

On Equal Ground

Righting the Balance between Energy Development and Conservation on Public Lands through a Common Sense “One-to-One” Principle

Former Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt has proposed a simple, powerful and common-sense principle: for every **one acre** of our public land leased to the oil and gas industry during President Obama’s tenure, **one acre** should be permanently protected – potentially as a national park, wilderness area, or national monument – for the good of our economy and future generations.

This ‘One-to-One’ principle will ensure that:

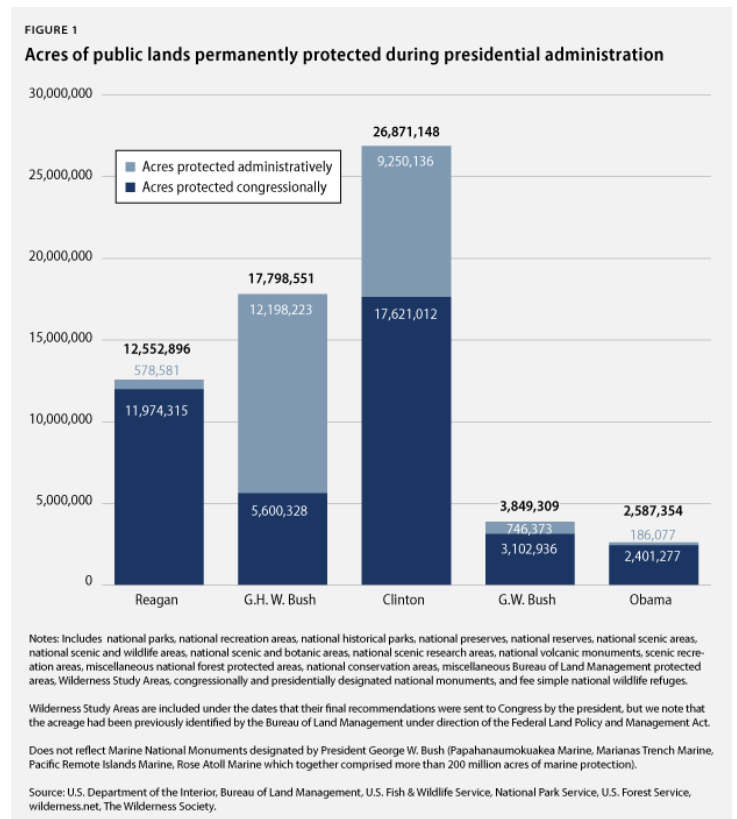
- The conservation of our public lands is **on equal ground** with energy development;
- Tourism, hunting, fishing, and the \$646 billion outdoor recreation economy are **on equal ground** with the interests of oil and gas companies; and
- Our responsibility to future generations and the climate is **on equal ground** with the pressures and needs of today.

The President and the Congress can do this. They can begin by committing to make up the deficit of the past four years by working to permanently protect 4 million acres of land. And going forward, they should commit to permanently protecting one additional acre for each acre leased out to the oil and gas industry.

Imbalance: A Recent Trend

Throughout **our own history**, the President and the Congress have traditionally worked together to set aside public lands for future generations to enjoy – enacting legislation to create wilderness, national parks, and conservation areas, and Presidents of both parties have regularly exercised their authority to establish national monuments and wildlife refuges.

Since 2001, however, we’ve seen a dramatic decline in public land conservation as Washington has become more gridlocked and broken. As a result, over the past four years, the oil and gas industry has leased more than 6 million acres of public lands, compared with only 2.6 million acres permanently protected. This lopsided outcome in favor of the oil and gas industry is inequitable to the American people and must be corrected.



Achieving the “One-to-One” Principle

The goal of the “One-to-One” principle is simple: over the course of President Obama’s term, for every one acre of land the Administration leases for development, one acre of land should be permanently protected. Meeting this goal will not be easy. The 112th Congress, recently departed, was the first Congress since World War II not to protect a single new acre of public land as a park, wilderness area, or national monument. And with Congress stalled, the U.S. continues to lose an area of open space the size of Rhode Island to development every year.

To fulfill the “One-to-One” principle, the President and the Congress must take action.

- **The Congress** must take action to pass the **30 wilderness and conservation land bills** that were log jammed at the end of 2012. These bills were sponsored – as per custom – by home state Senators or Representatives and, all together, would protect approximately 5 million acres of public land.
- **The President**, for his part, should make deliberate use of his executive powers, beginning with the Antiquities Act like many of his predecessors have done. If broadly-supported conservation bills do not advance in Congress, the President should use his executive authority under **the Antiquities Act** to protect deserving proposals. In addition, the President should pledge administrative action on the **18 backcountry areas** that they recommended Congress move to protect in 2011. These areas alone cover 3.5 million acres.

To ensure that the “One-to-One” principle is being met, **the President** will need to set **clear annual goals**. He will also need to solicit the recommendations of his Secretary of Agriculture and Secretary of Interior on areas that should be considered for permanent protection through his executive authority. If annual goals are not being met, the President should **suspend quarterly oil and gas lease sales** until action is taken to correct the imbalance.

The Administration and Congress should take other steps as well to help right the balance between oil and gas development and conservation on public lands. Those steps include:

- Providing full and dedicated funding from offshore oil and gas development to the creation of new parks and open spaces through the **Land and Water Conservation Fund**;
- Directing onshore oil and gas royalties to a **mitigation fund** to lessen the impacts of development, protect wildlife habitat, **and improve access for hunters and anglers**;
- Incorporating a “One-to-One” principle into landscape-scale management plans, including **Master Leasing Plans (MLPs)** and **Resource Management Plans (RMPs)**.