



February 11th, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Members of the U.S. House of Representatives:

On behalf of our more than one million members and supporters, The Wilderness Society (TWS) writes to urge you to support H.R. 2546, Protecting America's Wilderness Act, and oppose any weakening amendments.

Protecting America's Wilderness Act combines six public lands bills that, taken together, would protect more than 1.3 million acres of Wilderness and 1,000 miles of Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers across California, Washington, and Colorado. The bill includes the following sections:

Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act

The Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act would expand the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area by approximately 191,000 acres to include the area known as the Rim of the Valley Corridor. This boundary expansion would include critical wildlife corridors between the Santa Monica Mountain range in the West and the San Gabriel Mountains in the East. Additionally, this area is important for its potential to enhance recreational opportunities for over 17 million people living in the communities of the greater Los Angeles region.

Central Coast Heritage Protection Act

The Central Coast Heritage Protection Act would protect some of central California's most scenic and spectacular lands and watersheds and would ensure that a key part of California's wild heritage remains intact. Specifically, this section would designate nearly 245,000 acres of wilderness and would add 159 miles of creeks and rivers to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This section would also establish the Condor National Recreation Trail and designate nearly 35,000 acres in two National Scenic Areas. Together, these designations would protect landscapes that sustain abundant recreation opportunities as well as iconic species like the California condor and southern steelhead trout.

San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act

The San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act would expand protections for the Angeles National Forest, which accounts for 70% of Los Angeles County's open space, and establish a new San Gabriel National Recreation Area to enhance recreational opportunities for park poor communities. This section expands the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument by 109,143 acres and adds 31,069 acres of wilderness and 45.5 miles of wild and scenic rivers. These places are home to many rare

and endangered species such as the Nelson Bighorn Sheep and the Santa Ana Sucker. The nearly 50,000-acre National Recreation Area would establish a role for the National Park Service to work with local partners in providing education and enhancing connections to recreational opportunities along the foothills and the San Gabriel and Rio Hondo Rivers.

Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act

The Northwest California Wilderness Recreation and Working Forests Act would protect 260,000 acres of wilderness and 379 miles of wild and scenic rivers. This section creates a 730,000-acre restoration area to protect and restore forests, including ancient redwood forests, and improve water quality while reducing fire risks. It also establishes a partnership of federal, state and local entities to coordinate restoration of public lands damaged by illegal marijuana cultivation. Finally, the proposal helps build a strong outdoor recreation economy by providing new opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, motorized vehicle use, horseback riding, camping, hunting, and fishing.

Colorado Wilderness Act of 2020

The Colorado Wilderness Act of 2020 would permanently protect more than 600,000 acres of public lands as wilderness. These areas include Redcloud and Handies Peaks - the tallest mountains in the lower 48 under the management of the Bureau of Land Management - as well as some of the spectacular scenery of Browns Canyon National Monument and rugged hills of Assignment Ridge. A recent survey of western Colorado voters found that 68% support designating additional public lands in Colorado as wilderness, and the Colorado Wilderness Act responds to that desire. As the legislative process continues, we hope that a number of improvements will be made to this section.

Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 2019

The Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 2019 would protect 126,554 acres of the Olympic National Forest as wilderness and would add 464 miles of rivers to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The protections afforded in this section would safeguard the Olympic Peninsula's clean drinking water, ancient forests, wild and free-flowing rivers and habitat for many wildlife species, including the region's salmon and steelhead. This section would also protect and expand the world-class outdoor recreation opportunities in the region, an ever-growing sector of Washington's economy that accounts for \$21.6 billion in annual expenditures in Washington State.

We strongly urge the House to pass H.R. 2546, the Protecting America's Wilderness Act and oppose any weakening amendments.

Thank you for considering our views and vote recommendations.

Sincerely,



Drew McConville
Senior Managing Director, Government Relations
The Wilderness Society