January 25, 2011

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar -

On behalf of the National Association of Counties and its Western Interstate Region, I am writing to express my deep concern with your decision to issue Secretarial Order 3310, which would overturn the established moratorium on new wilderness inventories on public lands. The Order directs the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to begin to inventory, designate, and manage Federal lands as Wilderness independent of the United States Congress.

Secretarial Order 3310 undermines the established public process for land use planning and expressly violates the intent of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) as only Congress has the authority to designate lands as Wilderness.

Counties should be fully involved as affected partners in any process to designate wilderness. Congress and Federal agencies should coordinate with affected counties when considering special land use designations that impact the use and status of public lands. NACo strongly opposes the actions by the Interior Department and maintains our members position opposing Federal land management agency actions that limit access and multiple use of lands that otherwise would be available to the public (i.e. Wilderness Study Areas, "Wild Lands", or any other de facto wilderness designation).

The active management of America’s Public lands is essential to the public health, safety, and economic vitality of communities across the United States. Revenues generated from public land supports critical state and local government services and loss of such revenues would further cripple the economies of local communities and place unnecessary new burdens on State and local government budgets.

NACo respectfully requests that the Department of the Interior immediately rescind Secretarial Order 3310. Please direct any questions and correspondence to Associate Legislative Director Ryan R. Yates at (202) 942-4207 or ryates@naco.org.

Sincerely,

Larry E. Naake
Executive Director