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**Statement of John Gilroy, Director, U.S. Public Lands and Rivers Conservation,
The Pew Charitable Trusts, regarding**

H.R. 252, the Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation Act;

H.R. 2199, the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act;

H.R. 2215, the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act;

H.R. 2250, the Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act; and

H.R. 2642, the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

For the Record of the legislative hearing held on July 10th, 2019 in the

House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands

The Pew Charitable Trusts seeks to preserve ecologically and culturally diverse U.S. public lands and rivers through federal and state administrative protections, legislative designations, the defense of bedrock conservation laws, and restoring America's National Parks System. We thank the Committee for holding today's hearing.

Pew supports H.R. 252, the Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation Act; H.R. 2199, the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act; H.R. 2215, the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act; H.R. 2250, the Northwest CA Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act; and H.R. 2642, the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

To accomplish our goals, we work closely with conservation groups, recreation organizations, local businesses, local governments, and other stakeholders to develop and advance collaborative proposals for public lands protection. Each of these five bills is the result of such an effort. They have been developed over many years of collaborative efforts in California, Nevada, and Washington, resulting in durable local solutions that protect public lands and rivers in a manner that fits the needs of local communities.

Pew supports the Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation Act (H.R. 252).

Representative Amodei's bill represents a balanced, bipartisan approach to conservation that has emanated from a locally driven process where a group of diverse parties were able to advance their viewpoints and come to a result that will improve conservation, land management, and the local economy. H.R. 252 would designate new wilderness areas, consolidate checkerboard lands, and resolve other longstanding public lands issues in Pershing County, protecting areas of significant ecological value while providing new opportunities for economic development.

Pew strongly supports the conservation designations in this bill. H.R. 252 would provide wilderness protection for approximately 136,000 acres of land in Nevada's Great Basin desert, conserving critical wildlife habitat, dramatic landscapes, geologic wonders, and outdoor recreation opportunities. These seven new wilderness areas will permanently protect magnificent high desert landscapes with pinyon-juniper forests, sagebrush valleys, rugged canyons, and dramatic mountains that are home to a variety of wildlife such as sage grouse, pronghorn, mule deer, and bighorn sheep.

We have previously expressed concerns with some of the bill's other provisions. While we describe these concerns below for the record, we note that all stakeholders have been working together in good faith to resolve them, and we are confident that each of these issues can and will be resolved soon as the result of this constructive dialogue.

Section 304 would release 48,600 acres of Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), permitting development to take place on lands that are currently managed for their conservation values. Section 103(f)(1)(B) would make 150,000 acres of federal land available for sale. That land, along with land conveyed elsewhere under Title II could result in an increase in industrial development. While Pew would not support these changes in land management or ownership on their own merits, we recognize and appreciate that these provisions are balanced by the significant conservation gains in the rest of Title III. We have also previously expressed concerns with section 103, which permits land exchanges on an acre-to-acre basis rather than a value-to-value basis which is more commonly used for the exchange of federal and non-federal land.

Pew recognizes the need to resolve the long-standing checkerboard ownership pattern of land in Pershing County. We support the intent of these conveyances, which will help to consolidate the checkerboard of federal and non-federal ownership by removing partially-encumbered land from the federal estate and using the proceeds to acquire other land in the county, including land that will assist the Bureau of Land Management in implementing its public-interest management goals, including conservation and recreation.

We believe that stakeholders are close to identifying solutions to each of these issues and look forward to working with Mr. Amodei and the committee to incorporate those solutions into a subsequent draft of this bill.

Pew supports the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act (H.R. 2199).

Representative Carbajal's legislation has, over several Congresses, been sponsored by members of both parties. Originally introduced by former Representative Elton Gallegly and then by former Representative Lois Capps, the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act is supported by a diverse coalition of businesses, community leaders, and conservationists, has been extensively vetted, and is deserving of the Committee's favorable consideration.

H.R. 2199 would protect approximately 244,000 acres of forest and grasslands as wilderness and 160 miles of rivers as Wild & Scenic in the Los Padres National Forest and the Carrizo Plain National Monument. The bill would also establish two Scenic Areas encompassing approximately 35,000 acres.

These various designations will help preserve the region's quality of life by protecting clean sources of water and valuable wildlife habitat while promoting the local economy.

Known for its iconic oak woodlands, coastal mountains, and the nearby Channel Islands, the Los Padres National Forest provides habitat for some 468 species of wildlife, including the California condor and Southern steelhead, and is also home to two endemic plant species. Further inland, the Carrizo Plain National Monument encompasses native grasslands that are home to Pronghorn and Tule elk.

Pew supports the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act (H.R. 2215).

Pew spent many years working closely with Representative Chu, her constituents, and many local conservation organizations to protect the San Gabriel Mountains. This initial effort resulted in the designation of the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument in October of 2014. We believe expanding the existing monument by approximately 109,000 acres, designating some 31,000 acres of wilderness and 45 miles of Wild & Scenic rivers, and establishing a new National Recreation Area are worthwhile goals and support the passage of this legislation.

Pew supports the Northwest CA Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act (H.R. 2250).

Representative Huffman's bill offers a balanced and commonsense approach to protecting special wild lands while also addressing concerns about forest fires, local jobs, and environmental damage caused by illegal activities on national forest lands. H.R. 2250 would protect some 260,000 acres of wilderness and another 51,000 acres of potential wilderness, designate 380 miles of Wild & Scenic Rivers, and create a new 730,000-acre Restoration Area.

Northwest California's unique landscape ranges from towering redwood forests near the coast to old growth Douglas-fir forests, oak woodlands and grasslands, and wild rivers. The region's well-being depends on the health of its forests, rivers, and streams. Already home to the Trinity Alps Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers such as the Smith and the Trinity, the area has a strong recreation economy that draws outdoors enthusiasts from around the world to hike, paddle, and fish. The public lands and waters addressed in the bill are some of the region's most pristine and protecting them will allow them to remain in their natural state for future generations, safeguard important habitat for endangered salmon and steelhead populations, and maintain important watersheds.

In addition to these conservation gains, H.R. 2250 addresses the concerns of multiple constituencies. It enhances recreational opportunities both within and outside of the proposed wilderness areas to help further strengthen local economies. It also requires a new coordinated fire management plan for all the designated wilderness areas and would help protect local communities by creating a series of "roadside" shaded fuel breaks in the proposed South Fork Trinity-Mad River Restoration Area. These treatments would include the ability to thin neglected forest plantations, thus providing additional opportunities for the local forestry industry. Finally, the proposal seeks to address the environmental and health risks posed by abandoned illegal activities in these forests.

Pew supports the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (H.R. 2642).

Representative Kilmer's bill would permanently conserve 126,661 acres of Wilderness and add 19

rivers to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System on Washington's Olympic Peninsula. It protects sources of clean drinking water and critical salmon and steelhead habitat. It preserves and expands access and opportunities for world-class hiking, camping, boating, hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation, creating new economic opportunities for the Olympic peninsula while protecting existing timber jobs.

This carefully balanced, community-driven compromise legislation is the result of an exhaustive, multi-year public process featuring extensive local input including the local timber industry and timber communities. It is the result of hundreds of meetings with local stakeholders in every community on the Peninsula. The final proposal will permanently protect the best of the Olympic Peninsula's spectacular public lands without a loss of timber jobs or recreational access. As a result, H.R. 2642 enjoys broad, enthusiastic public support, with endorsements by over 700 local Olympic Peninsula & Hood Canal region businesses, Tribes, CEOs, farms, conservation & recreation organizations, local elected officials, and religious and community leaders. The bill is strongly supported by some of the Peninsula's largest employers, including Taylor Shellfish Farms, Sequim Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Ocean Gold Seafoods, Intellichek Mobilisa Inc., and others who depend on the clean water, ancient forests and stunning scenery protected by this bill to attract and retain skilled workers, visitors, new residents, educators, health care professionals, and grow the local economy.

The bill has also been endorsed by more than 75 local & regional outdoor recreation businesses and groups, including Olympic Raft & Kayak (Port Angeles), Sound Bikes and Kayak (Port Angeles), Hood Canal Adventures (Union), Port Townsend Cyclery (Port Townsend), North Coast Surf Inc. (Ocean Shores) The Mountaineers, Pacific Alpine Guides, the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, the International Mountain Bicycling Association, REI, Patagonia, Outdoor Research, American Whitewater, and others. Finally, the bill enjoys the strong support of more than 30 leading sportsmen groups and local hunting & fishing guides, including the Northwest Guides & Anglers Association, Izaak Walton League, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association, Washington Wildlife Federation, Northwest Steelheaders, Piscatorial Pursuits Guide Service (Forks), Johnson Guide Service, (Sequim), Angler's Obsession (Forks), Mike Z's Guide Service (Forks) Waters West Fly Fishing Outfitters (Port Angeles), SAGE Fly Rods (Bainbridge), Washington River Fishing (Hoodsport) & Waters West Guide Service (Montesano), Bad Ash Fishing Guide Service (Tahola) and others.

Conclusion

Pew appreciates the opportunity to submit these views for the Subcommittee's consideration, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee to improve these bills. Please contact John Seebach at (202) 540-6509 or jseebach@pewtrusts.org if you have any questions regarding our views on this legislation.