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Statement by Steven Kline, Alaska Wilderness League, on U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee Oversight Hearing on the Bureau of Land Management's Wild Lands Policy

“Today, the U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee held a hearing to discuss the future of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Wild Lands policy. The Wild Lands policy is not a new idea – it is a return to how BLM has administered land policy for decades with support from both sides of the aisle. In 2003, BLM’s authority to inventory Alaska’s lands for wilderness characteristics was revoked; the Wild Lands policy seeks to restore BLM’s authority to manage our most wild places.

In Alaska, the Bureau of Land Management administers approximately 75 million surface acres of federal public land – an area larger than the state of New Mexico. Much of the land in Alaska under the BLM’s authority has not been inventoried; in fact, a statewide inventory has never been conducted. It is irresponsible to leave decisions of our most valuable unprotected areas to the changing whims of politicians.

Instead, policies should be based upon sound science. In September 2010, Secretary Salazar announced a [Secretarial Order](#) to ensure scientific integrity in Departmental decision making. This Order has not been forgotten, nor has its promise to the American people to ensure ‘confidence that the Department of the Interior is basing its decisions on the best available science.’

The wild lands managed by the BLM in Alaska are full of superlatives – Alaska’s longest running river: our mighty Yukon, the world’s largest wild salmon fishery, the largest surging glacier in North America, the arctic and sub-arctic lakes and rivers that provide habitat for millions of migratory and resident bird populations, and the calving, insect-relief and wintering grounds of the largest caribou herd in Alaska to name a few. Within these vast, majestic lands Alaska Natives rely on subsistence resources to maintain a traditional lifestyle. Additionally, people from all over the world seek out some of Alaska’s well-loved recreational areas such as the White Mountains and the Steese National Conservation Area – Alaskan’s backcountry playground.”

Learn more by visiting our [website](#) or reading our [factsheet](#) on the Wild Lands policy.

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