

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 1, 2008

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing today to express our concerns regarding H.R. 2016, which has been transferred to the Senate, and urge you to veto this legislation should it come before you. This proposal raises serious questions about the fate of public lands. Our concerns are threefold:

1. We are concerned that the language as drafted would curtail public enjoyment of public lands.

H.R. 2016 as currently drafted would prevent many popular family recreational opportunities and almost all economic activities from taking place on 26 million acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. H.R. 2016 creates a two-tiered system within the BLM, under which some BLM land can be carefully managed for multiple-use, while other vast tracts would be managed for "preservation." Our concern is that preservation will result in no use at all.

Properly managed, public lands can simultaneously supply resources for energy independence, affordable housing, needed food and fiber, wildlife conservation, outdoor recreation and the advancement of science and technology. We can choose to remove land from multiple-use, but that choice is not cost-free; in fact, it will be impossible to meet any of these vital needs domestically if more and more public land is locked-up every year.

2. Codification of the language of H.R. 2016 could seriously impinge use of adjacent non-federal lands.

During the debate on this bill in the House of Representatives, it was asserted that H.R. 2016 merely codifies the existence of a division within the BLM that has already been

administratively created. Upon review, however, H.R. 2016 goes well beyond a codification of what already exists.

Section 3(c)(2) states that the Secretary (of the Interior) shall manage the system (NLCS) “in a manner that protects the values for which the components of the system were designated.” The term “values” is a wholly new concept to the BLM and this would be the first time legislation directing the management and operation of BLM interjects this nebulous, malleable term. This is neither an accidental nor trivial insertion of verbiage in the legislation; it was specifically plucked from the National Park Service’s organic act in order to purposefully mandate broad and vague new management practices.

Some of the “values” the National Park Service employs in the “no-impairment standard” to protect public lands include such concepts as “viewsclapes,” “soundsclapes,” and “smellsclapes.” It happens that many times these subjective concepts are enforced laxly within the park but used with something of draconian severity against the park’s neighbors. We are concerned that using this model for BLM lands which, unlike National Parks, are more often part of a mixed checkerboard of private, state and federal land would only further impinge uses on surrounding non-federal lands.

3. This bill would congressionally lock-up public lands based on administrative designations.

We view the inclusion of Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) in H.R. 2016 as a way to congressionally lock-in the administratively created and released WSA, turning them into de facto wilderness areas.

H.R. 2016 at best would codify a division of BLM (NLCS) that performs work that can better be performed by other agency officials and creates a duplicative agency without a clear mission or structure.

Former Secretary of the Interior Babbitt was forthright from the beginning when he by fiat created the NLCS and set forth what he envisioned it to be: a new way of managing BLM lands (he estimated up to 100 million acres someday) through the NLCS system so that, **“the old bureaucratic mule will awaken to a new future as an environmental steward right up there with the National Park Service and the National Wildlife Refuge System. The day is coming, I believe, when the BLM so often stereotyped and dismissed as the Bureau of Livestock and Mining will be better known as the Bureau of Landscape and Monuments.”**

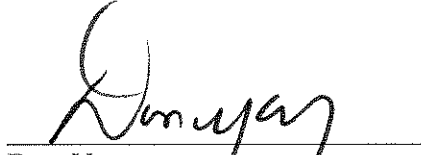
The country as a whole has a continuing need to ensure that our local and national economies grow stronger, more resilient and have access to vital resources from secure domestic sources. One thing is certain: there are no more zealous and knowledgeable guardians of environmental and recreational “values” of these lands than the local people

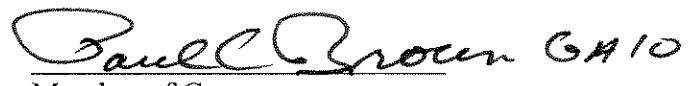
who hunt, fish, ride, hike, camp, raise their kids and, yes, try to earn a living on and around these lands.

In conclusion, we urge you to veto H.R. 2016 in its current form and in any form that would lock away public lands from public use, should this bill come before you.

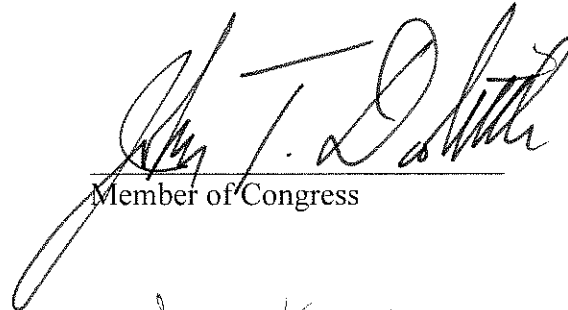

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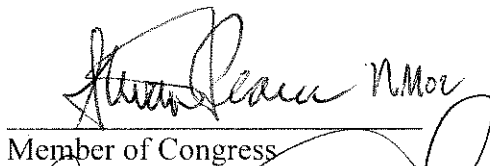

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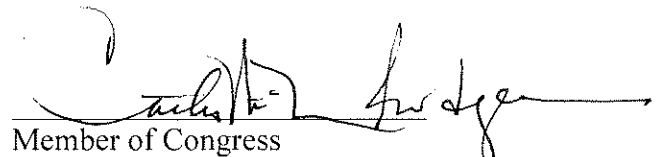

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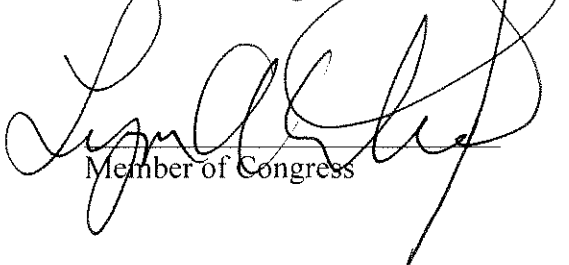

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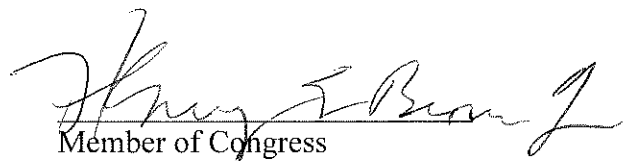

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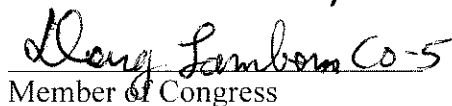

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