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Western States Need Bold Action from BLM to Achieve Their Conservation Goals

The Biden administration is not alone in its efforts to address the [climate and biodiversity crisis](#). Many states have made significant commitments toward protecting our lands, waters, and wildlife. For example, [California](#) and [New Mexico's](#) governors issued executive orders directing their state agencies to meet 30x30 conservation goals and [Colorado](#) and [Nevada's](#) governors have issued executive orders to protect more wildlife habitat across their states. Despite these efforts, states across the West cannot achieve their conservation goals without the BLM working with them to ensure lands, waters, and wildlife are protected. Below are some of the places where critical federal work needs to be done to ensure that the Biden administration, state, and local governments can meet their conservation goals:

- **Arizona:** The BLM manages [12.1 million acres](#) in Arizona, including currently managing 675,000 acres in the state as LWCs. The agency has also identified another 1.58 million acres of LWCs and local communities have identified nearly two million more acres of public lands worth of protection as LWCs. Some of the lands that could receive stronger protections in Arizona include: portions of Burro Creek in Yavapai County; Hot Springs Canyon, which is a tributary to the San Pedro River; the iconic summits of Dos Cabezas Mountains, in Cochise County; and diverse high desert shrublands contiguous to the Arrastra, and Santa Teresa.
 - **Current Action:** Management Plans for the sprawling Kingman and Safford Field Offices have not been updated in 30 years. The outdated plans need to be revised to account for the dramatically different climate and socio-political landscape of our modern era. New plans should identify and protect Lands with Wilderness Characteristics as WSAs, identify and protect Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and provide safeguards for biodiversity, precious riparian areas, and rare desert ecosystems.
- **California:** The BLM manages [15 million acres](#) in California and within the state, the BLM has identified almost [731,000 acres](#) of Lands with Wilderness Characteristics that could be protected as WSAs. Additionally, citizens from around the state have identified an additional 3 million acres that the agency should consider for protection. Some of the lands that could receive stronger protections in California include: Butte Creek in Butte County; Gilham Butte and Lacks Creek in Humboldt County; Conglomerate Mesa in Inyo County; Willis Ridge-Tomki Creek, Eden Creek, Eden Valley, and English Ridge in Mendocino County; Bodie Hills in Mono County; Mojave Trails in San Bernardino County; Clear Creek Greenway (Swasey) in Shasta County; Horseshoe Ranch-Jenny Creek, in Siskiyou County; Beegum Gorge and Deer Creek in Tehama County; and Sacramento River Bend Area/ACEC in Tehama and Shasta Counties.
 - **Current Action:** The Arcata and Redding Field offices have announced a combined planning process to develop a new resource management plan. The deadline for public scoping comments on the plan is June 28, 2022. WSA and ACEC designations should be part of the suite of actions BLM considers.
- **Colorado:** The BLM manages [8.3 million acres in Colorado](#) and nearly [1.5 million acres](#) of public lands managed by the BLM could be protected as Wilderness Study Areas. Community-identified LWCs include more than 4 million acres. Some of the lands that could receive stronger protections in Colorado include: Adobe Badlands in Delta County; Snaggletooth East wildlands in Dolores County; wildlands along the Arkansas River including Echo Canyon and North Coal Dale; Eightmile Mountain in Fremont County; wildlands along the upper Colorado River; Grand Hogback in Garfield County; Bangs Canyon and Maverick in Mesa County; and Vermillion Basin and Cold Springs Mountain in Moffat County.
 - **Current Action:** Valuable wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation opportunities from Cooper Mountain to Red Hill Pass could be conserved as Backcountry Conservation Areas through the Eastern Colorado Resource

Management Plan from Cooper Mountain in Colorado's rugged Gold Belt region to Red Hill Pass up in the South Park National Heritage Area.

- **Nevada:** The BLM manages [48 million acres](#) in Nevada, including millions of acres of community identified LWCs that are deserving of enhanced protections. Some of the lands that need greater protection in Nevada include: Avi Kwa Ame in Clark County; Stillwater Range in Churchill County; Palisade Mesa in Nye County; and Granite Banjo in Washoe County.
 - **Current Action:** BLM is exploring a Nevada-wide Resource Management Plan revision. The plan could include up to 18 management plans, including plans needed for Nevada's two BLM managed national monuments - Basin and Range National Monument and Gold Butte National Monument. The state-wide plan is an opportunity to take a more holistic look at the state to identify ways to advance goals within the America the Beautiful plan and help identify important cultural areas which are under-surveyed.

- **New Mexico:** The BLM manages [13.5 million acres](#) in New Mexico and nearly 355,000 acres of public lands of BLM-identified Lands with Wilderness Characteristics. There are additional community-identified LWCs totaling another 3.5 million acres that should be confirmed and considered. Almost all of these Lands with Wilderness Characteristics areas are currently lacking any protective management. Some of the lands that need greater protection in New Mexico include: Guadalupe Units in the Carlsbad field office; Otero Mesa, Otero County; San Juan Badlands, Sandoval County; and Cerro de la Olla and Rio San Antonio East, Taos County.
 - **Current Action:** There are planning processes underway or upcoming in the Rio Puerco, Carlsbad, Farmington, and Tri-County field offices as well as Rio Grande del Norte National Monument and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument.

- **Oregon/Washington:** The BLM manages [15.7 million acres](#) in Oregon and [1 million acres](#) in Washington. The Oregon-Washington office has identified more than [3.6 million acres](#) of LWCs around both states that the agency should consider for protection. Many of these lands with wilderness characteristics are currently lacking any protective management, while other LWCs are only protected pursuant to court order. Some of the lands eligible for stronger protections in Oregon include expansive areas of connected habitat in the Greater Hart-Sheldon in Lake County and in the Owyhee Canyonlands in Malheur County.
 - **Current Action:** Planning processes in the Vale District and the Lakeview District are key opportunities to conserving LWCs in eastern Oregon. In the Vale District, the Southeastern Oregon Resource Advisory Council collaboratively identified approximately 400,000 acres of LWCs that should be protected for wilderness values in the Southeast Oregon Resource Management Plan Amendment. In the Lakeview District, the BLM could administratively promote protection of wilderness-quality lands as part of a regional strategy to conserve habitat connectivity and wildlife migration across land ownerships.

- **Utah:** The BLM manages nearly [22.8 million acres](#) of public lands in Utah and the agency has identified almost [4 million acres](#) of LWCs that could be administratively protected and an additional 1.8 million acres of citizen inventoried areas that should be considered for protection. Many of these lands include Utah's wildest red rock wilderness; iconic public lands that Americans dream of when they think about the red rock country of southern Utah. Some of the lands that could receive stronger protections in Utah include: Hatch Canyon and White Canyon in San Juan County; Fisher Towers, Hell Roaring Canyon, and Goldbar Canyon in Grand County; Eagle Canyon, San Rafael River, and Limestone Cliffs in Emery County; Dirty Devil, Ragged Mountain, and Colt Mesa in Garfield County; and Vermillion Cliffs and Forty Mile Gulch in Kane County.
 - **Current Action:** BLM should be proactive as it prepares comprehensive plans for furthering renewable energy and conserving the greater sage grouse to look for opportunities to also establish new WSAs. New monument management planning will also present opportunities to establish new WSAs and ACECs.