Fifty years ago, the Wilderness Act of 1964 created the National Wilderness Preservation System. By enacting this groundbreaking law, Congress recognized the value and diversity of America’s natural heritage by protecting a portion of our public lands as wilderness, allowing them to remain untrammled, natural, and free. Wilderness is our common inheritance of humility, freedom, and democracy passed from our grandparents to our grandchildren. Wilderness is a refuge for wild creatures and a source of clean water, where the Earth in its natural state carries out its eternal cycles of birth, death, and change. Wilderness is a source of challenge and inspiration, where visitors can meet nature on its own terms. Our wilderness, protected by law for the American people, is a lasting connection to our uniquely American heritage. In 2014, we celebrate 50 years of one of this Nation’s greatest inventions: a lasting legacy of public lands and a treasure to be cherished, safeguarded, celebrated, and enjoyed from generation to generation.