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State of Louisiana
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
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July 13, 2017

Hon. Ryan Zinke
Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Lake Bistineau Land Claims by BLM

Dear Secretary Zinke:

I write to you today to request your assistance in a matter of utmost importance to the residents of northwest Louisiana that live along Lake Bistineau.

Louisiana acquired Lake Bistineau—a navigable waterbody—upon its entry into the Union on April 30, 1812. Based on United States surveys from the mid-1800s, the State of Louisiana relied on certain boundaries identified by the General Land Office as the shores of that Lake. Over time, as portions of Lake Bistineau dried, some of those dried lake beds were sold to private parties. Again, both the State and these private parties relied on the original federal surveys as the basis for their claims and titles.

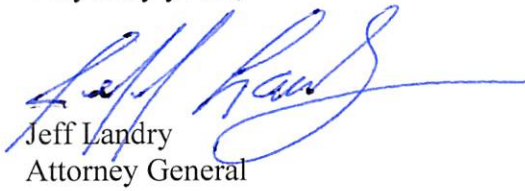
The Bureau of Land Management (“BLM”) has recently decided that a 1960s resurvey of the same lands around Lake Bistineau that were granted to Louisiana in 1812 and are now in private ownership demonstrates that those lands were incorrectly identified as lake beds and have never actually been severed from federal ownership. With this decision, the BLM threatens the private titles that were created long ago by insisting that the good faith private parties are now effectively trespassing on federal property. Aside from being factually incorrect, this assertion threatens to upset over two hundred years’ worth of title to many tracts of land in Louisiana and to evict private property owners from land that is rightfully theirs.

Louisiana Senator Bill Cassidy has introduced S. 1219 in an effort to legislatively remedy this attack on private title. While I am fully supportive of that legislation, I also ask that you consider changing your agency’s erroneous position to avoid the need for that legislation.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With best regards, I am,

Very truly yours,



Jeff Landry
Attorney General

cc: Hon. Bill Cassidy