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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Groups Mark Milestone for Network of Protected Lands Threats Remain to Natural and Cultural Resources

DOLORES, CO- As the National Landscape Conservation System prepares to mark its 10th anniversary at one of its signature units, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, representatives of the conservation groups taking part in the July 12 celebration are raising concerns about the growing threat to these and other National Conservation Lands from vandalism, looting, irresponsible recreation, and more.

The nonprofit Conservation Lands Foundation believes the National Conservation Lands can proudly stand alongside the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System as part of our national heritage. This new and distinctive collection of undeveloped lands provides Americans the ability to explore and reconnect with nature. However, these lands are facing increasing threats.

Native American rock art has been used for target practice or scratched out. Boulders containing petroglyphs have been trucked away, one just weeks ago in Arizona. Signs warning of endangered plants and wildlife such as Bighorn sheep are repainted or removed altogether. Rock shelters and habitation sites are burrowed into, sifted through, and dug out by those searching for artifacts. Looters have even disturbed human remains. And at one prospective National Conservation Lands site, Joshua Trees older than the U.S. Constitution have been pulled from the ground and their trunk and branches used for firewood.

The Foundation is hopeful that the 10th anniversary will raise awareness of our National Conservation Lands, especially for places like the Canyons which contains the highest density of archaeological sites in the nation, including cliff dwellings, villages, great kivas and rock art sites. Canyons has seen a good deal of vandalism and looting over the years and still faces the formidable task of identifying, inventorying, and protecting three-quarters of the estimated 30,000 archaeological sites believed to exist on its 180,000 acres.

For its part, the Foundation will lead a restoration project at the Canyons just prior to the July 12 10th anniversary festivities. The event will kick off a *Season of Service*, during which groups across the country will conduct volunteer service projects to help restore and conserve individual units within the National Conservation Lands. Several leaders of these groups, including Friends of Organ

Mountains (NM), Friends of Desert Mountains (CA), Friends of Missouri River Breaks (MT), Friends of McInnis Canyons (CO) and Friends of Red Rocks (NV), will be on hand on July 12.

The National Conservation Lands are the country's newest permanent collection of protected public lands and waters managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The lands include some of the nation's most spectacular scenic, historic, natural, cultural and archaeological sites. Home to rare plants and animals, dinosaur fossils and Native American sites, the National Conservation Lands provide a chance to experience the history of the American West.

For More Information on the 10th Anniversary please contact:

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