



February 12th, 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

RE: H.R. 2546 Amendment Vote Recommendations

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 to support H.R. 2546, Protecting America's Wilderness Act. 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.

In addition to passage of the overall bill, we urge members to consider the below recommendations for the following amendments:

#1 – Rep. Panetta (CA) – VOTE YES

This amendment reinforces what is already included within the Wilderness Act, as the Wilderness Act does not prevent activities needed to control fire, insects and disease.

#2 – Rep. DeGette (CO) – VOTE YES

The acreage included in this amendment is already managed to protect the wilderness character. These areas are entirely Wilderness Study Areas.

#3 – Rep. Cunningham (SC) and Rep. Tipton (CO) – VOTE YES

This amendment restates current law; military overflights are not precluded or restricted over wilderness areas.

#4 – Rep. Brown (MD) – VOTE YES

This amendment underscores the value that public lands, including wilderness, provide to members of the military and veterans. The therapeutic benefits of time in nature is incredibly important and numerous organizations now focus on providing these healing experiences to veterans. Wilderness enhances and provides for these experiences.

#5 – Rep. Tipton (CO) – VOTE NO

The Wilderness Act specifically allows land managers to take any such measures as are necessary in the control of fire, insects, or disease. Land managers regularly fight fires in wilderness. The Wilderness Act provides Congress with the sole discretion to determine which lands shall be designated as wilderness. These determinations are made after considering the recommendations of land management agencies. This amendment undermines the Wilderness Act by allowing Federal land management agencies to make

decisions on which lands shall become designated as wilderness. Such an approach is contrary to the Wilderness Act.

#9 – Rep. McClintock (CA) – VOTE NO

The Wilderness Act establishes Congress as the sole arbiter of which Federal lands shall be designated wilderness. This amendment would undermine the Wilderness Act by allowing counties to determine which lands will become designated wilderness. While counties provide important input, public lands are managed by and for the American people, and decisions on wilderness designation should be made by Congress in accordance with the Wilderness Act.

#11 – Rep. McClintock (CA) – VOTE NO

The Wilderness Act gives Congress the sole discretion to determine which lands are designated as wilderness. These designations are made after considering land management agency recommendations. This amendment would undermine the Wilderness Act by allowing Federal land management agencies to alone determine which lands become wilderness. Such an approach is contrary to the Wilderness Act. All lands proposed for wilderness designation in this legislation have been extensively studied and found suitable for such designation.

#13 – Rep. Westerman (AR) – VOTE NO

The Wilderness Act does not prohibit fighting wildfires. The Wilderness Act specifically allows land managers to take any such measures as are necessary in the control of fire, insects, or disease. Furthermore, it is in the interest of the taxpayer that limited wildfire resources are used where they are most needed--in the Wildland Urban Interface. This amendment would again take the decision about Wilderness designation away from Congress, contrary to the Wilderness Act, and does not take into account current wildfire fighting science or best practices from a land management or taxpayer resource perspective.

#14 – Rep. Westerman (AR) – VOTE NO

This bill rightly accommodates the interests and needs of a number of individual stakeholders through the use of a potential wilderness designation, ensuring the wilderness characteristics of important landscapes are protected. This amendment is a rhetorical attack on wilderness conservation, undermining the thoughtful efforts employed in many places in this bill to ensure many voices and needs are accommodated in decision making about public lands that belong to all Americans.

Thank you for your consideration of these views.

Sincerely,



Drew McConville
Senior Managing Director, Government Relations
The Wilderness Society