



wildsight

For Immediate Release

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Flathead visit from top United States cabinet official

Ken Salazar, John Bergenske discuss mining impacts, potential solutions

Whitefish, Montana: Wildsight's executive director John Bergenske joined U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar in the U.S. portion of the Flathead River Valley today to discuss the potential impacts of mining on this world class resource.

"This is a landscape of national significance and we must do whatever we can do to protect it for our children and grandchildren," Salazar said.

In June, an international coalition of conservation organizations from Canada and the United States petitioned the UNESCO World Heritage Committee at its meeting in Spain. The coalition requested that Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park be added to the list of *World Heritage Sites In Danger*, due to proposed mining activities in the headwaters of the Flathead, which flows into the Peace Park.

As a result of the petition, the committee voted unanimously to send an international team of scientists to evaluate and provide recommendations to ensure the site's protection.

The committee also requested that Canada and the United States prepare a joint report on the impacts of proposed mining near Waterton-Glacier and present it at the next World Heritage Committee meeting.

In June of 2008, President Obama's campaign issued a statement expressing concern over proposed coal mining in the Canadian Flathead. The statement said, "*The Flathead River and Glacier National Park are treasures that should be preserved for future generations.*"

John Bergenske's statement on Secretary Salazar's visit to the Flathead area today:

"I thanked Secretary Salazar on behalf of the Flathead Wild coalition for traveling to Montana to visit the transboundary Flathead River Valley. It's encouraging to see the top U.S. Cabinet member in charge of land management engaged on the issue. An on-the-ground visit is the best way to understand the devastating impacts that mining would have on the Flathead River.

"The Flathead River Valley is an international treasure that we share with our American neighbors. Proposed coal mines, coalbed methane extraction, and gold exploration threaten wildlife, pristine waters, and the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park.

"Wildsight and our international coalition is pleased that the Obama Administration understands the tremendous value of the Flathead River Valley and is committed to cooperating with the government of Canada to ensure that the World Heritage Committee's

scientific mission, and the joint report on mining impacts, are thorough. We hope these will be leading examples of international cooperation under the World Heritage Convention.

“The international community recognizes that both Canada and the United States have a global responsibility to protect Waterton-Glacier, the world’s first international peace park.

“We encourage the government of British Columbia to act on its responsibilities to British Columbians and the world.

“The Flathead Wild coalition is calling on the B.C. government to permanently protect the Flathead River Valley by:

- legislating no mining or oil and gas development in the Flathead;
- establishing a Wildlife Management Area encompassing the Flathead and adjacent drainages that secures wildlife habitat and connectivity in Canada’s southern Rocky Mountains;
- establishing a National Park Wilderness Reserve in the lower southeastern third of the Flathead -- encompassing the missing piece of the international Peace Park.”

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About Wildsight

Wildsight works locally, regionally and globally to protect biodiversity and encourage sustainable communities in Canada's Columbia and southern Rocky Mountain region. This area is internationally recognized as a keystone to conservation in western North America. For more information, please visit www.Wildsight.ca, and www.Flathead.ca.

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