

**Statement of  
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Deputy Director  
Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior  
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests  
S. 2762, San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act  
April 28, 2010**

Thank you for the invitation to testify on S. 2762, the San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act. The Department of the Interior supports the designation of the McKenna Peak Wilderness on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). We defer to the Department of Agriculture regarding designations on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service (FS).

**Background**

The McKenna Peak Wilderness Study Area (WSA) covers nearly 20,000 acres of BLM-managed lands in San Miguel and Dolores Counties in southwestern Colorado. This WSA is currently managed by the BLM to protect its wilderness characteristics while awaiting Congressional action.

This area is rich in wildlife, including mule deer, elk, mountain lions, black bear, and a variety of raptors. McKenna Peak is also home to the Spring Creek wild horse herd. Geologically, the area is quite diverse. It includes 100 million year-old remnants of inland seas (now black Mancos shale rich in invertebrate marine fossils), as well as the 8,000-foot McKenna Peak with ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and mountain mahogany. This area offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities, including hunting, hiking, horseback riding, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing, all of which are compatible with this wilderness designation.

**S. 2762**

We understand that S. 2762 is the result of a collaborative process, which included discussions between the Colorado Congressional delegation, county commissioners, adjacent landowners, ranchers, conservationists, recreationists, and other interested parties. The results are the proposed extensive wilderness designations on both BLM- and FS-managed lands in San Miguel, Ouray, and San Juan Counties. As I noted, the Department of the Interior defers to the Department of Agriculture regarding designations on lands managed by the FS.

Section 3(a)(4) of the bill designates 8,614 acres of the existing BLM-managed McKenna Peak WSA as wilderness. The BLM supports this designation. The legislation covers only those areas of the WSA in San Miguel County. The remaining almost 11,000 acres of the WSA are south of the proposed wilderness in Dolores County and are not addressed in the legislation. These acres will remain in WSA status, pending Congressional action. The BLM and the Department would support future designation of this area in order to improve the manageability of the area.

We would request the opportunity to work with the Sponsor and the Committee on some technical provisions, including corrections to the map reference. The BLM is currently completing a careful review of the boundaries of the proposed wilderness area to ensure manageability and would welcome the opportunity to work with the sponsor on possible minor modifications.

**Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S. 2762. We look forward to its inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.