



# PEOPLE PROTECTING WILDERNESS FOR PEOPLE

Celebrating 40 Years of the Wilderness Act



**CAMPAIGN**  
for AMERICA'S WILDERNESS

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Wilderness: The Uniquely *American* Resource

1

In pressing our civilization across a wild land, our ancestors became pioneers, conquering most of the continent's wild places. In that very process, our encounter with wilderness shaped in us as a people hardy pioneer characteristics we think of as fundamental to our Americanism: self-reliance, fortitude, hard work, a fierce independence, an innate love of the land.

In renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold's words, wilderness is "the very stuff America is made of"—and Americans, too.

Americans came to treasure the scenic wonders of their country: the Adirondacks, Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon, the Great Smokies. The wild, unspoiled American landscape and the lore of the frontier became great themes of American culture, woven into our art and literature—into the very fabric of our patriotism.

Yet, by the early 20th century, the frontier was gone. The momentum of pioneering had carried us across the continent, up every mountain valley and down every canyon, threatening to wipe out all wilderness. The process soon enough replicated itself across Alaska. Wilderness, as Bob Marshall wrote in 1937, "is melting away like some last snowbank on some south-facing mountainside during a hot afternoon in June."

In reaction to the loss of wilderness was born a uniquely American idea: to deliberately preserve scenic wonders and expanses of wild nature *as wilderness*, with a motive of not losing the imprint of frontier wildness so formative and fundamental to American values. We share an instinctive, insistent duty to pass some of that original American earth on, unmodified and untrammled, so that those who follow may experience living wilderness.

2 The Wilderness Act turns 40 on September 3, 2004. This landmark law now protects nearly 5 percent of all the land in our country, preserving wild public land for our own enjoyment, and as a living legacy we will pass to our descendants—a gift to them of the original American earth.

Four decades of progress in preserving wilderness—more than 106 million acres in 650 areas in 44 of the 50 states are now protected by the Wilderness Act—still leaves a challenging agenda to address.

Across the country, hundreds of local citizen groups are working to see wild places they know and love given the strongest legal protection our society provides—statutory protection under the Wilderness Act. Their focus is the large expanse of *unprotected* wilderness, lands of splendid wild beauty that millions of all ages use and enjoy as wilderness, which are still not permanently protected by act of Congress.

Many of the most sensitive unprotected wilderness areas are threatened by the usual special interests—logging, mining, oil and gas drilling, off-road vehicles, and seemingly endless road building.

Since the advent of the Bush/Cheney administration, policy changes through backdoor deals and secret “settlement” of court cases by the administration have put tens of millions of acres of America’s unprotected wilderness at grave risk of unthinking development.

### Progress for Wilderness...For Future Generations

Much progress has been made over the last four decades. Great systems of parks, wildlife refuges, forests, and other public lands are held in trust on behalf of all Americans. Congress has enacted many land conservation laws, notably the Wilderness Act—“the most far-reaching land preservation statute ever enacted.”

3 Using the power of the Wilderness Act, local citizen groups, federal agency employees, and members of Congress have succeeded in securing statutory protection for many important wilderness areas.

Thanks to the power of the Wilderness Act, once designated by Congress, America’s wilderness areas are wild by law. These lands are, in the words of the Act, “an enduring resource of wilderness” we bequeath to the future.

Protecting wilderness is the work of many thousands of ordinary people from all walks of life, whose devoted care for some wild expanse of desert canyon and plateau, old-growth forest, high mountain peak, or wildlife-rich Arctic ecosystem, has propelled them into the arena of grassroots political action as volunteer citizen-lobbyists for wilderness.



4

### “An Enduring Resource of Wilderness”

The Wilderness Act declares it to be “the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.” Wilderness areas are special places—wild, quiet havens of nature protected from human development—areas where we meet nature on its own terms.

The Act defines wilderness as an area of federal land retaining its “primeval character and influence ... affected primarily by the forces of nature.” No permanent roads, buildings, logging or drilling are allowed, and no motorized vehicles—nothing to disturb the wild landscape.

The Act established the National Wilderness Preservation System and designated the first 9 million acres. *Since 1964, Congress has passed more than 110 additional laws to build the system to its current 106 million acres.*

Wilderness is the strongest, most lasting protection for wild landscapes and wildlife on public lands. Once designated by Congress, the boundaries and protections of a wilderness area cannot be altered by a non-supportive administration in the White House—only by another act of Congress.

#### A WORD FOR THE WILDERNESS

This nation began as an ‘errand into the wilderness.’ The first task was to tame that wilderness, but as Wallace Stegner says, we need to preserve some of it ‘because it was the challenge against which our character as a people was formed.’ Most people will never care a fig about wilderness. Perhaps that means it is an elitist concern. But so what? ... Enjoyment of wilderness may not be spontaneous and ‘natural.’ It may be a learned process, inviting and even requiring reflection. But it is nonetheless valuable for being an aristocratic pleasure, democratically open to all.

George F. Will, *Newsweek*, August 16, 1982

5

### Citizens and Their Elected Representatives Save Wilderness

Development swallows remaining wild lands at a relentless pace—unless people intervene. *The Wilderness Act is a powerful citizen-tool for stopping this onslaught.*

Ordinary people have organized to inventory wild places on our public lands, review plans of the administering agencies, and prepare citizen proposals for areas suitable for designation as wilderness. Federal agency officials often develop their own proposals. But agencies may be dominated by an unsympathetic White House, so citizens can take their proposals directly to their elected representatives in Congress.

Hundreds of wilderness areas have been protected as Congress has responded to effective advocacy by everyday citizens.





## People Saving Wilderness

- When road-building threatened to invade a wild place he loved, small-town Montana hardware dealer Cecil Garland organized a citizen campaign that led to the 1972 law protecting the quarter-million-acre Scapegoat Wilderness.
- When logging was proposed, Katherine Petterson, a pear grower in Kelseyville, California, led the campaign that persuaded her congressman to secure statutory protection for the 36,000-acre Snow Mountain Wilderness.
- To protect an area of rare and endangered species habitat she loved, a waitress from Mesquite, Nevada got involved politically, mobilized others to write, and helped achieve the 23,000-acre Lime Canyon Wilderness, signed into law in late 2002.

*A hardware dealer. A pear grower. A waitress. That's who saves wilderness.*

Elected leaders, federal officials, and conservation group lobbyists play their part. But preserving wilderness is foremost the story of people like these working tirelessly to convince Congress to protect wild places they cherish, backed by thousands who get involved, writing letters and enlisting friends and neighbors.

### WILDERNESS DESIGNATED IN LAWS SIGNED BY EACH U.S. PRESIDENT

President (Term)	Acres Designated	Number of Bills Signed	Number of States Affected
Lyndon Johnson (1963–1969) <sup>1</sup>	9,900,000	6	14
Richard Nixon (1969–1974) <sup>1</sup>	1,600,000	12	16
Gerald Ford (1974–1977)	3,100,000	12	32
Jimmy Carter (1977–1981)	66,300,000	14	24
Ronald Reagan (1981–1989) <sup>2</sup>	10,600,000	43	31
George H. W. Bush (1989–1993)	4,000,000	10	8
Bill Clinton (1993–2001)	9,500,000	13	10
George W. Bush (2001–)	500,000	4	4

## 40 Years of Wilderness Progress

**SEPTEMBER 3, 1964:** President Lyndon Johnson signs the Wilderness Act, designating the first 9 million acres of statutory wilderness. The law also requires a 10-year review by agencies, with public hearings, to shape recommendations concerning 5 million acres of National Forest 'primitive areas,' all roadless areas within National Parks, Monuments, and other park categories, and in all National Wildlife Refuges.

**1964–1974:** Based on public hearings on each area reviewed, Presidents send wilderness recommendations to Congress. Congress begins designating additional wilderness areas in 1968, often enlarging agency recommendations as citizens urged.

**1972:** President Richard Nixon signs legislation designating the Scapegoat Wilderness in Montana, the first area not required to be reviewed by the Act, but designated on the strength of a grassroots citizen campaign.

**1975:** Congress enacts, and President Gerald Ford signs, the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act, protecting 207,000 acres of wilderness on National Forests in the East, South and Midwest. Congress rejects the view that once-logged or inhabited lands can never qualify for Wilderness Act protection.

**1976:** President Ford signs the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, extending the wilderness review program to hundreds of millions of acres of Western and Alaskan lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

**1978:** With the Endangered American Wilderness Act, signed by President Jimmy Carter, 1.3 million acres of National Forest lands across the west are designated as wilderness, all on the basis of citizen proposals.

**1980:** President Carter signs the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, history's most ambitious land conservation law. Fifty million acres of new wilderness areas protect vast tundra and deep old-growth forests.

**1984:** President Ronald Reagan (who signed more wilderness protection laws than any other president) signs wilderness laws for 22 states in a single year, protecting some 8 million acres.

**1994:** California Desert Protection Act, signed by President Bill Clinton, designates 3.6 million acres of wilderness administered by the Bureau of Land Management in the desert east of Los Angeles, and 4 million acres in Death Valley and other park units.

**2001:** With President Clinton's leadership and more written public support than for any federal regulation promulgated in American history, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule is adopted, blocking road-building in 58 million acres of roadless national forest lands, much of which local citizen groups hope to see Congress protect.<sup>3</sup>

**2002:** With bipartisan support, Congress passes and President George W. Bush signs, four wilderness laws designating half a million acres of wilderness in Nevada, California, Colorado, and South Dakota.

**2003– :**

- Bush administration presses Congress to open fragile Alaska and Western wild lands to oil and gas drilling.
- Bush administration cuts off review of tens of millions of acres of wild public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management to thwart statutory wilderness protections for any BLM lands.
- Bush administration begins to gut the protections of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, starting with the Tongass National Forest, Alaska.
- Grassroots citizen groups mobilize to counter these concerted special interest assaults on high-quality, *unprotected* wilderness.

## 10 Wilderness Preservation: A Bipartisan Achievement

Four decades of progress in saving America's wilderness has been a thoroughly bipartisan achievement, as was the earlier eight-year effort to pass the Wilderness Act itself.

The initial sponsors of the Wilderness Act in the Senate were six Democrats and four Republicans, including Thomas Kuchel of California, the assistant Republican Senate leader. Champions of wilderness have included presidents of both parties. Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon helped get the wilderness protection process well launched. The proposals that led to the historic 1980 Alaska Lands Act were developed by a Republican administration and moved through Congress by a Democratic one with overwhelming bipartisan support.

Democratic champions such as Senators Frank Church (Idaho) and Alan Cranston (California) and Representatives Morris Udall (Arizona) and John Seiberling (Ohio) were leaders in earlier decades, joined by Republicans like Senators Dan Evans (Washington), Mark Hatfield (Oregon), and William Roth (Delaware).

This bipartisan approach continues. The defense of Arctic wilderness today is totally bipartisan, as are promising efforts to see important wilderness measures enacted in the year leading to the 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. Members of a number of states' congressional delegations are collaborating across party lines, responding to public desire for a reasonable balance in land uses that include a generous portion of wilderness. A good example is Nevada, where Senators Harry Reid (D) and John Ensign (R) worked across the aisle to pass a wilderness bill in 2002—and are now collaborating on another one. In an all-Republican delegation like Idaho's, important progress may be made for wilderness soon. But in other states, entrenched anti-wilderness senators and representatives still block progress.



I believe that the Wilderness System serves a basic need of all Americans, even those who may never visit a wilderness area—the preservation of a vital element of our heritage. ... The preservation of wilderness areas across the country today enables us to recapture a vital part of the national experience: like our forebears we can journey into primeval, unspoiled land. ... Wilderness preservation insures that a central facet of our Nation can still be realized, not just remembered.

Gerald R. Ford

December 4, 1974

*Message from the President of the United States Transmitting the Tenth Annual Report on the Status of the National Wilderness Preservation System*

### The Federal Government's Own Polls

Some of the most important polling about wilderness is conducted by the research scientists of the U.S. Forest Service.

- Asked about protecting more wilderness in their own states, 69.8 percent are in favor; only 12.4 percent oppose.<sup>4</sup>
- Among non-metropolitan residents, 43.5 percent favor protecting more wilderness, with only 7.4 percent thinking too much has been protected and 34 percent saying the amount is about right.<sup>5</sup>
- More wilderness in their own states is favored by 62.8 percent of non-metropolitan residents, versus 18.8 percent opposed.<sup>6</sup>



### Wilderness Support Is Overwhelming Across States and Demographics

- In polling done for wilderness organizations in individual states within the past four years, protecting more wilderness enjoys overwhelming majority support:<sup>7</sup>

	California	Alaska	Utah	Vermont
Support more wilderness	72%	73%	80%	73%
Oppose	22%	15%	14%	20%
Don't know	6%	12%	6%	7%

	Nevada	New Mexico
Too little wilderness protected	56%	57%
About right amount	34%	35%
Too much	4%	5%
Not sure	6%	4%

- Polling by the National Hispanic Environmental Council in 2002 showed overwhelming Hispanic voter support for protecting more wilderness in their own states: in California, 81 percent support more protection, while only 12 percent oppose; among Arizona Hispanic voters, 75 percent support more versus 17 percent; and in New Mexico, 72 percent versus 18 percent.
- Zogby International polling in 2003 found that strong majority support for additional wilderness protection in one's own state cuts across party lines. Fifty-four percent of Republicans support additional wilderness in their own state, as do 66 percent of Independents and 75 percent of Democrats.



14 “There are quite a number of designated wilderness areas. The danger lies in the fact that their status is not firmly defined in law. ...[The Wilderness Bill] would simply insure that existing wilderness areas in national parks, forests, and wildlife refuges remain as they are. ... A forward-looking measure, worthy of support.”

*The Christian Science Monitor, July 3, 1956*

“... we believe there is value in having places where man can get away from all the reminders of his workaday life. At present, areas of this character are not guaranteed their borders will not be violated by the markings of civilization. Passage of the proposed legislation will give them this guarantee.”

*(Portland, OR) Sunday Journal, April 15, 1956*

“As our urban, mechanized society spreads itself with increasing speed and destructiveness across the land, the human need for preserving contact with natural areas, with living, wild and growing things, becomes more explicit and more pervasive. As natural areas rapidly diminish, the battle to keep the best of the remaining ones intact grows more intense.”

*The New York Times, April 29, 1956*

“The bill has nothing to do with partisan politics, and its sponsorship is bipartisan. ... The wilderness system, no matter what Congress does to it, will always be under fire from those who see in the forest nothing but board feet and kilowatts. ... But we do see the bill as a step toward making raids on the wilderness more difficult.”

*Eugene (OR) Register-Guard, June 18, 1956*

15 “The issue involves more than whether, as a matter of policy, we should intrude on untouched areas set aside for eternity in order to supply our energy-short civilization with desperately needed fuel—although these may be the usual terms of the argument. The issue also reaches deeper. It involves the way our nation and civilization values the needs of the present in comparison with the needs of the future and posterity. As such, it has to do with things of the spirit, with roots and aspirations. And it raises a question about the discipline of a civilization. ... The line should be drawn at the boundaries of our wilderness areas. These are set aside for tomorrow.”

*Casper (WY) Star-Tribune, November 15, 1981*

“This country’s energy requirements have not yet reached a point at which it must invade the most spectacular and remote of landscapes in a desperate attempt to scrounge up the continent’s last bucketful of oil. ...wilderness areas ought to be the last places in the country to be drilled—not the next places.”

*The Washington Post, November 30, 1981*

“... wilderness areas have little to offer the nation but natural grandeur. They are parts of North America that remain as they always were—uncluttered by traffic, free of pollution, places where no slabs of concrete separate people from their land. These havens of raw nature are worth fighting to preserve ...”

*Los Angeles Times, February 24, 1982*

16 “A balance must be struck between the need for jobs, money and energy, and the need to refresh the soul amid nature’s wonders. President George W. Bush has shown repeatedly ... that he would tilt the balance too far toward industry. Our children will be the poorer for it, if not in money, then in spirit.”

*St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 7, 2003*

“Wilderness can always be destroyed, but it cannot be created. We should not squander for questionable purposes what little remains.”

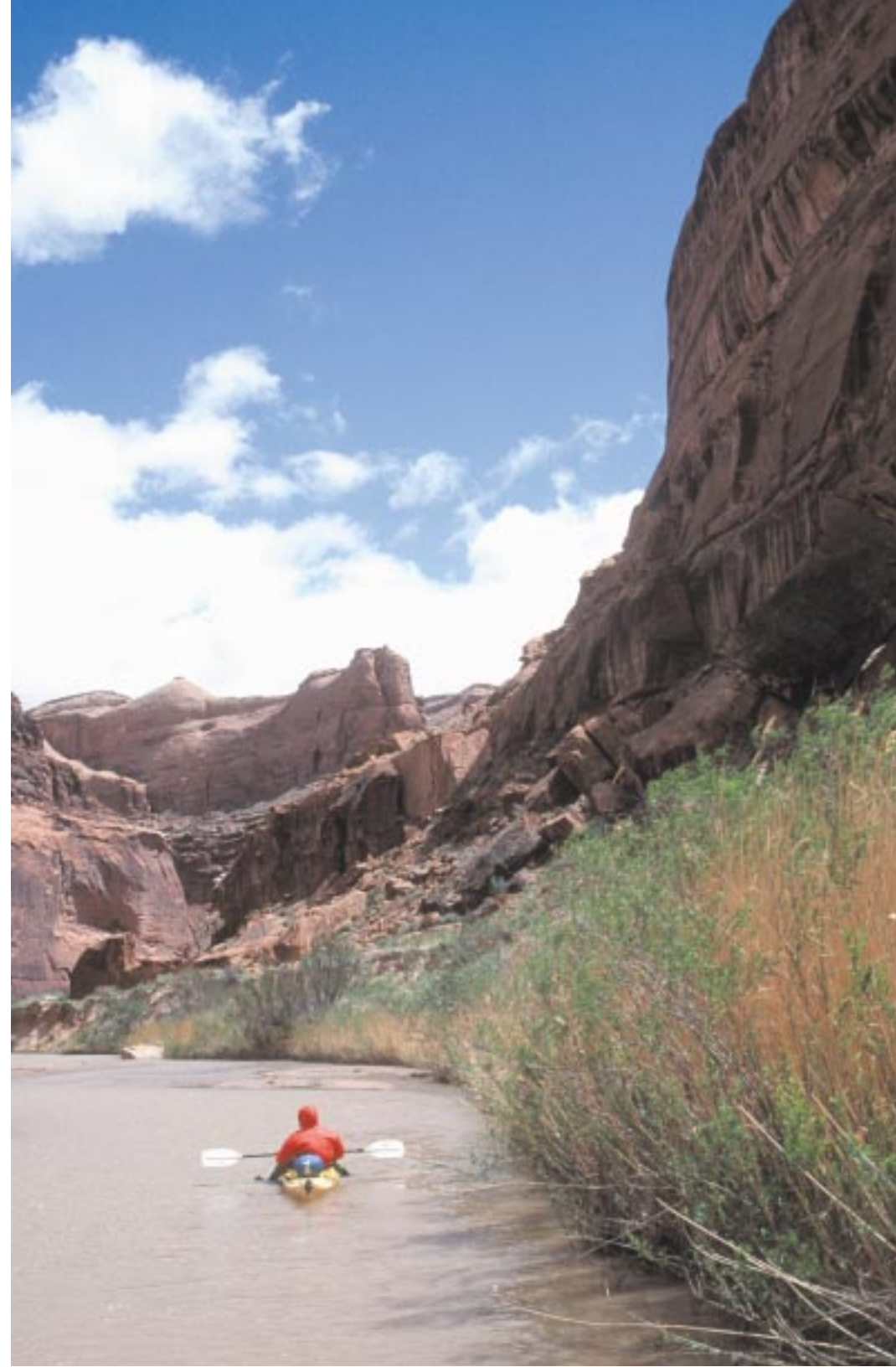
*Harrisburg (PA) Patriot News, April 17, 2003*

“Most Utahns recognize that the jewels of the magnificent federal lands in this state—the towering red rock fins and canyons, the alpine fastnesses and the stark Great Basin vistas—should be protected. Any maneuvers that undermine that protection should be viewed with alarm.”

*Salt Lake Tribune, April 20, 2003*

“As a nation and people, we agreed to discipline ourselves and continue to tread carefully across what is left of meager and wild public lands ... These lands might be in Idaho or New Mexico or Wyoming, but they belong to all Americans from coast to coast, and, perhaps as important, to future Americans who will rightly ask us: ‘What did you do to our country? And for what?’”

*Albuquerque Tribune, May 7, 2003*



## What Remains to be Done

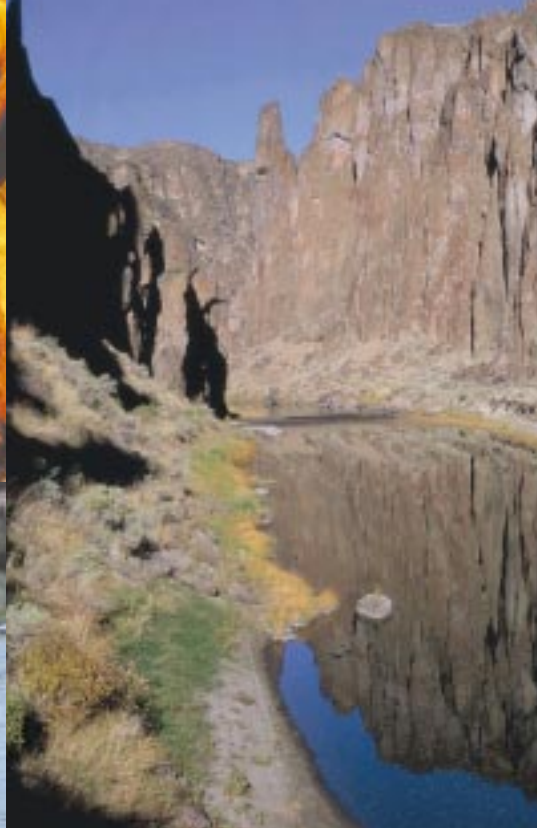
The Wilderness Act sets the national policy for protecting the areas Congress places in our National Wilderness Preservation System, but its authors did not presume to lay out some top-down master plan of what lands would be designated. Additional wilderness areas are designated only by act of Congress, when our elected senators and representatives believe it is in the national interest, and the President concurs.

Just as Congress did not stop protecting national parks in 1912, four decades after the establishment of the first park—Yellowstone—or in 1956, four decades after establishment of the National Park Service, this 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act is no time to slacken citizen and congressional efforts to preserve more wilderness.

In 2003, our nation celebrated the 100th anniversary of the first national wildlife refuge. Had we arbitrarily cut off protecting wildlife refuges after the first 40 years, President Dwight Eisenhower would never have been able to protect the original 9 million acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, and tens of millions of acres in other refuges would not have been saved.

In states across the country, citizen groups have been inventorying roadless public lands to prepare citizen proposals for new wilderness areas. They are also organizing public support to encourage local members of Congress to introduce legislation and work to pass it.

In the fall of 2003, active wilderness proposals are before Congress to protect special places in California, Washington, Colorado, Utah, Puerto Rico, and Alaska. Citizen groups and congressional delegations in Arizona, Idaho, New Mexico, Nevada, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and other states are preparing additional wilderness proposals.



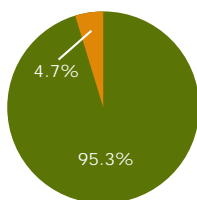
20 The Unprotected Wilderness ... And the Threats

Many millions of acres of public land are still unroaded, but have no statutory protection to ensure they will remain that way—a wild legacy for future generations. Many Americans use these areas as *wilderness* now, not differentiating them from statutorily protected wilderness. Yet these lands remain at risk—greater risk today than ever.

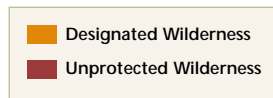
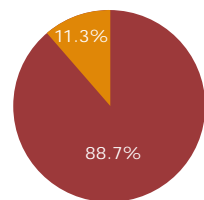
A computerized mapping analysis by the Campaign for America’s Wilderness of areas of 1,000 acres or more without roads, found 319 million acres of unprotected wilderness on national forests and public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

That means fully seven of every eight acres of the wilderness Americans use and cherish are not protected by law.

Designated Wilderness as Percent of Entire U.S.



Designated and Unprotected Wilderness in the United States



21 Many of these last roadless lands belong in our wilderness system. Often the proposals for wilderness designation involve lower-elevation slopes and valleys, where competing demands for development are the most intense. Preserving such lands is vital not only for wilderness recreation, but to properly protect wildlife habitat, natural diversity, and watershed integrity.



22 Wilderness has always been threatened by those who view wild land as nothing more than a collection of potentially exploitable resources to be mined, logged, or drilled for profit—or as a noisy playground to be trashed by off-road vehicles. Such threats are carried out when new roads are punched through roadless lands (sometimes under the ruse of being long-established rights-of-way). Roads fragment larger, more ecologically viable tracts of unprotected wilderness and wildlife habitat into smaller, more vulnerable, less self-sustaining pieces.

Often these threats can be subtle, with the values of an unprotected wilderness area gnawed away at its ever-receding edges by encroaching development.

### Greater Threats Today

As the 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act approaches, some want to slam the door on any further designation of wilderness, and the Bush administration is working to implement its special interest agenda:

- The Bush administration's assault on tens of millions of acres of unprotected public land wilderness administered by the Department of Interior across the West and in Alaska included closed-door deals that reverse long standing policies requiring public land managers to fairly consider wilderness protection as they decide on land use plans.
- The Bush administration's assault on spectacular Alaskan wilderness—from wholesale oil and gas leasing in America's Arctic to extensive logging in the Tongass National Forest, the country's largest temperate rainforest—is masked with promises that some areas might remain protected, but only if Alaska's elected officials agree. Yet these wild lands belong to all Americans, who have voiced strong opposition to the administration's policies favoring corporate interests.

23 • The Bush administration's assault on protection for national forest roadless areas attempts to reverse the Roadless Area Conservation Rule put into place on the strength of the largest—and lopsidedly favorable—record of public support in the history of federal rulemaking on any topic.

• The Bush administration's backdoor settlement with the state of Utah allows a loophole in an archaic mining law (R.S. 2477) to be used as an excuse to grant rights-of-way claims on public land across the West, which could turn cow paths and dry creek beds into highways to nowhere.

There is no justification for this broad assault on wilderness, which is an assault on the efforts of ordinary local citizens across the country who have worked hard to have a say in what happens to the land all of us—not just special corporate interests—own. The American people ask nothing more than fair consideration by the agencies and Congress.



### ... It's the “Conservative” Thing to Do

*Conserving* wilderness is fundamentally *conservative*. Indeed, the two words share a common root, expressing the prudence of holding on to original values, not rushing to destroy them. As Aldo Leopold put it, preserving wilderness “is premised on the assumption that the rocks and rills and templed hills of this America are something more than economic materials, and should not be dedicated exclusively to economic uses.”

Republican Representative John Saylor of Pennsylvania, the father of the Wilderness Act in the House of Representatives, once said: “I cannot believe the American people have become so crass, so dollar-minded, so exploitation-conscious that they must develop every last little bit of wilderness that still exists.”

Wilderness is conservative. It is also progressive in the best Teddy Roosevelt sense of that word. In sum, wilderness is just plain *American*, for wilderness preservation serves all, rising above political creed.

Congress said it best in the Wilderness Act: wilderness is “for the permanent good *of the whole people*”—exactly why preserving more wilderness enjoys overwhelming public support across the political spectrum.



## Wilderness in America: The 'Back Story'

Of course protection of wilderness did not simply emerge with the Wilderness Act. Even as pioneers first crossed the continent, voices were raised to counsel saving some wilder places. Hunters were among the first to recognize that plentiful game depended on protecting wildlife habitat.

But it was only after every form of resource development had left sad scars across the land that Americans realized protecting wilderness would require a deliberate policy.

In 1924, a young Forest Service officer in New Mexico, Aldo Leopold (later known as the most seminal philosopher of conservation and the land ethic), conceived the idea for protecting wilderness areas in a practical way. He convinced his superiors to approve the first wilderness designation, establishing the Gila Wilderness. Others soon followed across the West.

By 1929, the Chief of the Forest Service felt the need for a consistent national approach, and these areas—soon joined by others—became known as “primitive areas,” still under very loose protections.

In the 1930s, the Forest Service concluded it needed a stronger policy to discourage transfers of forest lands to new national parks. At the urging of the great wilderness champion Bob Marshall, then a senior Forest Service official, new regulations were put in place by the Secretary of Agriculture in 1939, tightening protections and elevating most decisions to his higher level of authority. The older “primitive areas” were to be reviewed, adjusted, and designated under the new policy as “wilderness areas.” But this was still only an administrative designation that could be all-too-easily altered by a future Secretary. In all, these administratively-protected primitive and wilderness areas never totaled more than 14 million acres.

## There Ought to Be a Law!

After World War II, wilderness advocates saw a recurrent pattern in which even those 14 million acres were threatened. As primitive areas were upgraded to wilderness designation, portions were lopped off—usually the land with the highest value for logging. Conservationists were concerned as the pattern continued, and as ecological diversity suffered. Similarly, tourism development began encroaching on national park wilderness from within, another threat with no end.

### WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT DO IN WILDERNESS AREAS

#### Allowed in the Wilderness

- Hunting (except in national park wilderness) and fishing
- Scientific research and nature study
- Hiking, backpacking, and camping
- Wheelchairs (including certain motorized wheelchairs)
- Outfitting and guiding
- Control of fire, and insect and disease outbreaks
- Float trips, canoeing, kayaking
- Horseback riding and pack trips
- Livestock grazing and related facilities, where previously established
- Mining on pre-existing mining claims
- Continued use of tracts of private or state land that may be within the boundaries of some wilderness areas, with reasonable access

#### Not Allowed in the Wilderness

- Road building
- Mechanical vehicles such as dirt-bikes and off-road vehicles (certain motorized wheelchairs are allowed)
- Logging
- Oil and gas drilling
- New mining claims
- New reservoirs, power lines, pipelines

Bitter experience convinced wilderness leaders, notably of The Wilderness Society, National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, Izaak Walton League, and National Audubon Society, that only stronger protection by statutory designation could stop the damage to these inadequately protected wildlands. The groups decided, in the early 1950s, to work for a wilderness protection law.

Conservationists drafted the Wilderness Act, but took great care to make it a workable conservation measure that did not seek to roll back already established uses of these lands. For example, all wilderness areas except those in some units of the national park system would remain open to sportsmen, offering high quality wilderness hunting. Where grazing of domestic livestock was permitted before, it would be allowed to continue after an area's designation as wilderness.

Wilderness designation does bar road building, logging, oil and gas drilling, dams, and the kinds of development that some still believe—against all evidence—might be the economic salvation of their communities. Not unexpectedly, every kind of development interest fought the Wilderness Act, impeding final congressional approval through eight long years of debate.

President John Kennedy came to office in 1961 as a strong advocate of the Wilderness Bill. His support got the legislation moving through Congress—in fact, he was working on final negotiations for this law just days before he left for Dallas. The Senate passed the Wilderness Act in 1963 by a 73-to-12 vote; the House in 1964 by a vote of 374-to-1.

With the landmark legislation's congressional champions gathered around him in the Rose Garden, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Wilderness Act into law on September 3, 1964.



We must also preserve, for use by this and future generations, some of the America that tempered and formed our national character.

- An America with undisturbed mountains and plains, forests, and valleys.
- An America with placid lakes and lonely shores which will not be dominated by man and his technology.
- An America where a man can be alone with all the glories of nature, and can renew his spirit in solitary communion with the land.

This is the reason for the Wilderness Act.

And this is the reason why we shall not be content until we have a National Wilderness Preservation System adequately symbolic of our great national heritage.

Lyndon B. Johnson

June 14, 1968

*Message from the President of the United States Transmitting the Fourth Annual Report on the Status of the National Wilderness Preservation System*



## The Wilderness Act and Its Place in History

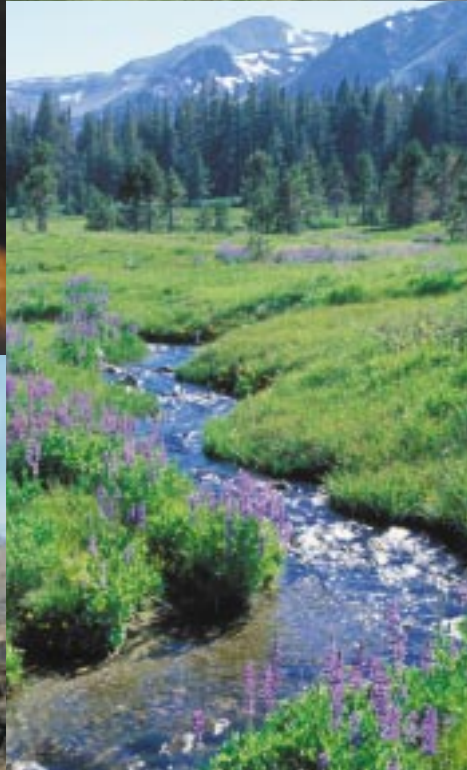
On the eve of the new millennium, some 450 history and political science scholars assessed the federal government's greatest accomplishments during the second half of the 20th century. Protecting America's wilderness ranked in the top 25, just below arms control, just above space exploration.

From space, the earth is a tiny blue ball. When its rotation brings North America into view, from a lower altitude the incredibly widespread impacts of human development are clear. Amid all that, nearly 5 percent of all the land in the United States remains wilderness, securely protected by the Wilderness Act.

This is the achievement of decades of devoted work by uncounted thousands of Americans who got involved and spoke up, encouraging Congress to act. Congress has responded, enacting more than 110 additional wilderness protection laws to add additional lands to our National Wilderness Preservation System. Many more proposals are championed by local citizen groups who know their nearby wildlands best.

As the Wilderness Act turns 40, consider:

- The only wilderness that is truly protected is wilderness protected by *statutory* law—by the Wilderness Act;
- Corporate interests and those with short-term agendas will always make preserving further wilderness a challenge;
- Forty years of success for grassroots citizen wilderness campaigns shows us all the key to protecting more wilderness;
- However much wilderness Congress protects, future generations are likely to judge we did too little. It is in their time, not ours, that the greatest values of the wilderness saved will be clear to all.



<sup>1</sup> Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon each made important contributions to wilderness preservation beyond the relatively smaller acreages actually designated during their terms (excluding the 9.1 million acres that were designated immediately when President Johnson signed the Wilderness Act). The Wilderness Act was a priority part of President Johnson's legislative program, a commitment he inherited from President John F. Kennedy. Both the Johnson and Nixon administrations worked with the agencies and environmental groups to get the complex study procedures established in the Wilderness Act off to an effective start, correcting agency ideas that could have frustrated the purposes of the new law. The Nixon administration also played a central role in the success of the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act and in the early shaping of very large wilderness, park, and wildlife refuge proposals for Alaska.

<sup>2</sup> President Ronald Reagan also was the only president to veto a wilderness bill—for Montana.

<sup>3</sup> As of August 2003, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule has been challenged in various courts. In the first appeal, the Rule and the process of its adoption were strongly upheld by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. A July 2003 contrary opinion from a federal judge in Wyoming was heading toward the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals.

<sup>4</sup> The National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE) is conducted for the federal government by the research arm of the U.S. Forest Service. This finding is from interviews conducted in 2000–2001 with 10,382 respondents nationwide.

<sup>5</sup> NSRE, 2000–2001, 3,168 non-metropolitan residents nationwide.

<sup>6</sup> NSRE, 2000–2001, 2,089 non-metropolitan residents nationwide.

<sup>7</sup> Details on each of the state polls summarized here, as well as on the NSRE polling, are available from the Campaign for America's Wilderness.

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### About the Campaign for America's Wilderness

The Campaign for America's Wilderness works with grassroots wilderness advocates to add public land to the National Wilderness Preservation System for the benefit of future generations. We collaborate with national, regional, and state organizations and elected officials in this work. Contact us for further information at 202.544.3691.



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