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Statement by Rep. James P. Moran
Before the National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee of the Natural
Resources Committee

Thursday, June 7, 2007

On the
National Landscape Conservation System Act (H.R. 2016)

Chairman Grijalva, Members of the Committee and honored guests, I am pleased to join you and one of my fellow Co-Chairs of the National Landscape Conservation System Congressional Caucus, Mary Bono, at today's hearing in support of H.R. 2016, the National Landscape Conservation System Act. This simple piece of legislation will codify the Bureau of Land Management's conservation system, so that it will be recognized and managed as a national system.

These lands were rightly given special status as National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers and National Scenic and Historic Trails by Congress and by Presidential Proclamation. While the majority of these lands are in the Western United States, we need look no further than just across the Potomac River in Northern Virginia where a segment of the Potomac Heritage Trail crosses my congressional district.

Like the widely popular Potomac Heritage Trail, the preservation of these lands is undeniably important for recreation and open space. Of equal or perhaps even greater importance, however, is their role in conserving landmark natural, cultural and scientific resources. To date, however, Congress has not recognized their management as a whole in a unified system.

These places are unique and diverse and continue to provide our nation with new discoveries of historic, cultural and scientific importance. In Utah, a very rare dinosaur skin was discovered with hadrosaur bone fossils. We can explore our own history and settlement of this continent through the Lewis and Clark Trail, the California, Pony Express, the Oregon Trail, and the Mormon Pioneer and Old Spanish National Historic Trails. New insect discoveries are emerging from Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument in Arizona, including a new genus and four new species of crickets and two new species of millipedes. The Headwaters Forest Reserve is home to threatened

Marbled Murrelets and the endangered Northern Spotted Owls. The Vermillion Cliffs National Monument in Arizona is the release site and habitat for the endangered California Condor, which was brought back from the brink of extinction.

Seven years ago this month, these lands were administratively organized as a system by the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Bureau of Land Management has proven they can manage these lands for conservation, and it is time for Congress to give this conservation system their stamp of approval. There is demonstrated bipartisan support for the conservation system and this legislation through the National Landscape Conservation System Congressional Caucus. This measure also enjoys the support of the Bush Administration. I thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement and I urge your swift consideration of this legislation.