



BLM Fact Sheet

U.S. Department of the Interior • Bureau of Land Management • Washington, D.C., Office • 1849 C Street N.W. • Washington, D.C.

Getting the Facts about America's Wild Lands

Americans love the wild places where they hunt, fish, hike, and get away from it all, and they expect these lands to be protected wisely on their behalf.

The Obama Administration's Wild Lands policy, established under Secretarial Order 3310, is a straightforward, **common-sense** initiative that **restores balance** to the management of public lands.

The policy affirms the Bureau of Land Management's responsibility to take into account **all of the resources for which it is responsible** - including wilderness characteristics - when it conducts its transparent, public land use planning process.

Secretarial Order 3310 directs the BLM to consider, **with the public**, in its planning processes whether lands with wilderness characteristics should be protected as "Wild Lands." **It does not itself create any Wild Lands designations**, nor require that any particular lands be so protected.

A Wild Lands designation, by contrast to congressionally-designated Wilderness Areas, **can only be made after consultation with the public** through a land-use planning process, can be revisited without legislation, and will not necessarily preclude all forms of motorized and mechanized travel, or the staking of new mining claims.

The Wild Lands policy gives state, local, and Tribal governments, communities, and the public a strong voice in how we manage backcountry areas for our children, grandchildren and future generations.

Key links:

- [Secretarial Order 3310](#)
- [Press Release on America's Wild Lands](#)
- [Secretary Salazar and Director Abbey's Remarks](#)

The Numbers

Acres of wild lands or wilderness designated by Secretarial Order 3310: **0**

Acres of land put 'off limits' to oil and gas development or other uses by Secretarial Order 3310: **0**

Estimated **annual economic benefit** of outdoor recreation on BLM public lands: **\$7.4 billion and 59,000 jobs**

Estimated percent of Westerners that participate in **outdoor recreation** activities: **~53%**

Percent of BLM-managed lands that are congressionally-designated **Wilderness Areas**, or that are awaiting congressional designation as **Wilderness Study Areas (WSA)**: **9% (21.5 million acres)**

Percent of the 279 million acres of Federal mineral estate identified as having potential for oil and gas development and **currently leased**: **15% (41.2 million acres)**

Acres offered for oil and gas leases in 2009 and 2010: **6.1 million acres**



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Wild Lands Protection: Myths and Facts

Myth #1: Secretarial Order 3310 violates the law.

Fact: Untrue. BLM’s organic statute, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), grants BLM broad authority to manage lands to protect their wilderness characteristics under sections 102, 103, 201, 202 and 302 of that act, among others. Moreover, when a controversial settlement agreement (which made representations about the BLM’s ability to designate WSAs) was challenged, a Utah District Court made clear that the settlement did not affect BLM’s authority to manage lands to protect those characteristics. In 2008, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the BLM must maintain a wilderness inventory and consider information about wilderness characteristics during the public, land-use planning process when those values are present in the planning area. The Secretarial Order follows clear legal direction.

Myth #2: Secretarial Order 3310 automatically elevates public lands with wilderness characteristics to wilderness status.

Fact: Totally untrue. Secretarial Order 3310 directs the BLM to consider, with the public, in its planning processes whether lands with wilderness characteristics should be protected as “Wild Lands.” It does not itself create any Wild Lands designations, nor require that any particular lands be so protected. Further, where made, a Wild Lands designation would differ significantly from Wilderness. Wilderness designation requires legislation, cannot be revisited without additional action from Congress, and necessarily precludes certain activities, such as the staking of new mining claims, and all forms of motorized equipment and mechanized transport. A Wild Lands designation, by contrast, can only be made after consultation with the public through a land-use planning process, can be revisited without legislation, and will not necessarily preclude all forms of motorized and mechanized travel, or the staking of new mining claims.

Myth #3: Too many acres of public lands are already being managed as wilderness, denying people proper access to their public lands.

Fact: Less than 10 percent of the land managed by the BLM consists of Wilderness and WSAs. The BLM is the steward of 221 Wilderness areas totaling more than 8.7 million acres, and 545 WSAs totaling nearly 13 million acres. That is a total of 21.5 million acres out of 245 million acres, or 8.8 percent. The remaining 91.2 percent of the public lands are not designated as Wilderness or WSAs, and are managed for myriad other uses.

Myth #4: The Secretary’s Order is attempting an “end around” Congressional approval of wilderness areas.

Fact: This is simply wrong. Only Congress can designate Wilderness or release WSAs for non-wilderness uses. The BLM is legally required to maintain an inventory of public lands and their resources, including wilderness characteristics. The BLM uses inventory information in developing land-use plans, which guide management of the public lands. As stated above, BLM has ample authority to protect wilderness characteristics as part of its multiple-use mission.



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Myth #5: The BLM's new policy will require a re-inventory of all public lands, even those lands managed under a recently completed resource management plan.

Fact: Wrong. The new policy provides a process for updating existing inventory information and for inventorying lands that have not previously been inventoried. The BLM will submit a report to the Secretary within six months that describes its plan for considering wilderness characteristics in existing land-use plans consistent with the Order. The BLM will initiate a land-use plan conformance review to identify whether existing land-use plans are inconsistent with this policy. After completion of the conformance review, the BLM will update only those plans that require it.

Myth #6: Secretarial Order 3310 will bog down formal proposals to use lands with wilderness characteristics in bureaucratic red tape, and require that all such proposals be denied.

Fact: This is false. Secretarial Order 3310 allows the BLM to approve uses incompatible with an area's wilderness characteristics and, in fact, may provide greater certainty to land-use applicants. Because Wild Lands designations will be made through an open and transparent public land-use planning process in which the compatibility of other resource uses on public lands with wilderness characteristics will be considered, projects taking place on public lands with wilderness character will likely face a reduced risk of being scuttled by litigation.

Myth #7: The new policy will take away thousands of acres of grazing allotments from American ranchers.

Fact: This statement is unfounded. Livestock grazing can be compatible with the protection of lands' wilderness characteristics, and lands with wilderness characteristics that are being grazed may not be affected when the BLM processes permit renewals. In some areas, historic livestock grazing practices may have contributed to the degradation of public lands. In those situations, the BLM is working with ranchers and others to improve conditions, and will continue to enhance grazing practices with on-the-ground improvements.

Myth #8: This Wild Lands policy totally disregards oil and gas development on public lands.

Fact: False. Oil and gas development is an important component of the BLM's multiple-use mandate, as evidenced by its schedule of lease sales. In 2010, about 41.2 million acres of federal and split-estate lands were under lease for development.

Myth #9: The BLM disregards the economic health and well-being of gateway communities and the many states that contain public lands.

Fact: This could not be further from the truth. Public lands managed by the BLM contribute significantly to the nation's economy and, in turn, have a positive impact on communities located nearby. Outdoor recreation on BLM-managed public lands supports an estimated \$7.4 billion in economic activity and 59,000 jobs.

Myth #10: Public lands designated as Wild Lands will increase the size of the 27-million-acre National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) managed by the BLM.

Fact: False. Public lands designated as Wild Lands will not be added to NLCS.