

## **Wilderness and Public Lands Policies: The Promise of Multiple Use in the West**

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Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's Christmas announcement on the new "wild lands" policy was just the latest in a two year effort to limit access to public lands for oil and natural gas development. Citizen-proposed wilderness areas, de facto wilderness management, buffers around parks and Wilderness Study Areas, and other efforts have tipped the balance away from the multiple use of public lands towards preservation only. This presentation will cover wilderness and related policies such as Master Leasing Plans; changes to the onshore program; permitting and project environmental analysis delays; and leasing irregularities, all of which are causing exploration and production companies to reconsider their commitment to public lands. These actions significantly impact job creation and economic activity in rural communities across the West. Western Energy Alliance alone has identified \$3.9 billion of investment that was prevented by these policies, thereby preventing the creation of more than 16,000 jobs.

But all is not lost: counties, states, ranchers, recreation groups, industries, and other sectors of society have become re-engaged in reaction to these overreaching policies. Congressional efforts to hold the Administration accountable for these policies hold promise, even at a time of divided government. The presentation will discuss these and other political efforts by communities and advocacy groups to protect the tradition of the responsible productive use of non-park, non-wilderness lands in the West.