

**Statement of  
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Deputy Director  
Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior  
House Natural Resources Committee  
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands  
H.R. 4192, Stornetta Public Lands Outstanding Natural Area  
January 21, 2010**

Thank you for the invitation to testify on H.R. 4192, the Stornetta Public Lands Outstanding Natural Area Act. The Department of the Interior supports H.R. 4192, which would designate approximately 1,100 acres of public land along the Pacific coast of northern California as an Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) within the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS).

**Background**

The coast of northern California is rugged and spectacular. Along that coast in Mendocino County, the BLM manages 1,132 acres commonly known as the Stornetta Public Lands, named after the family from whom they were acquired in 2004. These lands are magnificent, including over two miles of coastline and the estuary of the Garcia River, lying adjacent to the historic Point Arena Lighthouse.

This relatively small area contains significant natural resources, including several riparian corridors, wetlands, cypress groves, meadows, and sand dunes. As a result, the area is home to a broad range of wildlife, including a number of threatened or endangered species. These species include the endangered Coho and Chinook salmon, Point Arena mountain beaver, and Behren's silverspot butterfly, as well as the threatened Western snowy plover and California red-legged frog.

Extensive cultural resources attest to a history of occupation of this site going back at least 9,000 years. Up until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was home to the Bokeya Pomo people. Today, the Manchester-Point Arena Band of Pomo Indians partners with the BLM to conserve and protect the resource values on the Stornetta lands.

There are many recreational opportunities in the area. The Garcia River is a destination fishing site, and the coastal areas offer marine wildlife viewing, including Gray and Blue whales, seals, sea lions, and river otters. While not within the Stornetta lands, the adjacent Point Arena Lighthouse, operated by the nonprofit Point Arena Lighthouse Keepers, welcomes over 30,000 visitors annually. These visitors frequent the tidepools and beaches on the adjacent Stornetta lands.

The BLM currently manages this area to protect its important natural, cultural and historic resources. The BLM works cooperatively with a number of key partners, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Coastal Conservancy, the Nature Conservancy, the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society, the California Departments of Parks and Recreation Fish and Game, and Forestry and Fire Protection, Manchester – Point Arena Band of Pomo Indians,

Mendocino County, the City of Point Arena, California, and the Point Arena Lighthouse Keepers.

**H.R. 4192**

H.R. 4192 would designate the Stornetta lands as an Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) to be managed by the BLM within the NLCS. The BLM manages three other ONAs as part of the NLCS, all of which are located along the East and West coasts and are associated with historic lighthouses.

The Stornetta ONA would be an appropriate addition to the system, and we support the legislation. Designation will allow the BLM and the many local partners to continue to protect the special resources of the area, while encouraging public access and appreciation of those resources. We would like the opportunity to work with the sponsor and the Committee on some minor modifications to the legislation.

**Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 4192. We look forward to the inclusion of the Stornetta Outstanding Natural Area in the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System.