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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***Statement from Kristen Miller, Government Affairs Director, Alaska Wilderness League, on the confirmation by the Senate of Robert V. Abbey as Director of the Bureau of Land Management:***

“We welcome Robert Abbey to the effort to responsibly manage Alaska’s millions of acres of public BLM lands and look forward to working closely with him. His extensive experience in land use planning, including managing natural resources and mineral, oil and gas development on millions of acres of public lands, along with his knowledge of environmental law strongly suggests he will make an exemplary steward of the public trust.

“We hope he shares our sense of urgency to undo some of the last administration’s most egregious public lands decisions and establish greater protections for irreplaceable lands in Alaska. Unfortunately, there won’t be much of a grace period for the new director as there is a backlog of bad decisions that await his attention.

“First, we would ask that he immediately work to undo the Bush administration’s pro-development resource management plan for Bristol Bay and to create a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement that would adopt the strongest possible protections for the lands and waters of the Bristol Bay region.

“But that’s just the beginning. During the past eight years, the Bush administration prioritized turning our public treasures over to private interests, ignoring the American public’s claim to these lands. Instead, the nation needs the BLM to prioritize protecting sensitive areas and existing, sustainable uses of public lands while taking a balanced approach to responsible development.

“The Resource Management Plans completed during the last two years of the Bush administration resulted in the staggering reclassification of close to 30 million acres of wilderness-quality lands that had been closed to industrial development for decades—a huge giveaway of Alaska’s public lands to private interests that strongly favored resource development over resource protection. These lopsided and hasty plans need to be revisited.

“Director Abbey has an opportunity to reverse the destructive, pro-development classifications of the last administration. Past BLM management decisions must be revisited using a scientific assessment that seeks to identify the best possible use of these lands for the American public.

“The decisions Director Abbey makes in the coming months will determine the fate of millions of acres of public lands in Alaska and will be felt across these lands for the next 20 years. We look forward to working with him to establish a public lands legacy in Alaska that future generations will applaud.”

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[www.AlaskaWild.org](http://www.AlaskaWild.org)

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