



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, November 16, 2022

CONTACTS:

Mike Quigley, Arizona State Director of The Wilderness Society, 520-334-8741

Sandy Bahr, Director of the Grand Canyon Chapter of the Sierra Club, 602-253-8633

Kelly Burke, Executive Director of Wild Arizona, 928-606-7870

### **NEW BLM Guidance will Help Protect Arizona's World Class Wildlife**

**Washington, DC** – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued new guidance to land managers today prioritizing wildlife conservation and connectivity on the agency's 245 million acres across the west. The Instruction Memorandum titled "Habitat Connectivity on Public Lands" directs the agency to assess wildlife corridors on BLM lands and to make plans to safeguard them for the future. The new policy directs local public land managers to work closely with a broad range of stakeholders – including Tribal Nations, state and local wildlife officials, conservation groups, and scientific experts – to help incorporate local knowledge and best practices as well as the latest scientific research in developing plans to conserve and restore wildlife habitat connectivity.

From renowned mule deer migration routes into Utah, to mountain ranges and river riparian corridors of the Sky Islands region crucial to the survival of imperiled jaguars, Arizona's BLM lands provide vital connections for native wildlife – whether they're common big-game animals, or rare species hanging on by a thread. This new direction comes at a critical time for protecting Arizona's wildlife, as BLM managers have initiated extensive Travel Management Planning efforts across the state to be completed over the coming few years. Roads and vehicle traffic that fragment natural habitats are major impediments to wildlife movement, and the new policy provides much needed guidance to identify key habitats and reduce the potential for conflict and mortality.

"Prioritizing wildlife connectivity is especially critical across Arizona's now increasingly arid and fire-prone landscapes. As our state collectively deals with the accelerating impacts of climate change, our iconic wildlife needs vital wildlife corridors of protected and connected habitat areas including natural waters to ensure their future survival, a future directly intertwining with our own," said Kelly Burke, Executive Director of Wild Arizona. "We welcome BLM's new policy guidance and look forward to working with local managers to implement it as they begin travel management planning. BLM deserves a lot of credit for prioritizing wildlife conservation and connectivity. We look forward to seeing it on the ground here in Arizona."

"Western communities, especially those here in Arizona are rapidly feeling the impacts of climate change. But collaboration and shared planning across federal, state and tribal entities—as this guidance provides—will secure a healthier future for us, for wildlife and for the natural systems that support us all," said Sandy Bahr, Director of the Grand Canyon Chapter of the Sierra Club. "Arizona is home to some of the country's most spectacular wildlife and millions of people flock to the state each year to enjoy

Arizona's wildlife viewing opportunities. BLM's focus on ensuring wildlife connectivity across the state and the West will be critical as we work to combat the growing challenges from the climate crisis."

"The Arizona BLM office is about to begin comprehensive travel management planning for areas they manage across the state. This new national policy will help ensure that they are assessing and managing to protect connectivity and wildlife habitat as they develop new travel management plans," said Mike Quigley, State Director of The Wilderness Society. "Arizonians live here for a reason. Our iconic canyons, forests, mountains and deserts are the pride of the southwest. We hope this is the first of a number of policy announcements that help the BLM ensure the future of our state's wildlife and outdoors while establishing the BLM as a clear conservation champion across the West."

National Organization's Statements on the BLM's wildlife announcement:

**Sierra Club Statement**

<https://www.sierraclub.org/press-releases/2022/11/sierra-club-welcomes-blm-memo-habitat-connectivity>

**The Wilderness Society's Statement**

<https://www.wilderness.org/articles/press-release/new-guidance-makes-wildlife-major-priority-public-lands>

**Audubon's Statement**

<https://www.audubon.org/news/federal-agency-increases-efforts-protect-habitat-connectivity-public-lands>

**NWF's Statement**

<https://www.nwf.org/Latest-News/Press-Releases/2022/11-15-22-New-Guidance-from-Bureau-of-Land-Management>

**Mountain Pact's Statement**

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/546d52b2e4b079301f4abb7f/t/637412f2704c3967cdc174b5/1668551410983/Statement\\_+Instruction+Memorandum+on+Habitat+Connectivity+on+Public+Lands.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/546d52b2e4b079301f4abb7f/t/637412f2704c3967cdc174b5/1668551410983/Statement_+Instruction+Memorandum+on+Habitat+Connectivity+on+Public+Lands.pdf)

**TRCPs Statement**

<https://www.trcp.org/2022/11/15/trcp-welcomes-blms-increased-emphasis-habitat-connectivity/>