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Subcommittee on Federal Lands
U.S. House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

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Greetings Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in advance of the upcoming hearing on H.R. 3397. We respectfully oppose H.R. 3397 and support the adoption of the Bureau of Land Management's Public Lands Rule.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) stewards many of California's most spectacular places, in total overseeing about 15 percent of California's land mass. These landscapes including rangelands, forests, mountains, and deserts across our state. BLM lands provide important opportunities for Californians to recreate outdoors, including by hunting and fishing. These lands also provide important habitat and connectivity corridors for wildlife, allow for natural carbon sequestration, and protect clean water and air for local communities.

The Proposed Conservation and Landscape Health Rule is a thoughtful improvement to federal land stewardship. Simply put, it will better enable BLM to fulfill its mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of our shared public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

BLM's mission of Multiple Use and Sustained Yield will be strengthened with a focus on healthy and resilient ecosystems. California demonstrates that economic prosperity, clean energy, and environmental protections for air, water, and biodiversity can go hand in hand. California's economy has grown into the fourth largest economy in the world while maintaining world-leading environmental standards that keep our ecosystems and communities healthy.

We applaud the Bureau of Land Management for its proposed approach to place environmental conservation and restoration on equal footing with other uses on BLM-managed lands. This important shift will help conserve California's iconic landscapes, which sustain tourism, provide our residents public access to nature, offer refuge for wide range of wildlife, and safeguard our water supplies.

Importantly, finalizing and strengthening the proposed updates to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) will help to advance the solar energy and other renewable energy

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projects we need to achieve our clean energy goals. In California, we know that ambitious clean energy development is aided by well-planned and located environmental conservation. As BLM's own Desert Renewable Conservation Plan in California has demonstrated, land use planning that considers ecosystem needs alongside energy development can actually expedite permit issuance, speed project delivery and reduce conflict and delay for important new energy projects.

We also strongly support BLM's prioritization of partnership with Native American Tribes in this updated rule. Native people have stewarded these lands since time immemorial and must have a central role in future land stewardship.

Designation of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) have been successful conservation tools in California and updates to how these areas are designated and managed are essential to effectively address climate change and biodiversity loss. Encouraging the designation and durable protection of ACECs where needed and appropriate to protect imperiled plants and animals represents an important advancement to advance the BLM's conservation mission.

Several existing ACECs in California have played an important role in our environmental management, including:

- Hopper Mountain ACEC (Ventura County) was designated to limit certain uses during California Condor nesting season and has helped the successful California Condor Recovery Program, which has brought the species back from near extinction.
- Kaweah ACEC (Tulare County) limits certain activities to protect the only grove of Giant Sequoia trees managed by BLM at Case Mountain, while providing public access including hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian trails. Giant Sequoias are not only a culturally iconic species in California, but also are important for sequestering carbon and helping combat climate change.
- Pine Hill Preserve ACEC (El Dorado County) was designated to protect eight rare plant species, four of which are endemic, or found nowhere else on earth due to the unique soil type in this area. This area also provides access for hiking and educational resources and opportunities on California's rare plants.

We look forward to submitting more detailed written comments on BLM's proposed rule update in coming weeks. We are thankful for all the Natural Resources Committee, the Bureau of Land Management and other federal partners do to ensure the effective stewardship of federal lands in California.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,



Wade Crowfoot

Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency