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## Our National Conservation Lands

### Newest Permanently Protected Collection of Public Lands- Seek Identity and Support

Award-winning writer and documentary filmmaker Dayton Duncan ("The National Parks," "Lewis and Clark," "The West," and many more) and screenwriter, director, and Academy Award nominee Edward Norton ("American History X," "The Incredible Hulk," "Kingdom of Heaven," "The Illusionist," and "The Painted Veil") have teamed up to bring greater attention, recognition and protection to our National Conservation Lands (formally known as the National Landscape Conservation System).

Duncan and Norton are being joined by such conservation and preservation legends as former Idaho Governor and Secretary of the Interior Cecil Andrus, former Arizona Governor and Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt, first director of the National Museum of the American Indian Rick West, and National Trust for Historic Preservation President Emeritus Richard Moe.

Our National Conservation Lands include some of the country's most spectacular scenic, historic, natural, cultural and archaeological sites. The Lands, which officially were recognized by Congress and President Obama just last year, are a national collection of the last places where you can experience the history of the American West. The Lands, 866 sites and 27 million acres in all, also are home to numerous rare and endangered plants and animals, dinosaur fossils and prehistoric trackways, and sacred native American sites.

Very few seem to have heard or read about them. Yet:

***Canyon of the Ancients in Colorado*** has the highest known density of archeological sites in the country, with nearly 100 sites per square mile in places. These are rich, well-preserved remnants of native cultures going back thousands of years. Another site, Sloan Canyon in Nevada, has what has been described as the Sistine Chapel of Native American rock art.

The ***Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah*** has yielded more information about the end of the dinosaur era than any other place in the world. Fossils of many species of dinosaurs and other animals, large and small, have been found, revealing new information about what North America was like before the dinosaurs vanished. By the way, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument is so remote that it was the last place in the lower 48 States to be formally mapped.

Paddlefish, with ancestors dating back to the Eocene epoch (48 million years ago), thrive in the protected backwaters of the ***Upper Missouri Wild and Scenic River in Montana***.

The only physical evidence of the Lewis and Clark expedition in situ—William Clark's 1806 signature in sandstone—is located within Pompeys Pillar, Montana.

***Prehistoric Trackways National Monument in New Mexico*** is called a "megatrackway" because each red bed layer contains numerous surfaces where tracks of amphibians, reptiles, insects, plants, and

petrified wood from 50 million years before the dinosaurs can be found. It's been called the Rosetta Stone of the Paleozoic Era.

The 200,000-acre ***Carrizo Plain*** is one of the last remaining untouched areas of an ecosystem that used to span the great Central Valley of California. Carrizo Plain is recognized for its exceptional biological, cultural and geologic resources, including being one of the best places to view and study the San Andreas Fault.

***Fort Stanton-Snowy River Cave in New Mexico*** is where the discovery of a newly discovered cave passage is being described as “like a time capsule from earlier climate eras, where you can essentially peel back the layers of time in this cave, like pages in a book, and read the history of hydrology and the climate of the region. “

***Headwaters Forest Reserve in California*** contains one of the last remnants of ancient redwoods, some more than 1,500 years old.

***Ironwood Forest near Tucson, Arizona*** is the only federally designated area set aside to protect the Ironwood tree that can live to be over 800 years old and acts as a nursery plant for budding saguaros. Stands of ironwood, palo verde, and saguaro blanket the monument floor beneath the rugged mountain ranges, including the Silver Bell Mountains. Ragged Top Mountain is a biological and geological crown jewel.

***Snake River Birds of Prey's*** unique combination of climate, geology, soils and vegetation in Idaho supports an extraordinary number of prey and the most significant collection of nesting raptors in North America, if not the world.

Even Hollywood has taken note of these Lands. Because of the iconic old West landscapes or structures to be found on them, classic movies, such as “Red River,” “Duel in the Sun,” “Hombre,” “Winchester 73,” “The Big Country,” and many more were filmed at one site.

Sadly, these Lands have not gotten the level of funding, protection, recognition, or support that they need from the federal government. Many cultural resources, for example, are increasingly threatened by vandalism and looting. Native American rock art is used for target practice. Boulders containing petroglyphs have been trucked away, one just recently in Arizona. Human remains are disturbed. And rock shelters and habitation sites are burrowed into, sifted through, and dug out by those searching for artifacts. Dumping is commonplace.

Dayton Duncan and Edward Norton are working to address these matters and certainly would be willing to work with you on the production of a piece. Some truly spectacular photos of many of the 800 sites within the National Conservation Lands are available.

I will call you soon to see if you have an interest in pursuing. Thank you.

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