

During the "lame duck" session of the 111th Congress, Democratic members of the U.S. Senate had their sights set on passing yet another omnibus public lands bill to designate thousands of acres of wilderness and enact other restrictions on federal land-use. Thankfully, this effort was met with strong resistance by Senate conservatives and was quickly dropped before Congress adjourned on December 22nd. However, in what

appears to be a consolation prize to the environmental activist community and its supporters, upon Congress' adjournment Department of the Interior Secretary Salazar released

[Secretarial Order #3310](#)

, which instructs the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to identify and designate BLM lands with wilderness characteristics as "Wild Lands."

By designating "Wild Lands" through land-use planning, this order represents a deliberate end-run around the authority of Congress to designate lands as wilderness. While I have long opposed wilderness designations under any circumstances due to their extreme restrictions on beneficial and economic use of our federal lands, as well as the management restrictions that inhibit local efforts to address the growing threat of wildfires, I also believe that those decisions are best made through open debate and a vote by the Congress instead of through a backdoor process that is solely at the discretion of a federal agency. Moreover, as the Obama Administration continues to claim that it has no plans to designate national monuments in response to a leaked [memo](#) describing potential monument sites (including two within our Northern California Congressional District), this latest action further undermines their credibility. Instead, these statements simply reinforce the Administration's "lock it up" agenda with respect to multiple-use of federal lands. As the 112th Congress convenes with an emboldened conservative majority, I will pursue whatever means possible to prevent this Secretarial Order or any other policy from further restricting recreation, forest management, mining, grazing, and other valuable uses of our public lands in Northern California.