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## National Park Service News Release

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### Interior Secretary Jewell Designates New National Natural Landmark

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell on Nov. 15 designated the West Bijou Site in eastern Colorado as the newest national natural landmark. With a rich fossil record, this 7,613-acre site provides critical information for understanding the timescale of all of Earth’s history.

Located 31 miles east of Denver, the West Bijou Site National Natural Landmark features a 1.18-inch band of sediments that marks both the massive extinction of dinosaurs and the dawning of the new Cenozoic Era. This moment in time is called the Cretaceous–Paleogene boundary and is the most recent of Earth’s five large mass extinctions. West Bijou Site also contains minerals and metals that support the hypothesis that an asteroid caused the extinctions.

Administered by the National Park Service (NPS), the [National Natural Landmarks Program](#) was established in 1962. It recognizes and encourages conservation of sites that best illustrate the nation’s biological and geological history. National natural landmarks are owned by a variety of public and private land stewards and the federal designation imposes no new land use restrictions that were not in effect prior to designation. The NPS works cooperatively with landowners, managers and partners to promote conservation and appreciation of our nation's natural heritage.

“The information contained in that thin sediment band illustrates the key feature of national natural landmarks as significant natural areas recognized for their irreplaceable features,” said National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis. “They teach us extraordinary lessons about the world around us. The National Park Service partners with landmark owners in support of their voluntary conservation of these important areas, another important feature of the program.”

The non-profit Plains Conservation Center owns the property that contains West Bijou Site. This conservation organization strives to connect people with the natural and cultural history of the high plains through preservation, education, research and nurturing sound conservation and

environmental ethics. The Colorado Natural Heritage Program evaluated the area and determined that it meets the criteria for national significance.

The designation of West Bijou Site as a national natural landmark recognizes its incomparable contribution to the Earth's geologic history through its unique features, including pollen records and vertebrate fossils. Additionally, West Bijou Creek runs through the site, supporting a diverse ecosystem of plant and wildlife communities, including some rare species. West Bijou Site is the 599th National Natural Landmark designation.

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*About the National Park Service. More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 413 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Visit us at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov), on Facebook [www.facebook.com/nationalparkservice](https://www.facebook.com/nationalparkservice), Twitter [www.twitter.com/natl parkservice](https://www.twitter.com/natl parkservice), and YouTube [www.youtube.com/nationalparkservice](https://www.youtube.com/nationalparkservice).*