

**Statement of Mike Matz, Director, U.S. Public Lands
The Pew Charitable Trusts
Regarding S. 1423, S. 1510, S. 1699, S. 1167, and S. 2383**

**Submitted to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and
Mining**

For the Record of the hearing held on April 21, 2016

The U.S. Public Lands program at The Pew Charitable Trusts seeks to preserve ecologically and culturally diverse U.S. public lands through congressionally designated wilderness, the establishment of national monuments, and administrative protections. We appreciate the opportunity to submit these comments for the record.

S. 1423 - The Central Coast Heritage Protection Act

The Pew Charitable Trusts supports S. 1423, the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act, sponsored by Senator Barbara Boxer. We have worked closely with local interests and Senator Boxer for almost ten years in support of this proposal that would protect approximately 245,665 acres of new and expanded wilderness in the Los Padres National Forest and Carrizo Plain National Monument. The legislation also includes significant protections for local rivers and streams as wild and scenic rivers, as well as establishes a new national recreation trail, and two new scenic areas. We applaud Senator Boxer for her tireless commitment over many years to protecting special wild lands in her home state of California.

The bill is widely endorsed by more than 500 local businesses, trail user groups, individuals, conservation organizations, and local elected officials. With Senator Boxer's retirement at the end of the 114th Congress, passage of the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act would be a fitting way to recognize and honor her long service to the people and lands of California.

S. 1510 – Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 2015

The Pew Charitable Trusts supports S. 1510, the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 2015, sponsored by Senator Patty Murray. This legislation would designate roughly 126,554 acres of the Olympic National Forest as wilderness and 19 rivers and their major tributaries, a total of 464 river miles, as wild and scenic rivers. The bill would protect old growth and ancient forest habitat throughout the region, sources of clean drinking water for local communities and critical salmon and steelhead habitat. It would also expand outdoor recreation opportunities in the area, including hiking, camping, boating, hunting and fishing.

Permanent protection for these wildlands and rivers enjoys broad local support on the Olympic Peninsula and Hood Canal region. The Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act has been endorsed by over 500 local businesses, farms, faith leaders, local elected officials, as well as hunting, fishing, recreation and conservation groups.

S. 1699 - The Oregon Wildlands Act

The Pew Charitable Trusts is also pleased to support S.1699, the Oregon Wildlands Act. Introduced by Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, the bill designates approximately 108,000 acres of wilderness in the Wild Rogue and Devil's Staircase areas. It would also protect roughly 252 miles of wild and scenic rivers and preserve more than 119,000 acres of the Rogue and Molalla rivers as national recreation areas. These areas are treasured by Oregonians for their clean drinking water sources, for their economic benefits, and for their wildness and recreational opportunities.

Local and diverse support from businesses, sportsmen, veterans, and conservation organizations to protect these places has been in place for decades. These wild and rugged landscapes and the rivers and creeks that grace these areas, and the local campaign to support their protection, are shining examples of how the Wilderness Act should work. It's time to protect these places for our children and their children.

S. 1167 – Owyhee Wilderness Areas Boundary Modifications Act

The Pew Charitable Trusts supports clarifications to the Owyhee Public Land Management Act of 2009 to ensure key agreements of the successful Owyhee Initiative collaborative are upheld and the commitments and expectations of those who collaborated for years are honored. We thank Senator Crapo for his willingness to work with us on such a solution.

When conservationists and ranchers began on-the-ground wilderness negotiations in 2002, the coalition first turned to the Congressional grazing guidelines, or House Report No. 101-405. These guidelines were used to achieve a common understanding of how Congress had decided livestock grazing issues in wilderness should be addressed, paying particular attention to the stipulation that “if livestock grazing activities and facilities were established in an area at the time Congress determined that the area was suitable for wilderness and placed the specific area in the wilderness system, they should be allowed to continue.”

Grazing is allowed by the 1964 Wilderness Act. Under Congressional and earlier agency grazing guidelines, most ranchers whose allotments were included in this particular wilderness occasionally used motorized vehicles to maintain fences and stock ponds and to herd livestock as part of the requirements of their grazing permits. It was expected that this activity in areas under consideration for wilderness in the Owyhees would continue. In 2012, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) revised its management policies. In order to protect range resources and wilderness values, BLM determined that motorized vehicles should no longer be allowed to maintain grazing structures or to move livestock in the Owyhees. The subsequent wilderness management plan for the Owyhee Canyonlands reinforced this decision.

The guideline changes contravene an agreement reached during an eight-year collaborative among a diverse set of stakeholders. We appreciate the effort to seek redress and uphold the agreement originally reached to manage for grazing in this specific wilderness area, and would like to continue working toward a resolution that accomplishes that goal, while also protecting range resources and wilderness values. As with the same initial spirit of collaboration and compromise, we believe parties working in good faith can arrive at a successful resolution in this case.

In 2014, the members of the initial collaborative who formulated the Owyhee Initiative and wilderness proposal – including ranchers, the Wilderness Society, Idaho Conservation League, the Nature Conservancy, and the Idaho Chapter of the Sierra Club – asked Idaho’s congressional delegation to sponsor legislation that would address technical wilderness boundary corrections and the grazing management issue. Administrative attempts to resolve this matter have not been successful to date, so a legislative solution is necessary. While Pew has concerns with S. 1167 as currently written, Senator Crapo has indicated a willingness to find common ground and we look forward to working with him to achieve that end.

S. 2383 – Utah Test and Training Range Encroachment Prevention and Temporary Closure Act

The Pew Charitable Trusts opposes Title III of this legislation in its entirety. The transfer of unadjudicated claims of rights-of-way in Box Elder, Tooele and Juab Counties is unrelated to the purpose of the bill, has no bearing on national security, and would represent an unprecedented give-away of routes totaling nearly 6,000 miles across federal lands. More than half of those routes are unmaintained tracks, many of which would not meet the standard of evidence for the counties to win title in court. Title III would improperly pre-empt court proceedings currently underway to resolve these claims and should be stricken from the bill. Additionally, while we have no objection in principle to land trades to consolidate federal and state land ownership patterns, we do object to the inclusion of the Cricket Mountains, Little Sage, Red Canyon, Drum Mountains and Little Drum Mountains proposed wilderness areas in the trade outlined in S. 2383.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit these views for the Subcommittee’s consideration. For additional information, please contact Mike Matz, Director, U.S. Public Lands Program, The Pew Charitable Trusts, at (202) 494-0729 or mmatz@pewtrusts.org.