

March 18, 2024

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

As you prepare the FY2025 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we encourage you to build on investments in the nation's largest land management agency made in recent fiscal years by including **at least \$1.395 billion for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for Management of Lands and Resources, at least \$78 million for the BLM National Conservation Lands, and at least \$25 million for BLM's cultural resources account.**

Bureau of Land Management

The BLM is the largest land manager in the United States, responsible for the management of 248 million acres of public lands and 700 million acres of mineral estate. As defined under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), the agency's mission is defined as multiple-use and sustained yield, which includes management of those lands for uses including grazing, mining, fossil fuel production leasing, renewable energy production, outdoor recreation, and conservation.

Despite the tremendous estate it manages, the multiple uses of the land for which it is responsible, and the record-high visitation on public lands in recent years, the BLM has been underfunded and understaffed for decades. Comparatively, the BLM has historically received less funding than all of the other federal land management agencies despite the significantly larger acreage and management activities for which it is responsible.¹ The BLM also receives significantly less funding per visitor than any of the other federal land management agencies.² The underfunding of the agency has caused delays and poor customer service for outdoor recreation visitors and guides at a time when the outdoor recreation economy is booming: according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the outdoor recreation economy increased 4.8 percent in 2022, compared with a 1.9 percent increase for the overall U.S. economy.³

With these facts in mind, we urge the Committee to provide **at least \$1.395 billion** for the BLM for Management of Lands and Resources, which will help ensure the agency can fulfill its mission and myriad responsibilities, including completing resource management plans, citing renewable energy development opportunities, fulfilling lease and outdoor recreation applications and renewals, and ensuring safe outdoor recreation opportunities.

¹ See Table 1

² See Table 2

³ "[Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis Reports Outdoor Recreation Economy Tops \\$1 Trillion in 2022](#)", U.S. Department of Commerce, December 15, 2023

National Conservation Lands

One of the most important responsibilities the BLM has within its multiple-use and sustained yield mission is the management of the 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 37 million acres of National Monuments, National Conservation Areas (NCAs), the National Trails System, and similar designations, as well as Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). This system has grown consistently since its inception in 2000 and has more than doubled in size since then as a result of acts of Congress and use of the Antiquities Act by presidents from both parties.⁴

While the system has grown, however, funding from Congress to manage these critical landscapes has not kept pace. Congress should further invest in the BLM in FY2025 to ensure it can properly manage this system of critical landscapes, which has grown by 108 units and more than 13 million acres since FY2006 when Congress provided the highest funding level for this account.⁵ That investment will ensure the BLM can fulfill its responsibilities for managing the system of National Conservation Lands for conservation, outdoor recreation, and protection of natural, cultural, and archaeological resources.

We urge you to consider these resource management needs, as well as the ever-increasing demands BLM is responsible for resulting from the increasing popularity of these lands, and provide **at least \$78 million** for managing the National Conservation Lands. Such an increase would reflect a correction of the historic underfunding of the agency responsible for managing some of America's most critical landscapes⁶. It will also permit increased inventory, monitoring and protection of cultural resources, enhance proper management of all resources and provide a quality visitor experience. 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 this account and other areas of the BLM's budget.

Cultural Resources

The BLM manages the largest, most diverse, and most scientifically important body of cultural, historical, and paleontological resources of any federal land management agency. However, only about 12 percent of BLM lands have been surveyed for cultural resources. We urge the Committee to provide **at least \$25 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.

Along with this modest increase in funding, we also urge the Subcommittee to include \$1 million specifically for the National Cultural Resources Information Management System (NCRIMS). NCRIMS supports ongoing collaboration with state historic preservation officers in the West to standardize and integrate cultural resources data for BLM lands. This effort is a significant and often overlooked preservation success story. It funds predictive modeling and data analysis, in partnership with state

⁴ See Table 3

⁵ See Tables 3 and 4

⁶ See Table 3

historic preservation offices, to support planning for large-scale cross-jurisdictional and other projects. It promotes streamlined land-use planning by making better cultural resource data available early in the planning and project development process. This is especially important as the agency implements the recent infrastructure law, including fuels reduction to minimize wildfire risk, siting of multistate power and transmission lines, and renewable energy projects.

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 our request in the FY2025 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Conservation Lands Foundation

National Trust for Historic Preservation

National

American Rivers
American Society of Landscape Architects
Back Country Horsemen of America
Clean Water Action
Creation Justice Ministries
Earthjustice
Endangered Species Coalition
GreenLatinos
HG Conservation Solutions
Hispanic Access Foundation
Kids for Saving Earth
Latino Outdoors
League of Conservation Voters
The Mountain Pact
National Audubon Society
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council

Next 100 Coalition
The Ocean Project
Oregon-California Trails Association
Outdoor Alliance
Outdoor Recreation Roundtable
Pacific Crest Trail Association
Patagonia
The Pew Charitable Trusts
REI Co-op
Runners for Public Lands
Sierra Club
Society of Vertebrate Paleontology
Trust for Public Land
Vet Voice Foundation
The Wilderness Society
Wildlands Network

Alaska

Alaska Wilderness League

Arizona

Archaeology Southwest
Friends of Arizona Joshua Tree Forest
Friends of Ironwood Forest
Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument

Friends of the San Pedro River
Grand Canyon Trust
Keep Sedona Beautiful, Inc.

California

Alabama Hills Stewardship Group
Amargosa Conservancy
CactusToCloud Institute
California Environmental Voters
California Native Plant Society
Californians for Western Wilderness

Friends of Headwaters
Friends of the Inyo
Friends of the Lost Coast
Habitat Stewardship Project, Monterey Bay
Los Padres ForestWatch
Mattole Restoration Council

CalWild
Carrizo Plain Conservancy
Council of Mexican Federations in North America (COFEM)
Fort Ord Recreation Trails (FORT) Friends
Friends of the Amargosa Basin
Friends of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve
Friends of the Carrizo Plain
Friends of the Desert Mountains
Friends of the Dunes

Colorado

Colorado Canyons Association
Colorado Wildlands Project
Conservation Colorado
Dolores River Boating Advocates
Friends of Browns Canyon

Idaho

Birds of Prey NCA Partnership

Maryland

Chesapeake Conservancy

Minnesota

Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness

Montana

Friends of Pompeys Pillar

Nevada

Blacks in Nature
Friends of Avi Kwa Ame National Monument
Friends of Basin & Range National Monument
Friends of Black Rock-High Rock
Friends of Gold Butte
Friends of Nevada Wilderness
Friends of Red Rock Canyon

New Mexico

Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps
Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks
New Mexico Wild

Oregon

Friends and Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area
Friends of Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument
Friends of the Owyhee

Tennessee

Overmountain Victory Trail Association

Mojave Desert Land Trust
Piedras Blancas Light Station Association
Sempervirens Fund
Transition Habitat Conservancy
Trinidad Coastal Land Trust
Tuleyome
Ventana Wilderness Alliance
The Wildlands Conservancy

Friends of the Yampa
San Juan Citizens Alliance
San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council
Southwest Colorado Canyons Alliance
Western Slope Conservation Center

Wild Montana

Friends of Sloan Canyon
Get Outdoors Nevada
Indigenous Voices of Nevada
Save Red Rock
Nevada Conservation League
Nevada Outdoor Business Coalition
Trail Access Project

New Mexico Wildlife Federation
Upper Gila Watershed Alliance

Friends of Yaquina Lighthouses
Oregon Natural Desert Association
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council

Texas

The Frontera Land Alliance

Utah

Amazing Earthfest
 Bears Ears Partnership
 Conserve Southwest Utah

Grand Staircase Escalante Partners
 Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
 Utah Dine Bikeyah

Virginia

HECHO

Washington

Islanders for the San Juan Island National Monument

Wyoming

Wyoming Outdoor Council

Wyoming Wilderness Association

Table 1: Land Management Agency Acreage and Funding*

Land Management Agency	Acres	FY23 ~\$ Per Acre	FY23	FY22	FY21
U.S. Forest Service	193 million	\$52.20	\$10.075B	\$10.847B	\$7.424B
National Park Service	84 million	\$41.37	\$3.475B	\$3.265B	\$3.123B
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	89 million	\$19.89	\$1.77B	\$1.646B	\$1.584B
Bureau of Land Management	245 million	\$6.10	\$1.494B	\$1.411B	\$1.31B

*Source: Congressional Research Service

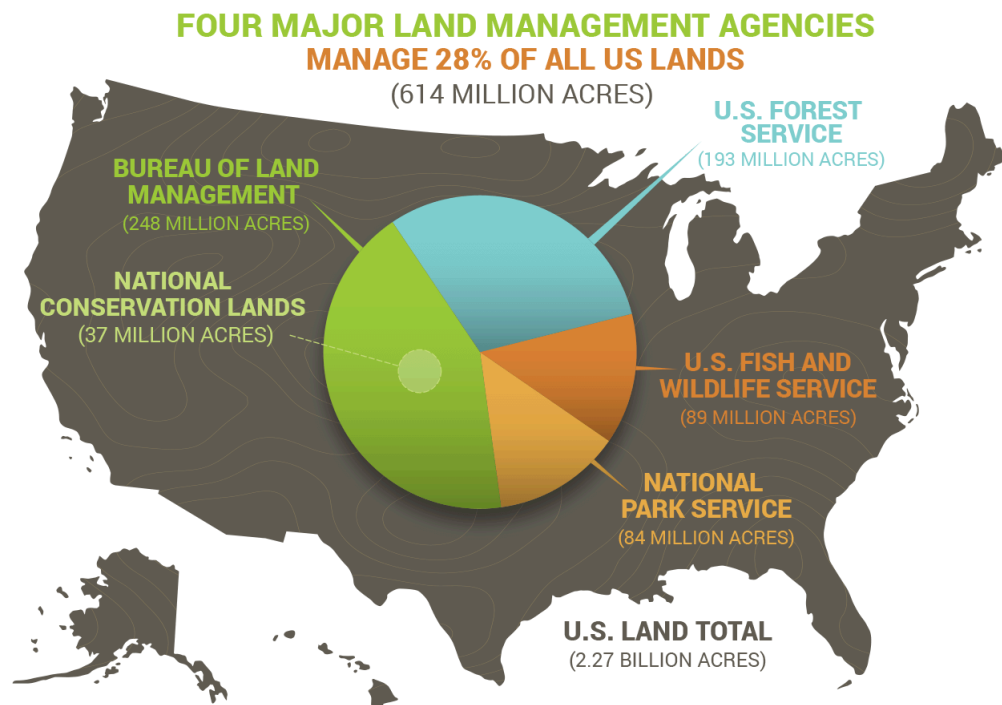


Table 2: Land Management Agency Funding Per Visitor, 10 Year Average (2012-2021)*

Land Management Agency	Acres	10 Year Avg per Visitor
National Park Service	84 million	\$5.20
U.S. Forest Service	193 million	\$1.70
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	89 million	\$1.32
Bureau of Land Management	245 million	\$0.79

*Source: Bureau of Land Management

Table 3: Historical Comparative Growth of Appropriations and National Conservation Lands

FY	Appropriations*		National Conservation Lands **
	Enacted (\$M)	+/-	New Acres Added
2024	\$59.135^^	-2.464	1,036,056
2023	\$61.599^^	+12.325	346,354
2022	\$49.274	+3.455	
2021	\$45.819	+2	
2020	\$43.819	+4	
2019	\$39.819	+3	1,164,118
2018	\$36.819		
2017	\$36.819		47,624
2016	\$36.819	+5	7,189,857
2015	\$31.819		925,946
2014	\$31.819		443,547
2013	\$31.819		243,710
2012	\$31.819	-0.051	7,212
2011	\$31.870	+0.569	11,001
2010	\$31.301	-29.526	
2009	\$60.827	+8.687	1,419,424
2008	\$52.140	-11.557	106
2007^	\$63.697	-1.434	
2006	\$65.131	+5.542	471,559
2005	\$59.589	-2.687	11,823
2004	\$62.276	+2.437	780,806
2003	\$59.839	-4.450	
2002	\$64.289	+1.041	759,032
2001	\$63.248	+12.095	1,085,539
2000	\$51.153	+1.078	4,079,958
			19,494,430 added

*Source: Congressional Research Service

**Source: Bureau of Land Management

^Up until FY2007, funding for the National Landscape Conservation System was provided under Recreation Management.

^^Starting in FY2023, this account includes \$11 million for National Scenic and Historic Trails.

Table 4: Additions to National Conservation Lands Since 2006*

Year	NCL Unit	State	BLM Acres
2023	Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni-Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument	AZ	529,242
	Avi Kwa Ame National Monument	NV	506,814
2022	Numunaa Nobe National Conservation Area	NV	160,224
	Pistone-Black National Conservation Area	NV	3,415
	Cain Mountain Wilderness	NV	14,050
	Clan Alpines Wilderness	NV	128,362
	Desatoya Mountains Wilderness	NV	40,303
2019	John Wesley Powell National Conservation Area	UT	29,868
	Jurassic National Monument	UT	850
	Alabama Hills National Scenic Area	CA	18,610
	Aden Lava Flow Wilderness	NM	27,673
	Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Wilderness	NM	7,242
	Avawatz Mountains Wilderness	CA	89,500
	Big Wild Horse Mesa Wilderness	UT	18,192
	Broad Canyon Wilderness	NM	13,902
	Buzzards Peak Wilderness	CA	11,840
	Cinder Cone Wilderness	NM	16,935
	Cold Wash Wilderness	UT	11,001
	Desolation Canyon Wilderness	UT	142,996
	Devils Canyon Wilderness	UT	8,675
	Devil's Staircase Wilderness	OR	8,600
	Eagle Canyon Wilderness	UT	13,832
	East Potrillo Mountains Wilderness	NM	12,155
	Great Falls Basin Wilderness	CA	7,810
	Horse Valley Wilderness	UT	12,201
	Labyrinth Canyon Wilderness	UT	54,643
	Little Ocean Draw Wilderness	UT	20,660
	Lower Last Chance Wilderness	UT	19,339
	Mexican Mountain Wilderness	UT	76,413
	Middle Wild Horse Mesa Wilderness	UT	16,343
	Milpitas Wash Wilderness	CA	17,250
	Mount Riley Wilderness	NM	8,382
	Muddy Creek Wilderness	UT	98,023
	Organ Mountains Wilderness	NM	19,916
	Potrillo Mountains Wilderness	NM	105,085
	Reds Canyon Wilderness	UT	17,325
	Robledo Mountains Wilderness	NM	16,776
	San Rafael Reef Wilderness	UT	60,442
	Sid's Mountain Wilderness	UT	49,130
	Sierra de las Uvas Wilderness	NM	111,114
	Turtle Canyon Wilderness	UT	29,029
	Whitethorn Wilderness	NM	9,616
2017	Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument	OR/CA	47,624
2016	Bears Ears National Monument	UT	1,063,000

	Castle Mountains National Monument	CA	20,920
	Gold Butte National Monument	NV	296,937
	Mojave Trails National Monument	CA	1,600,000
	Sand to Snow National Monument	CA	8,300
	California Desert Conservation Lands	CA	4,200,000
2015	Basin and Range National Monument	NV	703,585
	Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument	CA	110,000
	Browns Canyon National Monument	CO	21,586
	Cecil D. Andrus-White Clouds Wilderness	ID	90,775
2014	Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument	NM	496,330
	Pine Forest Range Wilderness	NV	24,015
2013	Rio Grande del Norte National Monument	NM	242,710
	San Juan Islands National Monument	WA	1,000
2012	Fort Ord National Monument	CA	7,212
2011	Elkhorn Ridge Wilderness	CA	11,001
2009	Prehistoric Trackways National Monument	NM	5,280
	Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area	UT	63,478
	Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area	CO	210,149
	Fort Stanton-Snowy River Cave National Conservation Area	NM	24,876
	Red Cliffs National Conservation Area	UT	44,859
	Beartrap Canyon Wilderness	UT	40
	Beauty Mountain Wilderness	CA	15,627
	Big Jacks Creek Wilderness	ID	52,000
	Blackridge Wilderness	UT	13,108
	Bruneau-Jarbridge Rivers Wilderness	ID	90,000
	Canaan Mountains Wilderness	UT	44,531
	Cottonwood Canyon Wilderness	UT	11,667
	Cougar Canyon Wilderness	UT	10,409
	Deep Creek and Deep Creek North Wilderness	UT	4,262
	Doc's Pass Wilderness	UT	17,294
	Dominguez Canyon Wilderness	CO	66,280
	Goose Creek Wilderness	UT	98
	Granite Mountain Wilderness	CA	9,808
	La Verkin Creek Wilderness	UT	445
	Little Jacks Creek Wilderness	ID	51,000
	Lower White River Wilderness	OR	2,806
	North Fork Owyhee Wilderness	ID	43,000
	Oregon Badlands Wilderness	OR	29,000
	Owyhee River Wilderness	ID	267,000
	Pinto Mountains Wilderness	CA	25,000
	Pole Creek Wilderness	ID	12,530
	Red Butte Wilderness	UT	1,537
	Red Mountain Wilderness	UT	18,729
	Sabinoso Wilderness	NM	19,625
	Slaughter Creek Wilderness	UT	3,901
	Soda Mountain Wilderness	OR/CA	24,700
	Spring Basin Wilderness	OR	6,400
	Taylor Creek Wilderness	UT	32

	White Mountains Wilderness	CA	229,953
2008	Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Outstanding Natural Area	FL	86
	Piedras Blancas Light Station Outstanding Natural Area	CA	20
2006	Becky Peak Wilderness	NV	18,189
	Bristlecone Wilderness	NV	14,095
	Cache Creek Wilderness	CA	27,296
	Cedar Mountain Wilderness	UT	100,000
	Cedar Roughts Wilderness	CA	6,287
	Goshute Canyon Wilderness	NV	42,544
	Government Peak Wilderness	NV	6,313
	Highland Ridge Wilderness	NV	68,627
	King Range Wilderness	CA	42,694
	Mount Grafton Wilderness	NV	78,754
	Rocks and Islands Wilderness	CA	6
	South Fork Eel River Wilderness	CA	12,867
	Yuki Wilderness	CA	53,887

***Source: Bureau of Land Management**