

For Immediate Release

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PLC Leads Opposition to Possible Omnibus Public Lands Bill

WASHINGTON (Dec. 1, 2010) - The Public Lands Council (PLC); American Sheep Industry Association (ASI); National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA); and 15 other livestock groups have submitted letters to congressional leadership and to Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar, stating their opposition to both an omnibus public lands measure and legislation to increase funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) during the lame-duck session. While such legislation has not been introduced, both measures would have the potential to threaten the livelihoods of livestock producers.

In the letter, the livestock groups express concern over reports of the possible introduction of a bill including as many as 60 different land bills, 20 of which could be new wilderness designations in 13 states (possibly exceeding 2 million acres). The letter also addresses Secretary Salazar's statement of support for such a bill, as well as his support for legislation for full funding of LWCF. Funds from LWCF would be used in part to acquire private land, including inholdings, for the purpose of conservation. This would open the door to the possibility of greater restriction on activities such as livestock grazing.

"With the economy in the state that it is, and our livestock producers already struggling to make ends meet, the last thing we can afford is more federal land acquisition and more restrictions on those lands," said PLC President John Falen, a federal lands rancher out of Orovada, Nev. "Adding more land to the federal fold, and removing federal lands ranchers — the on-the-ground stewards of the range — will only add cost to taxpayers."

The letter calls on elected and appointed officials to proceed on the principles of limited federal spending, continued use of our nation's natural resources and local input in the decision-making process to ensure the continuation of responsible productivity on public lands.

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The Public Lands Council (PLC) has represented livestock ranchers who use public lands since 1968, preserving the natural resources and unique heritage of the West. Public land ranchers own nearly 120 million acres of the most productive private land and manage vast areas of public land, accounting for critical wildlife habitat and the nation's natural resources. PLC works to maintain a stable business environment in which livestock producers can conserve the West and feed the nation and world.