

THE
PEW
ENVIRONMENT GROUP

AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS — DON'T GIVE IT AWAY!

Jerry Peak Wilderness Study Area, Idaho.
PHOTO: JOHN MCCARTHY

Oppose the Wilderness and Roadless Area Release Act

The Wilderness and Roadless Area Release Act, H.R.1581, introduced by House Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy (Calif.), would remove current protections for more than 60 million acres of public lands, an area the size of Wyoming. Sen. John Barrasso (Wyo.) has introduced a companion measure, S.1087.

Industrial activities such as mining, logging and drilling are already allowed in more than half of our national forests and other public lands. This bill proposes to open up most of the rest. As a result, roughly 70 percent of America's most valuable landscapes and waterways could be degraded through large-scale development and off-road vehicle use.

The bill would take away protections that have existed for decades, including those for our most pristine backcountry. America's tradition of managing our lands on the "multiple use" principle would be replaced by a lopsided approach that would leave wilderness, national

forests and other spectacular public lands vulnerable to industrial activities.

In addition, H.R.1581 would put drinking water for 60 million Americans at risk, damage fish and wildlife habitat and compromise outdoor recreation, along with the billions of dollars in revenue it generates annually.

PROTECTIONS ELIMINATED

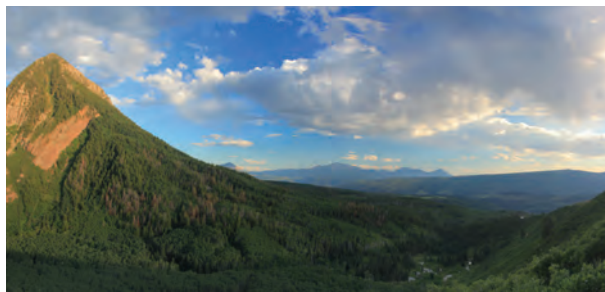
Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Study Areas

H.R.1581 and S.1087 would remove protections from roughly 6.6 million acres, more than half of the most wild, scenic and ecologically significant holdings of the Bureau of Land Management, known as Wilderness Study Areas. These places have been identified and safeguarded under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act pending a congressional decision to give them

permanent protection under the Wilderness Act. If industrial development and off-road vehicle use are allowed in these places, they would become ineligible for wilderness consideration. Congress' authority to designate wilderness areas would become moot, and years of work by individual lawmakers to craft balanced land-use proposals with diverse stakeholders would be disregarded.

National Forest Roadless Areas

H.R.1581 and S.1087 would undo current protections for most of the 58.5 million acres of undeveloped national forests preserved by the landmark Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The proposed legislation would strip safeguards from all national forest roadless areas except for the roughly 3 million acres that are already congressionally designated as wilderness or identified as such under revision of a land and resource management plan. Pristine forestland in 38 states would be affected, including 9.3 million acres of Alaska's Tongass National Forest—the core of North America's largest temperate rain forest. National forest roadless areas not only serve as the prime source of clean drinking water



Ragged Mountains Roadless Area, Colorado.

PHOTO: NELSON GUIDA



PHOTO: GORDON JOHNSON

Five Springs Wilderness Study Area, California.

for millions of Americans, but they also provide valuable fish and wildlife habitat for more than 1,600 threatened or endangered plant and animal species, and generate a significant portion of the outdoor recreation industry's \$730 billion in annual revenue and 6.5 million in jobs across the country.

BLM Wild Lands

H.R.1581 and S.1087 would bar BLM from identifying and protecting potential new wilderness on millions of acres in 12 states, including Alaska. The proposed legislation would block the Obama administration's new "Wild Lands" policy, which instructed the agency to identify and protect its most ecologically significant lands until Congress could decide whether to include them in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Valuable fish and wildlife habitat would be lost to increased oil and gas development, mining and off-road vehicle use.

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