and updating such materials.

The BLM manages more land – 258 million acres – than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 Western States, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

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