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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INTERIOR DEPARTMENT, NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION, AND ANSCHUTZ EXPLORATION CORPORATION ANNOUNCE AGREEMENT TO PROTECT HISTORIC AND CULTURAL FEATURES OF WEATHERMAN DRAW

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 23, 2002) – Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton applauds an agreement between the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Anschutz Exploration Corporation aimed at preserving a culturally important area in Montana, containing rock paintings and archaeological resources, that is particularly significant to a number of Native American tribes. The agreement is designed to protect the Weatherman Draw Rock Art Complex and Archaeological District.

Weatherman Draw, also known as the Valley of the Chiefs, has been valued for centuries by various Native American tribes. The area includes a number of archaeological sites and 1,100-year old pictographs, including the largest concentration of polychrome painted art known in the Northern Plains. Those cultural values prompted the BLM to designate 4,268 acres as an area of critical environmental concern in 1999. The oil and gas leases involved existed prior to the designation and were subject to valid existing rights.

The Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management worked with the Anschutz Exploration Corporation and the National Trust to develop a plan that will allow for the transfer of the Anschutz oil and gas leases in Weatherman Draw to the National Trust, who will hold them until expiration. Following the transfer, BLM will use its discretion to withhold the area from new leases pending the development of a new resource management plan in 2004.

“It is important for the Department to help facilitate local, market driven solutions that work to resolve resource conflicts on a case by case basis,” Secretary Norton said. “This agreement exemplifies the successes we are achieving through the 4 C’s process of conservation through consultation, cooperation, and communication.”

William Miller, vice president of Anschutz, said “We recognize that there are significant cultural values connected with this site. We believe that transferring our leasehold rights to an organization like the National Trust will be the most effective way to see that the interests of all parties are met.”

“The historic, cultural, and spiritual values of this resource are worth preserving,” said Clifford Birdin Ground, Sr., Chairman of the Crow Tribe. “The Crow Tribe, along with other concerned Tribes, have hoped that this sacred area would be protected from oil and gas development. Today’s announcement of an agreement proves victorious for the Crow Tribe and other Tribes who have long held the Weatherman Draw area as a significant religious and cultural site.”

Richard Moe, president of the National Trust, said, “This is a mutually beneficial result for all those interested in protecting America’s heritage, and especially for Native Americans who value this unique area. The donation of these lease rights by Anschutz represents exemplary corporate citizenship. I want to thank Anschutz Exploration, the Bureau of Land Management, and Secretary Norton for working with us to find this amicable solution.” ###