

The Pew Charitable Trusts, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Cochran:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters across the nation, including those from the state of Tennessee, we are writing to express our strong support for The Tennessee Wilderness Act, to be introduced by Senator Lamar Alexander and Senator Bob Corker.

The Tennessee Wilderness Act, identical to legislation introduced in the 112th Congress, will designate nearly 20,000 acres of the Cherokee National Forest as a new wilderness area and additions to existing wilderness units. These forestlands protect critical habitat for native species including black bear, bobcat, brook trout and numerous migratory bird species. Hunting, fishing, white water rafting, horseback riding, and hiking are just a few of the popular activities that will be protected for local residents and visitors to the area.

The wilderness designated in this proposal is based on the recommendations of the current Cherokee Forest Management plan and the result of a lengthy public process conducted by the U.S. Forest Service. As a result, this bill enjoys broad public support. The Tennessee Wilderness Act has been endorsed local elected officials, businesses, recreation and conservation groups, and a broad coalition of individual Tennesseans who want to protect these lands.

The Tennessee Wilderness Act is a celebration of proud local heritage to protect the state's most special places. We urge the Committee act in a timely fashion to approve the Tennessee Wilderness Act.

Sincerely,

Mike Matz
Director, U.S. Public Lands
The Pew Charitable Trusts

Athan Manuel
Director, Lands Protection
Sierra Club

Alan Rowsome
Senior Director
The Wilderness Society